Introduction

This research proposal is in regard to a study I will be completing for my Ph. D. in College Student Personnel and Services at the University of Georgia. The focus of this research is on residence life staff attitudes toward student-athletes. Student-athletes are prone to negative stereotyping and prejudice on a college campus (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993; Engstrom et al., 1995; Sedlacek, 1996). Student-athletes have reported being treated differently by faculty (Potuto & Hanlon, 2007). They also must deal with the stereotype of underachieving academically and being viewed as a “dumb jock” (Prentice & Yopyk, 2005; Valentine & Taub, 1999). Student-athletes are perceived as being the recipients of special treatment in the form of academic and financial support (Valentine & Taub, 1999). Black/African-American student-athletes must face a double stigma associated with their athletic participation and their ethnicity (Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jenson, 2007). All student-athletes face the same developmental challenges as their non-athlete peers amidst the demands of participation in their sport (Curry & Rehm, 1997; Parham, 1993; Valentine & Taub, 1999). Prejudice and stereotype may complicate this development.

Allport (1954) defined prejudice as “an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole or toward an individual because he is a member of that group” (p. 10). Others have similarly defined prejudice as a negative evaluation of a group or members of group based on characteristics which may be real or perceived (Jackson, 2011; Nelson, 2009; Stangor, 2009). Group membership can be fluid and complex as people hold many different social identities and may be part of an in-group or out-group (Allport, 1954). It is normal for people to categorize others into groups based on social identities (Jackson, 2011). The concept that certain attributes
are essential to being part of a social group is psychological essentialism (Prentice & Miller, 2007). This concept of certain characteristics being essential for group membership can have a negative impact when it leads to stereotyping (Prentice & Miller, 2007).

Stereotypes are usually viewed in a negative light but are also a tool of categorizing or helping us simplify something seen as complicated. This helps people interpret and make sense of the world (Allport, 1954; Allport, 1979; Tajfel, 1981). Although we use stereotyping to help us interpret the world, there are situations where these stereotypes lead to prejudice toward a person or a group of people. Those who are prejudiced may hold on to negative attitudes, based on stereotypes, even when new information is gained which would change the negative attitude of a reasonable person (Allport, 1954; Pincus, 2006). College campuses are diverse places where community members may experience prejudice and stereotype. One of the groups prone to stereotype and prejudice on a college campus is Student-athletes (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993; Engstrom et al., 1995; Sedlacek, 1996).

Both faculty and students have been shown to hold negative attitudes toward student-athletes (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995). These attitudes include general areas like academic ability and special treatment as well as more specific items such as driving an expensive sports car (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom et al., 1995; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993). These negative attitudes represent a few of the challenges faced by student-athletes as they interact with their fellow students and faculty members. One of the main places where many student-athletes interact with other fellow students and therefore may also encounter such attitudes is the residence hall.
In 1991 the NCAA reformed their policy to require institutions to move away from residential models that separated the student-athletes from the general student population (Davis, 1991). Student-athletes are now dispersed throughout the residence hall, which creates opportunities for them to interact with students outside of athletics. Residence life staff members working in the residence hall have three areas of emphasis which may impact student-athletes: advising, training, and programming (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek 1993). These create opportunities for residence life staff to have a positive impact on the student-athlete population. Residence life staff are in the position to have interactions with student-athletes surrounding topics outside their student-athlete identity and to help student-athletes develop a positive self-image (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993).

**Statement of the problem**

Student-athletes are a group prone to stereotype and prejudice on campus (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993; Engstrom et al., 1995; Sedlacek, 1996). Studies have shown faculty and students hold negative attitudes toward student-athletes (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995). These studies have pointed to residence life staff members as a support for student-athletes, however, there have not been studies regarding residence life staff attitudes toward student-athletes.

**Purpose of the Study**

The potential for positive impacts of living in a residence hall during college has been widely studied (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Blimling, 1994). The impact ranges from increased involvement to personal growth. Residence life staff members have an opportunity to have a positive impact for students who reside in the residence
hall through advising, training, and programming (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek 1993). Student-athletes are a sub-population residing in the residence hall (Davis, 1991) and are a group who is prone to stereotype and prejudice on a college campus (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995). Studies have stated that staff members serving in residence halls may be a valuable resource for student-athletes as they face negative attitudes from faculty and students (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995).

The purpose of this study is to (a) assess the attitudes held by residence life staff at toward student-athletes; (b) determine if there are differences in attitude based on previous athletic experience of the residence life staff participants; (c) determine if there are differences in attitudes toward black and white student-athletes; (d) determine if there are differences in attitude based on the NCAA Division of the institution where the residence life staff members serve; and (e) determine if there are differences in attitude based on demographic factors of the residence life staff participants; including gender, ethnicity, and years of experience of the residence life staff. Understanding the attitudes of residence life staff toward student-athletes will benefit the residence life staff, the student-athletes, and other students residing in the residence hall.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study will consist of members of the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) who are currently professional full-time live-in residence life staff at NCAA Division I, II, and III institutions. ACUHO-I has a
membership which includes thousands of individuals serving at more than nine hundred member institutions around the world (ACUHO-I, 2011). The scope of this sample will include residence life staff working within the United States of America. These participants will be asked to complete versions of the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) online to assess differences in attitudes toward students and student-athletes.

**Instrument**

The Situational Attitude Scale Student-Athlete (SAS-SA) developed by Engstrom and Sedlacek (1991) will be used in this research. This version of the SAS has been used in previous studies on student attitudes toward student-athletes (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993) as well as faculty attitudes toward student athletes (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom et al., 1995). The SAS-SA includes ten situations which are displayed as statements on the questionnaire (see Appendices A and B for complete questionnaire). The situations range from specific behavior of students (student-athletes) such as being arrested or experiencing domestic violence to simple interactions such as meeting a new resident (student-athlete) or being assigned to work with a group of students (student-athletes) on a special project. There are two (or more) versions of the questionnaire designed for a single study. There will be three different comparisons made in this study: students and student-athletes; White students and White student-athletes; Black students and Black student-athletes. Form A is the control form including statements with no stimulus word related to the foci of this study: student, White student, or Black student. Form B will include the stimulus word in the statement; in this case the stimulus term will be one of the following; student-athlete, White student-athlete, or Black student-athlete. The statements are followed by 10 adjective pairs (e.g., happy-sad), and participants marked on a semantic differential scale in response to the statements. The possible
score for each item ranged from 10-50; 10 = more negative attitudes and 50 = more positive attitudes. Scores will be tallied within the web based service software of Survey Monkey. Scores between individual situations will be tested; there is not a complete form score, as noted by Sedlacek and Brooks (1972).

This current study will collect data to determine differences in the following comparisons: Students and Student-Athletes, White Students and White Student-Athletes, Black Students and Black Student-Athletes. The comparison of Black and White students is important in this case due to the demographics of students competing in the high profile NCAA sports of men’s basketball and football as well as the high profile professional sports leagues of the NBA and NFL (NCAA, 2010c; Lapsick et al., 2011a; Lapsick et al., 2011b). There is a high percentage of Black/African-American participants in these high profile sports (NCAA, 2010c; Lapchick et al., 2011a; 2011b). Black/African-American student-athletes face a double stigma associated with their ethnicity as well as their status as an athlete (Simons et al., 2007). Other studies have not considered the ethnicity of the student-athlete in their assessment of attitudes of others toward student-athletes ((Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom et al., 1995; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993).

The researcher received permission via email from Dr. William Sedlacek, the instrument author, to use the SAS-SA. The Situational Attitude Scale Manual (Brooks & Sedlacek, 1972) was provided by the Testing Center of the University of Maryland College Park. The situations used in this study are taken from the SAS-SA used in research with residence hall students (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993). They have been adapted by the researcher for the focus of this study, residence life staff. The semantic differential scales for the current study were developed by taking word pairs from previous SAS studies. This was done as there was not an original
copy of the SAS-SA used in the residence hall student study (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993); only the situations were available from the published article. However, the SAS-Manual (1972) by Sedlacek and Brooks noted specifically that the choice of words used in the scale is unimportant. The importance lies in the whether the words are in a “good-bad” differential (Brooks & Sedlacek, 1972).

**Data Collection.**

The researcher will use Survey Monkey; a web based independent company to collect data. The College of Education (COE) has an account with Survey Monkey and has granted the researcher permission to use this account. There will be an online informed consent form along with six separate questionnaires uploaded to Survey Monkey and a separate link will be created for all six forms. The membership email addresses will need to be split into six separate samples. Each sample will receive a link for one of the following forms: student (Form A1), student-athlete (Form B1), White student (Form A2), White student-athlete (Form B2), Black student (Form A3), or Black student-athlete (Form B3). An initial email will be sent to each sample separately including information about the research project and the link to the questionnaire. The researcher is requesting one additional reminder email be sent to the six samples. Once the data collection process is completed the data will be transferred from Survey Monkey to SPSS and analyzed.

**Data Analysis**

Once the data collection process is completed via Survey Monkey, data will be analyzed using SPSS software (see Table 1). The researcher will use a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to compare the mean scores for each statement between Forms (A, A1, A2 and B, B1, B2). Significant differences at the p>.05 level will be identified and reported. MANOVA
with post hoc Tukey Tests will be completed for main effects by form for gender, ethnicity, previous high school or collegiate varsity level athletic experience, professional experience (0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11 years and beyond), and primary NCAA Divisional level of professional work experience by each statement between Form (A, A1, A2 and B, B1, B2). Significant differences at the p>.05 will be reported and Tukey Tests will determine where the significance lies within the main effects for gender, ethnicity, previous athletic experience at the college or high school varsity level, professional level (0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11 or more years), and primary NCAA Divisional level professional work experience as reported by the participant. Only the scores between individual situations will be tested; there is not a complete form score, as noted by Sedlacek and Brooks (1972).

Table 1

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<tr>
<th>Research Questions and Statistical Procedures</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
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| RQ 1: What attitudes do residence life staff hold toward student-athletes as compared with students who are not athletes? | MANOVA  
Comparison of mean scores  
p<.05 level |
| RQ 2: Is there a difference in attitudes of residence life staff toward student-athletes based on their gender? | MANOVA  
Comparison of mean scores  
p<.05 level  
Post Hoc Tukey Test for gender main effect |
| RQ 3: Is there a difference in attitudes of residence life staff toward student-athletes based on their own previous high school or collegiate athletic experience? | MANOVA  
Comparison of mean scores  
p<.05 level  
Post Hoc Tukey Test for previous high school or collegiate athletic experience main effect |
|---|---|
| RQ 4: Is there a difference in attitudes of residence life staff toward white student-athletes and black student-athletes? | MANOVA  
Comparison of mean scores  
p<.05 level |
| RQ 5: Is there a difference in attitudes of residence life staff toward student-athletes based on NCAA Divisional work experience? | MANOVA  
Comparison of mean scores  
p<.05 level  
Post Hoc Tukey Test for NCAA Divisional level main effect |
| RQ 6: Is there a difference in attitudes of residence life staff toward student-athletes based on years in the profession? | MANOVA  
Comparison of mean scores  
p<.05 level  
Post Hoc Tukey Test for professional level main effect |
| RQ 7: Is there a difference in attitudes of residence life staff toward student-athletes based on the ethnicity of the residence life staff member? | MANOVA  
Comparison of mean scores  
p<.05 level  
Post Hoc Tukey Test for professional level main effect |
I appreciate the consideration and time of the ACUHO-I Research Committee. I am available to answer any questions the committee may have as they review this proposal. There has been a link to Form A of the survey instrument on Survey Monkey sent to the chair of the committee and others may review it using the link.
References


