March 2021

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Recommended Citation

Ortega, Guillermo (2021) "An Examination of Campus Engagement and GPA for Latinx College Athlete," *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience*: Vol. 3: Iss. 1, Article 4.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25035/jade.03.01.04>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/jade/vol3/iss1/4>

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JADE

Journal of Athlete
Development and Experience

VOLUME 3
ISSUE 1

GLOBAL PARTNERS

An Examination of Campus Engagement and GPA for Latinx College Athletes

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Abstract

Despite the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA's) focus on improving college athletes' academic outcomes, research specifically has overlooked Latinx college athletes. This paper focuses on how campus engagement with peers, faculty, administrators, and athletic staff are positively related to GPA among Latinx college athletes. An ordinary least square (OLS) regression model was used to examine the relationships between engagement and Latinx college athletes' GPA. The findings suggest that high school GPA, participation in class, and faculty student interactions were significant for Latinx college athletes' GPA. Additionally, interactions with teammates and coach both were significant predictors, but team interactions had a slight negative effect on GPA. Lastly, identifying as a Latina college athlete had a positive association on GPA when compared to Latino college athletes.

Keywords: *College athletes, Grade point average, Intercollegiate athletics, Latinx*

In 2019, there were approximately 30,000 Latinx college athletes participating in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), making them the third-largest group of athletes after Whites and African Americans (NCAA, 2020a). Scholars have observed the increase in the Latinx population in the United States and higher education (Gándara, 2010), but they have tended to overlook Latinx representation in college athletics. With the rise of Latinx students in higher education, institutions must be ready to respond and accommodate their participation in intercollegiate athletics.

The purpose of this study is to understand how the campus engagement of Latinx college athletes is related to their grade point average (GPA). According to Axelson and Flick (2010), campus engagement involves student learning and their connection to the institution, faculty, and peers. For example, connections to the institution can include membership in extracurricular groups, faculty-student interactions, utilizing school resources, and

conducting community services (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Davidson & Wilson, 2013). Specifically for college athletes, campus engagement can include their interactions with teammates, coaches, and athletic staff (Rankin et al., 2011). With limited research on Latinx college athletes' engagement, it is important to understand what factors are associated with their GPAs. This study focuses on GPA as an outcome for this population because the NCAA requires college athletes to have a 2.3 GPA to be eligible for their sport (NCAA, 2018). In addition, I define academic achievement through GPA because it is a common measurement of success by institutions (York et al., 2015). Therefore, GPA serves as an important measure for college athletes' achievement.

More broadly, GPA is a measurement that the NCAA uses to evaluate the eligibility and retention of college athletes (NCAA, 2020b). According to Johnson et al. (2012), GPA and individual eligibility are primary determinates for Academic Progress

Rate (APR) scores. Introduced in 2004, the APR is a metric the NCAA uses to track real-time academic progress of college athletes and teams (Gayles & Hu, 2009). The APR allows every team to receive two points per college athlete per semester for staying in school and one point for being academically eligible for financial aid (NCAA, 2018). The APR takes a team's total points, divided by the total points possible, and then multiplies that by 1,000 (NCAA, 2018). To emphasize the importance of academics, the NCAA punishes teams that do not meet a minimum of 900 points by revoking scholarships or rendering them ineligible to participate in post-season competitions (Althouse, 2007). In order to avoid penalties, athletic administrators must ensure their athletes meet their GPA eligibility requirement (Stokowski, et al., 2017; Fountain & Finley, 2009, 2010).

With the NCAA's emphasis on academics, it is important to understand how campus engagement can help college athletes' GPA. Prior research suggests that Latinx students who are more actively engaged with their campus community are more likely to be academically successful (Nora, 2003). An engaged student can be academically successful because they are devoting their time to classes, extracurricular activities, peers, and faculty (Nora, 2003). However, we know relatively little about whether campus engagement positively relates to Latinx college athletes' GPAs. In this quantitative study, I analyzed the Student Athlete Climate Study (SACS) data to examine whether interactions with peers, faculty, administrators, and athletic staff are positively related to GPA among Latinx college athletes. I draw on the literature on college athletes and Nora's (2003) Student/Institution Engagement model to address the following research questions:

1. What engagement factors (i.e., Faculty, Student, Athletic) are positively related to Latinx college athletes' GPA?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in the relationships between engagement factors and GPA among Latinx college athletes?

Literature Review

College Athletes

The NCAA's core purpose is to ensure that college athletes' athletic and educational experiences are positive (NCAA, 2020b). Since its formation, the NCAA has stated that academics is the main priority of all college athletes (NCAA, 2015). According to NCAA guidelines, college athletes must spend no more than 20 hours per week, with a maximum of four hours per day, on athletic-related activities (NCAA, 2019). The NCAA makes it clear that only 20 hours can be spent on athletic-related activities in order for college athletes to focus on their academics.

However, there has been criticism on how college athletes' athletic commitments may affect their GPA (Simons et al., 1999). Studies have demonstrated that college athletes have lower GPAs compared to non-athletes due to their athletic commitments (Rubin & Rosser, 2014). For example, college athletes spend up to 40 hours a week on athletic-related activities (Wolverton, 2016). These activities include traveling to and from practice and competitions, attending team meetings, receiving physical rehabilitation by team trainers in the training room, and receiving counseling or guidance from athletic staff (Althouse, 2007). The time required for these athletic commitments can limit a college athlete's opportunities for academic-related activities.

Furthermore, studies have found that gender is an important predictor of college athletes' GPA (Lance, 2004; Miller et al., 2005). Johnson et al. (2012) conducted a study to predict GPA for first-year college athletes at a Division I university. The study included college athlete demographics, pre-college characteristics, and sports (Johnson et al., 2012). The findings showed that female college athletes outperformed males academically (Johnson et al., 2012). The NCAA's graduation rates show that female college athletes had a 92% graduation rate compared to 80% of males (NCAA, 2020c). This may be due to the large number of men participating in

revenue-generating sports, which include football and basketball (Hawkins et al., 2016). According to Comeaux and Harrison (2011), revenue generating sports tend to be more demanding and often are commercialized by television, media coverage, and sponsors. The commercialization adds pressure for athletic teams, athletic departments, and universities to have a successful season and program (Adler & Adler, 1991). This pressure causes college athletes participating in revenue-generating sports to dedicate more time to their sport than nonrevenue athletes, resulting in a lower GPA (Adler & Adler, 1991).

Moreover, faculty and students are less likely to engage with Black college athletes due to their involvement in sports (Killeya, 2001). Faculty and peers have the perception that college athletes of color have nothing to contribute academically to the campus community and are only admitted because of their athletic ability (Harper, 2018). These negative perceptions can lead Black college athletes to forgo pursuing academic help from their faculty, advisors, or student peers (Killeya, 2001; Comeaux, 2011; Stokowski et al., 2020). Furthermore, Black college athletes are more likely to express feelings of isolation and experience racial remarks compared to White college athletes (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012). Black college athletes are stereotyped as the “Black dumb jock” by academic stakeholders and non-athlete peers (Bimper, 2017). According to Edwards (1984), the “Black dumb jock” stereotype was created to systematically devalue Black athletes by accepting low academic expectations and overly encourage athletic pursuits. As a result, Black college athletes are encouraged to concentrate on sports-related activities rather than academics (Edwards, 1984; Cooper & Hawkins, 2012). I acknowledge that the literature does not specifically address Latinx college athletes, but it is important to provide insights on the potential importance that exist for racial minority groups of college athletes.

The Importance of Campus Engagement for Latinx Students

Hurtado et al. (1996) found that Latinx students’ social interactions with peers and faculty are positively related to academics. Latinx students who are engaged with the campus community can help build support networks that can contribute to GPA and persistence (Nora et al., 2011). Latinx students’ interactions with peers can contribute to higher GPAs and improved graduation rates (Crisp et al., 2015). First-generation Latinx students often struggle navigating the college experience and turn to their peers for support (Nuñez & Sansone, 2016; Nuñez, 2009).

Latinx students who engage with faculty outside the classroom have a higher chance of succeeding academically (Nuñez, 2009). Faculty members can provide guidance and development for Latinx students, influencing their GPA and persistence (Crisp & Nora, 2009). However, Latino college athletes have a unique case, since college athletes are less likely to interact with the campus community and interact more with their athletic community (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Jayakumar and Comeaux (2011) state that college athletes tend to be isolated from the campus community and socialize with teammates, coaches, and athletic-related staff. These studies help us understand that while research exists for Latinx student GPA, there still are research and data gaps we must rectify if we are to understand how campus engagement is a significant factor of the Latinx college athlete GPA.

Latinx Students’ Grade Point Averages (GPAs)

Since NCAA member institutions are comprised of four-year institutions, I consider literature on Latinx student GPA at four-year institutions. Additionally, with minimal research on Latinx college athletes, I analyzed studies that focused on Latinx student GPA. Researchers have argued that Latinx students have lower college GPAs compared to their

White counterparts (Miller, 2005). One reason may be due to Latinx students disproportionately coming from low-income backgrounds and having parents who did not enroll in college (Laird et al., 2007).

I highlight socio-economic status (SES) and first-generation status because many Latinx students come from low-income areas with fewer resources available and are first-generation college students (Horn & Chen, 1998). Generally speaking, attributes such as lower SES and first-generation are reported as two of the strongest indicators for GPA and persistence (Astin & Oseguera, 2005). Moreover, St. John et al. (2011) found that alleviating the pressure to secure financial “resources” through financial aid provided an opportunity for first-generation Latinx students to attend college. Any source of financial aid is helpful in their collegiate success.

Furthermore, like access to financial aid, athletic participation for Latinx students in secondary school has been shown to improve test scores and lead to higher chances of attending college (Rosewater, 2009). However, if athletics can help Latinx academically in secondary schooling, does athletic participation in college operate like financial aid and positively correlate with the Latinx students’ graduate rate and success? I plan to examine if the relationship between athletic participation and campus engagement leads to a positive correlation in the GPA of Latinx college athletes. Therefore, I build on previous literature to identify what predictors can positively influence Latinx college athletes’ GPA.

Latinx College Athletes

Scholars have suggested that Latinx college athletes experience negative campus interactions with faculty and peers. For example, Turk and colleagues (2017) found that a Latino male college athlete was being stereotyped by his faculty due to his athletic identity. The Latino male college athlete explained how faculty saw him as ‘arrogant’ and only caring about sports (Turk et al., 2017). Moreover, Ortega

(2019) found that Latino male college athletes are less likely to engage with non-athlete peers. Non-athlete peers can provide negative athletic stereotypes toward Latino college athletes, which can lead to negative interactions with the campus community. Although these studies provide information about Latino male college athletes’ experiences, they do not examine how academic and athletic interactions can support the experiences of Latino and Latina college athletes.

Furthermore, in a quantitative study, Oseguera et al. (2018) used campus climate to understand White, Black, Latinx, Asian, and Pacific Islander college athletes’ perceptions of academic success due to their collegiate experiences. Using the SACS dataset, Oseguera et al. measured academic success by college athletes’ perceptions since enrolling at the institution and if college athletes performed academically as well as they anticipated. Additionally, hierarchical regressions were used to see if personal and institutional campus climate were statistically significant across racial groups (Oseguera et al., 2018). The results found that as White college athletes’ class standing and family income increased, so did their academic success. For Black college athletes, college GPA and positive personal and institutional climate increased their academic success (Oseguera et al., 2018). Similarly, Latinx college athletes reported college GPA increased their academic success, but if they were involved in campus organizations, it had a negative effect on their academic success (Oseguera et al., 2018). I plan to extend this research by understanding the relationship campus engagement has on Latinx college athletes’ GPA.

Conceptual Framework

While there has been research on student engagement, there are limited models that specifically focus on Latinx students. To examine Latinx college athletes’ success, the present study was informed by Nora’s (2003) Model of Student/Institution Engagement Model. The model draws from studies by Tinto

(1975), Bean (1980), and Nora and Cabrera (1996) to explore persistence by incorporating underrepresented college students. Specifically, Nora's (2003) model examines how interaction with faculty, students, and academic staff enhances Latinx students' persistence to obtain a degree (Nora et al., 2011). Nora's (2003) model proposes six major components for students: (1) Pre-college characteristics, (2) sense of purpose and institutional allegiance, (3) academic and social experiences, (4) cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, (5) goal determination/institutional allegiance, and (6) persistence (Nora et al., 2011).

According to Nora (2003), students bring pre-college characteristics such as high school experience and prior academic achievement influences to their college experience and connection to their institution. Upon entering college, students' experiences are thought to be influenced by environmental pull factors that "pull away" or "draw in" students into academic and social campus environments (Crisp & Nora, 2010). These pull factors impact a student's persistence and can include interaction with faculty members, participation in clubs and organizations, academic advisor interactions, and participation in courses (Crisp & Nora, 2010).

Nora's (2003) model was modified, and based on previous literature on college athletes, three components of the model were utilized: (1) pre-college characteristics, (2) academic and social experiences, and (3) athletic interactions (Figure 1). Nora's (2003) model takes into account how students bring a series of pre-college characteristics and experiences that can influence GPA. Past experiences can include a student's high school GPA, academic preparation, level of parent education, and SES (Nora et al., 2011). Academic and social experiences include interactions with faculty, peers, advisors or counselors, and student organizations (Nora et al., 2011). Lastly, due to the significant amount of time (20 hours per week) college athletes spend with their teammates, coaches, and athletic staff (Bell, 2009; Watt & Moore, 2001), athletic interaction and engagement also were

analyzed. Athletic interactions are relevant because unlike other students, the demands and participation of athletics are unique commitments for college athletes (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Such activities were used to help examine how academic and athletic engagements predict GPA for Latinx college athletes.

Figure 1.

Modified Version of Amaury Nora's (2003) Model of Student/Institution Engagement Model

Data and Method

Data

The present study utilized the Student Athlete Climate Study (SACS) to examine the different campus engagements for Latinx college athletes. The original scale compiled SACS data by surveying 8,000 college athletes from more than 150 NCAA institutions. SACS was developed to examine the campus, team, and athletic department's climate to understand academic and athletic success, as well as athletic identity (Rankin et al., 2011). The responses about individual campus experiences came from all the NCAA Divisions (Rankin, et al., 2011). The dataset responses from college athletes include demographics, sports, and NCAA Division (Rankin et al., 2011). Additionally, "ratio estimation was used to develop a weight adjustment on the characteristics of gender, race, academic class standing, and NCAA division in order to make the data as representative as possible of the sample" (Oseguera et al., p. 123).

SACS aims to expand the knowledge of college athletes' well-being by analyzing their engagement with the campus, intercollegiate athletics, and their team (Rankin et al., 2011).

The SACS dataset had a total of 389 respondents that identified as Latino and 227 that identified as Latina. Only a small number of respondents identified as low-income ($n = 39$) or first-generation ($n = 66$). Moreover, Table 1 provides the mean and standard deviation of variables included in the model for Latinx college athletes. The mean self-reported response for current GPA was 6.20 (1.63 SD).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Latinx Student Athletes in SACS Data (N = 389)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>
Grade Point Average (GPA) (1 = D or below, 9 = A)	6.20	1.63	1.00	9.00
High School GPA (1 = D or below, 9 = A)	7.45	1.35	3.00	9.00
First-Generation (1 = Yes, 0 = No)	0.16	0.38	0.00	1.00
Low-Income (1 = Yes, 0 = No)	0.10	0.30	0.00	1.00
Gender (Latina = 1, Latino = 0)	0.59	0.49	0.00	1.00
Participate in class? (1 = Never, 5 = Very Often)	3.97	0.92	1.00	5.00
Faculty Student Interactions (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	4.13	0.76	1.00	5.00
Academic Advisor Interactions (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	4.10	0.86	1.00	5.00
Primarily Socialize with Other College Athletes (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree)	3.26	0.73	1.00	4.00
Fraternity/Sorority	0.04	0.19	0.00	1.00
Academic & Honor Society	0.17	0.37	0.00	1.00
Intramural/Club Sports	0.16	0.37	0.00	1.00
Cultural Groups	0.10	0.30	0.00	1.00
Religious/Spiritual Group	0.10	0.30	0.00	1.00
Other Clubs and Organizations	0.10	0.30	0.00	1.00
Team Interactions (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	4.28	0.88	1.00	5.00
Athletic Advisor Interactions (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	4.10	0.86	1.00	5.00
Athletic Department Interactions (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	4.00	0.92	1.00	5.00
Coach interactions (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	4.10	1.09	1.00	5.00

Variables

Current college GPA was used as the dependent variable; it is a commonly used proxy for student success (York et al., 2015). Current college GPA asked college athletes to designate their GPA within a range that corresponded to letter grades. The variable was semi-categorical and grades ranged from 1 (*D or below* (< 1.50)) to 9 (*A* ($3.84-4.00$)). As mentioned earlier, the APR primarily is calculated by the college athletes' GPA and individual eligibility. Additionally, college athletes must meet their academic and athletic GPA requirements to remain eligible (Johnson et al., 2012). Therefore, it is important for coaches, staff, and institutions to understand what variables are related to GPA (Johnson et al., 2012).

Based on the data available, the control variables start with pre-college characteristics (Table 1). Pre-college characteristics has been found to be an influential factor for minority students' academic success (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Based on SACS, I use the following variables to define pre-college characteristics: high school GPA, first-generation (*FG*), and low-income (*LI*). Gender was dichotomous. I used "0" for Latinos and "1" was added as a dummy variable to represent Latinas.

The independent variables begin with what Nora (2003) referred to as academic integration. Academic integration was measured by college athletes' participation in class, socialization with athletes and non-athletes, memberships in clubs and organizations, and interactions with faculty and academic advisors. Participation in class is measured on a Likert scale from 1 (*Never*), 2 (*Rarely*), 3 (*Sometimes*), 4 (*Often*), and 5 (*Very Often*). Additionally, Latinx college athletes' overall relationship with their faculty (*Faculty Student Interactions*) and academic advisor (*Academic Advisor Interactions*) were measured in a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*), 2 (*Disagree*), 3 (*Neither Agree nor Disagree*), 4 (*Agree*), and 5 (*Strongly Agree*).

Furthermore, academic development was used to understand what type of academic engage-

ment activities college athletes are attending. For example, college athletes' socialization with other college athletes (*Primarily Socialize with Other College Athletes*) was measured on a Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*), 2 (*Disagree*), 3 (*Agree*), and 4 (*Strongly Agree*). Next, membership in clubs and organizations was collected with different types of organizations college athletes can join. The clubs and organizations included: *Fraternity/Sorority*, *Academic & Honor Society*, *Intramural/Club Sports*, *Cultural Groups*, *Religious/Spiritual Groups*, and *Other Clubs and Organizations*. Interactions with faculty (*Faculty Student Interaction*) were constant variables measured on a continuous scale, and measured the quality of formal and informal interactions with faculty members (Rankin et al., 2011).

Finally, athletic interactions was used because previous studies have neglected the influence athletics has on college athletes. Athletic interactions was measured by the following variables: team interactions, athletic advisors, athletic department interactions, and coach interactions. First, a Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*), 2 (*Disagree*), 3 (*Neither Agree nor Disagree*), 4 (*Agree*), and 5 (*Strongly Agree*) was used to measure Latinx college athletes' overall relationship with their teammates. Similarly, the same Likert scale was used to measure the overall relationship satisfaction with athletic department (*Athletic Department*), athletic advisors (*Athletic Advisor*), and head coach (*Head Coach*). Ultimately, these interactions can help identify which are statistically significant for Latinx college athletes' GPA.

Data Analysis

An ordinary least square (OLS) regression model was conducted using IBM-SPSS version 24. OLS can be used to model a single response variable that has been recorded continuously (Hutcheson, 2011). Additionally, beta coefficients from OLS estimation can measure the strength of the relationship between key independent and dependent variables (Meyers et al., 2016). In this study, OLS was used to

examine the strength of relationships between engagement and Latinx college athletes' GPA. This study tested whether the relationship between GPA and campus engagement is positively related for Latinx college athletes. Additionally, a vector of interaction terms was added between the variable for females and the variables of their academic, social, and athletic commitments.

Findings

Table 2

Pre-College Characteristics for Latinx College Athletes GPA

	Beta Coefficients	SE
High School GPA	0.31 *	0.06
First-Generation	-0.10 ***	0.22
Low-Income	-0.02 ***	0.28
Gender	0.04 ***	0.17
Adjusted R ² .105		

Note: $p \leq 0.05$ * $p \leq 0.01$ ** $p \leq 0.001$ ***

I present the results from the OLS in Table 2. All the tables include the beta coefficient and standard error. The regression represented in Table 2 shows the pre-college characteristics and found that high school GPA was a statistically significant control variable ($p \leq 0.05^*$). The findings suggest that high school GPA had a positive association on college GPA; for every on-unit increase in high school GPA, there is a corresponding increase of .31 GPA points in college. Moreover, first-generation and low-income statuses had a slight negative association on college GPA for Latinx college athletes ($p \leq 0.001^{***}$).

In regard to research question one, Table 3 examines Latinx college athletes' academic and social experiences. The regression suggests there is a positive association between participation in class and Latinx college athletes' GPA¹. Additionally, the model suggests there is a positive association between being involved in an academic honor society and Latinx college athletes' GPA². Moreover, faculty student interactions and academic advisor interactions had a slight positive association to GPA ($p \leq 0.001^{***}$). It is important to note that Table 3 indicated that Latinx college athletes' interactions with their teammates and coach both were significant predictors, but team interactions had a slight negative effect on GPA ($p \leq 0.001^{***}$). Lastly, to answer the second research question, Latina college athletes had a positive association on GPA³ when compared to Latino college athletes ($p \leq 0.001^{***}$).

¹ Beta estimate is .25, but the pseudo-continuous nature of GPA limits the interpretability of that coefficient.

² Beta estimate is .04, but the pseudo-continuous nature of GPA limits the interpretability of that coefficient.

Table 3

Summary of Ordinary Least Square (OLS) Regression Model for Latinx College Athletes GPA

	<u>Beta Coefficients</u>	<u>SE</u>
High School GPA	0.26*	0.06
First-Generation	-0.09***	0.22
Low-Income	-0.01***	0.27
Gender	0.04***	0.17
Participation in Class	0.13*	0.10
Faculty Student Interactions	0.03***	0.13
Academic Advisor Interactions	0.06***	0.13
Primarily Socialize with Other College Athletes	0.00***	0.11
Fraternity/Sorority	-0.01***	0.26
Academic & Honor Society	0.26*	0.21
Intramural/Club Sport	0.04***	0.21
Cultural Groups	-0.06***	0.27
Religious/Spiritual Groups	-0.01***	0.26
Other Clubs and Organizations	-0.04***	0.25
Team Interactions	-0.02***	0.10
Athletic Advisor Interactions	0.00***	0.13
Athletic Department Interactions	0.00***	0.11
Coach Interactions	0.05***	0.08

Adjusted R² .168Note: $p \leq 0.05$ * $p \leq 0.01$ ** $p \leq 0.001$ ***

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between Latinx college athletes' engagement and GPAs. While scholars have looked at Latinx student campus engagement and GPA, little is known about Latinx college athletes' campus engagement. The findings suggest that high school GPA can be a predictor on Latinx college athletes' college GPA. For example, high school GPA is associated with Latinx students' academic outcome in college (Mendez & Bauman, 2018; Arbona & Nora, 2007; Peter & Horn, 2005). Additionally, high school GPA can be considered as a predictor for academic college performance

for college athletes (Shulman & Bowen, 2001). Moreover, scholars have stated that first-generation low-income college athletes engage less with the campus community in comparison to their peers whose parents graduated from college (Ortagus & Merson, 2015). Lastly, the findings suggest that identifying as a Latina can have positive academic achievement when compared to Latino college athletes. According to Sàenz and Ponjuán (2016), Latino males are more likely to underperform academically compared to Latinas in K-12 and higher education (Sàenz & Ponjuan, 2016). While Sàenz and Ponjuan (2016) did not specifically examine Latinx college athletes, the results in this study highlight similar findings regard-

ing Latinx subgroups. Thus, this study adds evidence to support what pre-college characteristics are significant factors when understanding Latinx college athletes.

Furthermore, participation in class and faculty-student interactions also played an important role in Latinx college athletes' GPAs. Students who actively participate in class are more likely to be academically engaged and persist in college (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). Specifically, for Latinx students, classroom participation can influence their likelihood of persisting academically by establishing positive classroom experiences with their faculty and peers (Kim et al., 2014). The findings suggest that participation in class and faculty student interactions can positively influence Latinx college athletes' GPA. In addition, being involved in an academic or honor society was positively related to Latinx college athletes' GPA. Joining a college organization can help students get engaged with the social and academic life of their college (Nora & Crisp, 2009). It is worth noting that academic and honor societies are known for their academic excellence and professional leadership (Ferrari & Appleby, 2006). In that sense, joining academic and honor societies can play a critical role for Latinx college athletes' academic success.

Finally, it is important to address how athletic interactions varied throughout the model. In the model, coach interactions had a slight positive association with Latinx college athletes' GPA, while interactions with teammates had a slight negative association. It is possible that coaches, teammates, and athletic advisors are contributing to the academic success of college athletes beyond GPA (Rankin et al., 2011). For example, athletic advisors and athletic administrators can include helping college athletes with mental health, professional development, and maintaining relationships with their family (Thompson, 2011). In addition, coaches and teammates tend to discuss athletic-related goals and how college athletes can be successful in their sport (Beamon, 2008). Thus, it is important to further examine the athletic experiences

for Latinx students participating in the NCAA beyond GPA.

Implications

The findings in this study can provide meaningful implications for academic and athletic stakeholders. First, Nora's (2003) Student/Institution Engagement model was developed for persistence and success for Latinx students, not college athletes' GPA. Because there is little known about Latinx athletic commitment and educational experiences, there are limited theoretical models that can connect Latinx college athletes' college engagement with GPAs. In order to better understand the experiences of college athletes, there needs to be theoretical frameworks that account for their academic and social integration in college (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011).

Second, institutions develop mentorship programs to support Latinx college athletes. For example, Giraldo-García et al. (2019) stated that mentor programs can provide a positive academic influence and serve as a support system for students, especially students of color. Mentorship programs also can provide Latinx students with opportunities to help navigate the college environment (Huerta & Fishman, 2014). However, athletic and academic stakeholders must collaborate to provide successful mentoring opportunities for Latinx college athletes. Topics discussed in these mentorship programs can include research opportunities, time management workshops, graduate school enrollment, and career aspirations.

Future research needs to focus on examining if campus engagement is different for Latinx college athletes when compared to different racial and/or gender groups in the NCAA. Previous research mainly has examined how academic engagement influences the academic success of White male college athletes (Oseguera et., 2018). College athlete research needs to take into account diversity factors such as race, gender, and athletic experience to generate positive college athlete outcomes (Bimper, 2017). Therefore,

it is important to look at engagement across a diverse group of college athletes to improve academic success for minoritized groups in the NCAA. Additionally, data should not combine all Latinx identities into one category. Latinx students come from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures, and it is important to highlight their unique experiences (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015). It is important to incorporate different Latinx backgrounds to get an in-depth understanding of how to support Latinx college athletes. Finally, researchers need to address if the institution's demographic makeup can promote positive academic outcomes for Latinx college athletes. An institution's racial composition can be an important reference for understanding the educational outcomes for underrepresented students (Zilvinskis et al., 2020). Thus, it is important to understand not only individual backgrounds, but the institutional makeup as well.

Limitations

While this study plans to fill gaps for Latinx college athletes, there still are limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the variables did not include Latinx college athletes' NCAA division or sports. Within the NCAA, there are three different divisions (Division I, Division II, and Division III) in which college athletes and universities can participate in athletic competition. In all divisions, college athletes tend to have different interactions with professors, peers, and athletic personnel (Umbach et al., 2006). In addition, college athletes in featured sports have more interaction with athletic personnel than those in non-featured sports (Rankin et al., 2010). Second, the data did not provide the different forms of financial aid available. There are multiple forms of aid for college athletes, including academic and athletic scholarships, grants, and loans (Bandre, 2011). Any form of financial assistance can help underrepresented students focus less on finance and more on their academic goals (Mendez & Bauman, 2018). Additionally, college athletes who do not receive scholarships are

more likely to have a higher GPA than college athletes with scholarships (Rubin & Rosser, 2014). Lastly, I want to recognize that the dataset differentiates sport participation between Latinos and Latinas, and did not give the option to identify as "Latinx." Salinas (2020) explains how Latinx provides a gender-neutral and inclusive term that challenges masculine-centric "Latino" terms. However, in this dataset, Latinos and Latinas are differentiated by their sport participation, respectfully.

Conclusion

While the Latinx community has led to an increase in empirical research in higher education, they remain an afterthought when examining college athletics (Guillaume & Trujillo, 2018). The goal of this quantitative study was to contribute to the limited research on Latinx college athletes. Using the SACS dataset, this study sought to understand what engagement factors (i.e., faculty, student, athletic) are positively related to Latinx college athletes' GPA, and if there are statistically significant differences in the relationships between engagement factors and GPA among Latino and Latina college athletes. Based on the findings of the study, high school GPA serves as an important variable for Latinx college athletes' postsecondary GPA. Additionally, the more Latinx college athletes participate in class, the more likely their GPA increases. Coach and team interactions both were significant predictors for Latinx college athletes' GPA. Lastly, from the sample of Latinx college athletes, identifying as Latina was positively associated with GPA compared to Latino college athletes.

Prior literature has not focused on how campus engagement can increase Latinx college athletes' GPA. Latinx college athletes are expected to succeed both in the classroom and the playing field. The findings from this study can benefit the NCAA and institutions by providing insight on the factors that can contribute to the academic success for Latinx college athletes. Working with Latinx college ath-

letes requires the NCAA and colleges/universities to take into account their athletic and academic campus engagement. Therefore, as Latinx participation continues to grow in the NCAA, it is important to understand what best practices can help increase their GPA and ultimately lead to degree attainment.

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