

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE UNIVERSITY CHOICE OF NCAA DIVISION I SOFTBALL PLAYERS

Kary Kankey, Norfolk State University
Jerome Quarterman, Florida State University

Abstract

This investigation was designed to examine the choice factors softball players considered most important when selecting a college or university of NCAA Division I member institutions. A questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 196 students (freshmen through seniors) of 10 NCAA Division I member institutions in the state of Ohio. Descriptive statistics were followed in the analyses of the data. Factors that were most influential for softball players' choice of a college or university were availability of a major or academic program, head coach, career opportunities after graduation, social atmosphere of the team, and the amount of financial aid. The least influential choice factors were friends, affiliation of the university (religion, public, private), media coverage, softball team Web site, softball team sponsorships, high school coach, and ethnic or gender ratio of the university. Recommendations for college softball coaches and all staff members involved in recruiting softball players of NCAA Division I are discussed in the article as well as recommendations for further research.

INTRODUCTION

The majority of colleges in the United States sponsor intercollegiate athletics for their students. Since 1910, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has governed intercollegiate athletics. Including provisional members, 1,258 colleges and universities are members of the NCAA (2003). One of the NCAA championship sports is softball. NCAA figures from January 2000 show that 853 NCAA institutions sponsored softball (NCAA, 2000). Of 25 most popular intercollegiate sports for women, softball was ranked as number six, following basketball, volleyball, soccer, tennis, and cross country ("Acosta-Carpenter Study," 2002). In the 1996 Olympics, the first year softball was a medal sport, the U.S. Olympic softball team captured the gold medal.

Every year, thousands of high school seniors graduate and enter colleges and universities in the fall. This is a complicated and difficult choice because there are over 4,000 institutions from which to choose in the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2000), higher education enrollment increased 16% between 1985 and 1995, including a 23% increase in enrollment by females. Choosing a college or university to attend is one of the most important decisions people make (Doyle & Gaeth, 1990). Admissions personnel have attempted to determine how to attract students to their colleges and what factors impact students' decisions to remain at one college for their entire degree matriculation (Martin & Dixon, 1991).

Students have a difficult choice when it comes to choosing a college or university. There are many reasons to choose or not to choose to attend a particular college or university. For those students who are interested in playing collegiate softball, the choice process may, or may not in some instances, become more difficult. For coaches, recruiting is an essential task that is necessary in order to sustain an athletic program. Recruiting is also competitive and expensive, so any extra information on the choices of softball players may be helpful to coaches. The intent of this study is to provide collegiate softball coaches with a tool that will improve the recruiting process and raise awareness as to what softball players look for in a college/university and a softball program. In particular, this study reports the development of an instrument for assessing the choice factors that influence softball athletes to attend a particular college or university. A review of the literature of the theoretical frame-

works and evidence of reliability and validity of the instrument are described in the following sections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review was conducted to identify and evaluate existing studies of (a) choice factors of college/university students in general, (b) choice factors of student-athletes in general, and (c) choice factors by gender and specific sport teams. The current investigation empirically evaluated the choice factors of softball players who made the decision to attend an NCAA Division I program. In addition, a critical analysis was made of the review in order to provide rationale for the current investigation. The interest of examining choice factors of softball athletes in member institution of NCAA Division I was investigated through research questions representative of the aforementioned areas discussed in view of the analysis of the review of literature.

Many past research efforts have attempted to explain college/university choice factors of the general student body. In an extensive search, the authors found numerous data-based articles, theses, and dissertations that investigated choice factors of college/university students in general. A list of such studies includes but is not limited to studies by Ash (1987), Astin (1965), Canale, Dunlap, Britt, and Donahue (1996), Discenza, Ferguson, and Wisner (1985), Erdmann (1983), Espinoza (2001), Espiritu (1982), Friedman (1984), Gorman (1976), Hiscocks (1996), H. D. Johnson (1994), Kaufman and Creamer (1991), Kealey and Rockel (1987), Koch (1981), Loury and Garman (1995), Martin and Dixon (1991), Sanders (1986), Simmons (1969), Stordahl (1970), and Weiler (1996). Common findings of the general student body in the literature revealed that such factors as parents/guardians, friends, financial assistance, reputation of the academic program, program availability, and location of the institutions have repeatedly surfaced as most influential for students when making a choice of a college or university (Dixon & Martin, 1991; Galotti & Mark, 1994; Hu & Hossler, 2000; Sevier, 1991). For example, Dixon and Martin (1991) reported that factors such as parents, reputation of the academic program, program availability, advice of others, location of the institution, and availability of financial aid repeatedly showed up in the literature as most influential for the general student body.

Although not as plentiful as the studies of the general college/university studies, there has been a growing body of literature on the college choice decisions of student-athletes in general. For more than two decades, a list of such studies includes but is not limited to the following:

- Male athletes: Forman (1980), Konnert and Gieser (1987), Fielitz (2001).
- Women's intercollegiate athletics: Conley (1981), Nicodemus (1990).
- Male basketball players: Hess (1986), Moffitt (1982), Ulferts (1992).
- College choice of athletes: Loudermilk (1983), Howat (1999), Mathes and Gurney (1985), Monaghan (1994), Slabik (1995), Walker (2002).
- Freshman football players: Fortier (1986).
- Male athletes and nonathletes of NCAA Division III: Giese (1986).
- Football: Kraft and Dickerson (1996).

A short list of such studies shows that four factors were repeatedly found to be important to student-athletes in general: (a) the opportunity to play (Forseth, 1987; E. A. Johnson, 1972; Konnert & Giese, 1987; Slabik, 1995); (b) academic factors (Bukowski, 1995; Cook, 1994; Forseth, 1987; Mathes & Gurney, 1985; Reynaud, 1998; Slabik, 1995); (c) amount of scholarship (Doyle & Gaeth, 1990; Ulferts, 1992); and (d) head coach (Cook, 1994; Mathes & Gurney, 1985; Slabik, 1995). For example, Mathes and Gurney (1985) surveyed 231 male and female athletes in revenue and non-revenue producing

sports receiving full and partial scholarships. They found that the athletes placed the most importance on academic characteristics, the coach, and the campus.

While a growing body of literature exists on college choice of student-athletes in general, the same cannot be said for similar studies of factors that influence student athletes' choice by gender and by specific sport teams. A comprehensive review of the literature review showed that a dearth of studies had examined university choice factors of female student-athletes by specific sport teams (e.g., female basketball players: Heilman, 1988, and Speer, 1992; volleyball players: Reynaud, 1998, and Widdison, 1982).

Widdison (1982) conducted one of the first sport specific studies of choice factors among female volleyball players ($N=112$) from an NCAA region. The most influential reasons for the volleyball players to select a college or university were (a) opportunity to play, (b) degree offered in chosen major, (c) head coach, (d) proximity to house, (e) coaching staff, (f) only scholarship offered, (g) contact of coaching staff by mail or phone, (h) opportunity to travel, (i) high school coach or coaches, (j) religion, and (k) organization of the volleyball program.

Reynaud (1998) conducted one of the latest sport studies of choice factors among Division I volleyball players. She surveyed 457 people and interviewed 8 Division I volleyball players and found that the top five factors were (a) being offered a scholarship, (b) the academic reputation of the school, (c) the head coach, (d) the school offering their preferred academic major, and (e) the players presently on the team. In general, the existing literature is very limited in its ability to provide a broad and comprehensive understanding of the college choice decisions of college student-athletes by specific sport teams.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature search, there has not evolved a conceptual framework regarding the college choice decisions of college student-athletes by specific sport teams. Therefore, for the purpose of this investigation, the conceptual framework was guided by Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model. Hossler and Gallagher developed a three-stage model to describe the college selection process of individuals: the predisposition stage, a search stage, and a choice stage. During the predisposition stage, students determine whether or not they would like to continue their education beyond high school. It is during this stage that students decide if they are going to attend a college/university or pursue other options. In the second, or search stage, students begin to consider their various options in terms of college/university. According to Hossler and Gallagher, it is during this stage that there are many interactions between the college/university and the students, and both the students and the institutions are searching for the other.

The choice stage is the final stage of the college selection process. Students enter this stage when they submit applications to a small number of colleges/universities. The choice may range from one to several colleges/universities. This investigation focuses on the choice stage of the college selection process. According to Hossler and Gallagher (1987), it is this stage that students carefully contemplate the academic reputation, costs, location, and other factors of the institutions they are considering. Therefore, it is hypothesized that this conceptual model is one way to determine the choice factors that softball student-athletes consider most important in selecting a college/university of NCAA Division I status. The purpose of the current investigation was to examine the choice factors softball players considered most important when selecting a NCAA Division I college/university.

METHOD

This investigation was a descriptive cross-sectional nonprobability quantitative survey used to examine the choice factors of softball players of NCAA Division I member institutions. Data were collected

at one point in time. Participants were 196 students who included members of softball teams in NCAA Division I programs in Ohio. Of the 196 students, sophomores accounted for 29.4%, juniors 28.9%, freshmen 26.8%, and seniors 15.0%. The average age of the respondents was 19.8 years and ranged between 18 and 25 years. Nearly all of the respondents (94.1%) classified themselves as White, 2.6% classified themselves as Hispanic, 1.9% as Asians, and 1.3% as Black. Nearly two thirds (63.8%) of the respondents were on a partial athletic scholarship, one fifth (20.4%) had a full scholarship, and 15.8% (24 of 152) were not on a scholarship. The greatest percentage of the respondents (79.1%) were recruited and offered a scholarship. Nearly one fifth of the respondents (18.3%) were walk-ons and not offered a scholarship. Less than 3% were recruited and not offered an athletic scholarship. Table 1 provides descriptive measures of the choice factors for the total sample.

Once the questionnaire was revised for content validity and tested for reliability, it was mailed to all softball coaches of NCAA Division I member institutions in Ohio.

The survey packet was accompanied by a cover letter signed by the researchers including 20 copies of the questionnaire, instructions for administering the questionnaire to the team, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for returning the survey. The coaches were provided instructions for administering the questionnaire to the members of their softball teams. Some of the instructions were to (a) explain the purpose of the study to the team members, (b) administer the questionnaire to all of the team members at one time, (c) inform the team that participation was voluntary and confidential, and (d) not have any members of the coaching staff present during the administration of the questionnaire. The coaching staff was advised not to be present during administration of the survey in order to limit and control any influence the coaching staff might have on the responses. To ensure anonymity, each team was identified by a code. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of the means, standard deviations, and percentages of participants who expressed agreement (extremely important or very important) of the choice factors.

Using the frameworks of Forseth (1987), Mathes and Gurney (1985) and Reynaud (1998) a 37 item questionnaire was developed. Participants were required to respond to the items on a five-point scale ranging 5 (extremely important) to 1 (unimportant). Other items addressed in the questionnaire were ones to capture a demographic profile of each participant. This section of the questionnaire consisted of 14 closed-ended questions and 3 open-ended questions.

The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small panel of coaches to establish its content validity. The panel consisted of 2 coaches of NCAA Division I softball programs. Each member of the panel critically analyzed the instrument and made suggestions for its improvement. The recommendations of the coaches were incorporated into the final draft of the survey. Internal consistency of the performance of the 37-Likert type scale items, computed by the Cronbach alpha coefficient, was .79.

Data collection occurred over a two-month period. Initially, permission for all data collection procedures was obtained in advance from each of the participating university institutional review boards. Participation in this investigation was completely voluntary and confidential. No individual or institutional names were included on the survey. Therefore, one would be unable to link the responses with a particular softball coach, team, or individual of a team. Useable questionnaires were returned from 10 (90.9%) of the 11 programs. On average, 15 individual softball student-athletes responded from each of the 10 universities. A total of 196 questionnaires were completed and returned from the participants in the current investigation.

RESULTS

From a descriptive analysis, college softball players of NCAA Division I programs considered availability of major or academic program, head coach, career opportunities after graduation, and social at-

mosphere of the team to be the most important college choice factors, respectively. The least important college choice factors included my friends, affiliation of the university (religious, public, private, etc.), media coverage, softball Web site, softball team sponsorships, high school coach, and ethnic or gender ratio of the university.

Means, standard deviations, and percentages were performed to analyze the responses for each of the 37 choice factors as summarized in Table 1. When looking at the means, three fourths (29 or 78.4%) of the fixed factors were rated above the mid-point ($M=3.00$) of the scale. Additionally, nearly half (17 or 46.0%) of such factors were also rated as very important by more than 60 percent of the participants. For example, the six most highly rated factors were availability of major or academic program ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.94$) and head coach ($M=4.28$, $SD=0.89$) rated by 80% or more of the respondents as extremely important or very important. The means of four factors were rated as 4.00 or higher and were rated as extremely important or very important by more than 75% of the respondents: (a) availability of major or academic program ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.94$); (b) head coach ($M=4.28$, $SD=0.89$); (c) career opportunities after graduation ($M=4.25$, $SD=0.84$); and (d) social atmosphere of the team ($M=4.04$, $SD=1.00$). Over two thirds of the factors had a mean between 3.00 and 3.99.

The means of eight factors were rated below the midpoint ($M=3.00$) of the scale: (a) fan support of the softball team ($M=2.88$, $SD=1.08$); (b) friends ($M=2.64$, $SD=1.33$); (c) affiliation of the university ($M=2.60$, $SD=1.14$); (d) media coverage ($M=2.36$, $SD=0.98$); (e) softball team Web site ($M=2.31$, $SD=1.20$); (f) softball team sponsorships ($M=2.25$, $SD=1.30$); (g) my high school coach ($M=2.16$, $SD=1.33$); and (h) ethnic or gender ratio of the university ($M=1.85$, $SD=1.05$). Ethnic or gender ratio was rated by only 8.4% of the respondents as extremely important or very important.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NCAA DIVISION I SOFTBALL COACHES

First, they must be cognizant that there are a variety of factors that may have significant influence on the choice of softball student athletes when selecting a university of an NCAA Division I member institution. Based on the ratings of the softball student-athletes in the current investigation, there are certain factors that coaches and their staff must give special attention for enhancement of the recruitment of such prospects for NCAA Division I programs. Second, the head coaches themselves must be directly involved in the recruiting process. This finding was similar to those in earlier studies by Adler and Adler (1991), Mathes and Gurney (1985), and Reynaud (1998). Head coaches have a great deal of influence, interaction, and contact with their players while they are in college. The influence of head coaches extends off the playing field, and they often act as role models for their players. It is taken that coaches cannot control which student athlete will attend their respective universities and participate in softball, however, when they are knowledgeable about the most influential factors and are directly involved in the recruiting process, they will be able to increase the likelihood of a student enrolling at their respective university.

Third, it was revealed that potential softball student-athletes be involved in meaningful academic-related events during the recruiting process. Kraft and Dickerson (1996) suggested that a team's academic advisor as well as faculty within the student-athlete's major area be involved in the recruiting process prior and during the campus visit. This approach would be important since the availability of an academic major was another factor that influenced the softball prospects in the current investigation. This further implies that the prospects acknowledge that a softball scholarship is one of the elements used for obtaining an education; however, a good education is still the primary goal.

A fourth measure is that recruiting personnel must make known the possible career opportunities post graduation to softball student athletes. This finding may be attributed to limited opportunities for females to participate as professional softball players. The Women's Pro Softball League is a fledgling professional softball league but not a career option for collegiate softball players such as Major

League Baseball, the National Basketball Association, or the Women's National Basketball Association. This may explain why two of the top three factors career opportunities after graduation dealt with the academic aspect of higher education. These findings parallel those of previous studies (Forseth 1987; Mathes & Gurney, 1985; Reynaud, 1998; Slabik, 1995).

Special attention must also be given to the amount of financial aid offered in a Division I softball program, which was considered important by the sample in the current study. This finding is consistent with those reported in earlier studies by Doyle and Gaeth (1990), Reynaud (1998), and Slabik (1995). In addition, softball is classified as an equivalency sport in which a softball coach can divide 12 scholarships between a larger number of players for a softball program. For example, the coach may offer 18 partial scholarships instead of 12 full scholarships. Based on NCAA guidelines, women's basketball and volleyball are classified as "head count sports"; therefore, the number of athletes cannot be increased by head count as in softball.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While the list is not conclusive, four recommendations are offered in reference to the current investigation. The first recommendation is to replicate this study with only one institution using a longitudinal approach. While the results may be less generalizable, an examination of one program every year for five or more years would enable the coach/researcher to compare the choice factors of the students who were accepted and declined admission or participation with those who were accepted and participating on the team.

A second recommendation is to replicate the study with a larger sample size using probability sampling procedures. It is suggested that a proportionally stratified random sample be used to obtain adequate representation from different racial groups (e.g., African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, international players from other cultures, etc.) as well as European or White Americans. Nearly all of the participants (94.1%) in the current investigation identified themselves as European or White Americans. The current investigation was limited in scope since it was a nonprobability convenience sample consisting of 196 softball players from Division I programs within the state of Ohio. Probability sampling would allow for ways to analyze similarities and differences among the various sub-cultures.

A third recommendation is to expand the current investigation to NCAA Divisions II and III and also programs in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). This approach would provide better means for the analysis of a variety of descriptive and inferential statistics to be conducted in determining choice factors of female student-athletes in the softball program. A fourth and final recommendation is to replicate this study using a qualitative approach. It must be realized that there were choice factors not addressed in the current scale. Using an inductive approach with open-ended questions would provide for insights from the respondents not included on the scale.

A fourth and final recommendation regarding this investigation is that researchers in the future may want to continue their efforts in developing the scale for measuring choice factors for specific sport teams. In addition, it may be that the variables for the choice factors of the scale in this investigation needs improvement to assure their validity, reliability and generalizability for specific sport teams.

This investigation has some limitations. The sampling method employed was non-probability and convenient; therefore, caution must be taken in generalizing the results. The participants in this study were student-athletes who were members of softball teams of NCAA Division I member institutions in the state of Ohio. Applying the findings of this study to comparative ones is necessary to demonstrate external validity, reliability and generalizability. Age, scholarship status, undergraduate classifica-

tion, and race were restricted in this study to control confounding effects. For future studies, it is recommended that differences in age, scholarship status, classification and race be examined.

Another potential limitation was the role of the coach or individual who administered the questionnaires to the student athletes. Although clear directions were given to ensure that the coaches administered the questionnaires anonymously, it was difficult to determine if their presence had any influence on how the participants responded.

CONCLUSIONS

Prior this investigation, Hossler and Gallagher's model as a framework of choice had not been applied to the study of the members of intercollegiate softball programs of NCAA Division I member institutions. The findings of this investigation may be viewed as lending support for this particular conceptual framework, however, this approach in relations to softball at other competitive levels remains an open question and requires additional research.

Overall, this exploratory cross-sectional research has increased our understanding of the choice factors that softball players of NCAA Division I member institutions in the state of Ohio considered important. While the conclusions are specified to this group of athletes, the findings may have implications for intercollegiate softball programs in general. In conclusion, the results of this investigation suggest that when making a choice to select a university, their decisions are based on at least six types of choice factors: availability of major of academic program, head coach, career opportunities after graduation, social atmosphere of the team, amount of financial scholarship offered, and academic program reputation. When coaches and the recruiting personnel are aware of such factors, they can take a more proactive approach in the recruitment of student-athletes for a Division I softball program.

REFERENCES

- Acosta-Carpenter study shows decline in female ADs. (2002). *Athletic Management*, 14(4). Retrieved from <http://www.momentummedia.com/articles/am/am1404/bbstudy.htm>.
- Adler, P., & Adler, P. (1991). *Blackboards and blackboards: College athletes and role engulfment*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ash, J. M. (1987). An analysis of college choice influence items and selected biographic and demographic characteristics of entering freshman at a large southeastern urban university. (Doctoral dissertation, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 48, 129.
- Astin, A. W. (1965). College preferences of very able student. *College and University*, 40(3), 292-297.
- Bukowski, B. J. (1995). Influences on student college choice for minority and non-minority athletes at a Division III institution (Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 56(7), 126.
- Canale, J. R., Dunlap, L., Britt, M., & Donahue, T. (1996). The relative importance of various college characteristics to students in influencing their choice of a college. *College Student Journal*, 30(2), 214-218.
- Conley, E. O. (1981). Analysis of women's intercollegiate athletics as a factor in the college selection process: with specific attention give to small private colleges. (Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 42, 98.

Cook, T. (1994). *Factors female freshman student-athletes use in deciding between a NJCAA college and a NAIA college*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.

Discenza, R., Ferguson, J. M., & Wisner, R. (1985). Marketing high education: Using a situation analysis to identify prospective student needs in today's competitive environment. *National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Journal*, 22(2) 18-25.

Dixon, P. N., & Martin, N. K. (1991). Measuring factors that influence college choice. *National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Journal*, 29(1), 31-36.

Doyle, C. A., & Gaeth, J. (1990). Assessing the institutional choice process of student-athletes. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 61(1), 85-92.

Erdmann, D. G. (1983). An examination of factors influencing student choice in the college selection process. *The Journal of College Admissions*, 100(1), 3-6.

Espinoza, S. M. (2001). College decision-making of enrolling undergraduates: The influence of institutional factors (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62, 175.

Espiritu, J. K. (1982). Influences on the college selection process: Parents', students' and college admissions officers' perceptions (Doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 44, 188.

Fielitz, L. R. (2001). Factors influencing the student-athletes' decision to attend the United States military academy (Doctoral dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62, 144.

Forman, H. L. (1980). *Male athletes' perceptions of factors influencing their choice of university: an investigation of higher education*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, IL.

Forseth, E. (1987). Factors influencing student-athletes' college choice at evangelical, church-supported NAIA institutions in Ohio (Doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 48(01), 172.

Fortier, R. S. (1986). Freshman football players' perception of factors influencing their choice of college (Doctoral dissertation, The University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND). *Dissertation Abstracts International* 48, 111.

Friedman, R. (1984). Questions for high school student to think about when choosing college. *The Journal of College Admissions*, 103, 23-27.

Galotti, K. M., & Mark, M. C. (1994). How do high school students structure an important life decision? A short-term longitudinal study of the college decision-making process. *Research in Higher Education*, 35, 589-607.

Giese, R. F. (1986). A comparison of college choice factors and influential sources of information between division three male athletes and male nonathletes (Doctoral dissertation, Kent State University, Kent, OH). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 47, 169.

- Gorman, W. P. (1976). An evaluation of student-attracting methods and university features by attending students. *College and University*, 51, 220-225.
- Heilman, I. L. (1988). *Factors influencing college selection by female basketball players participating in the Pennsylvania State Athletic conference*. Unpublished master's thesis, Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, PA.
- Hess, C. (1986). *A comparison of factors coaches and players consider important in basketball recruiting*. Unpublished master's thesis, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
- Hiscocks, R. A. (1996). The factor influencing college choice and persistence (Doctoral dissertation, Truman State University). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 35, 46.
- Hossler, D. R., & Gallagher, K.S. (1987). Studying student college choice. A three- phase model and the implications for policymakers. *College and University*, 62(3), 207-222.
- Howat, E. G. (1999). Factor influencing student-athletes choice of institution (Doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee States University, Johnson City, TN). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 60, 114.
- Hu, S., & Hossler, D. (2000). Willingness to pay and preference for private institutions. *Research in Higher Education*, 41, 685-701.
- Johnson, E. A. (1972). *Football players' selection of a university*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT.
- Johnson, H. D. (1994). College decision making is a counseling opportunity. *Journal of College Admission*, 144, 21-24.
- Kaufman, M. A., & Creamer, D. G. (1991). Influences of student goals on freshman-year quality of effort and growth. *Journal of College Student Development*, 32, 197-203.
- Kealy, M., & Rockel, M. L. (1987). Student perceptions of college quality: The influence of college recruitment policies. *Journal of Higher Education*, 58(6), 683-703.
- Koch, L. D. (1981). Factors influencing the selection of nontraditional student at the University of Maryland. (Doctoral dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 42, 143.
- Konnert, W., & Giese, R. (1987). College choice factors of male athletics at private NCAA Division III institutions. *College and University*, 63(1), 33-44.
- Kraft, R., & Dickerson, K. (1996). Influencing the football prospect's choice of college: Football-related factors outweigh academic and facility considerations. *Coach & Athletic Director*, 65(9), 72-74.
- Loudermilk, S. (1983). Factors influencing the college choice of athletes (Doctoral dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 44, 210.
- Loury, L. D., & Garman, G. (1995). College selectivity and earning. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 13(2), 289-308.

- Martin, N., & Dixon, P. (1991). Factors influencing students' college choice. *Journal of College Student Development, 32*, 253-257.
- Mathes, S., & Gurney, G. (1985). Factors in student-athletes' choice of colleges. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 26*(4), 327-333.
- Moffitt, J. I. (1982). *Male basketball player and coaches' perceptions of factors influencing players' choice of university*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of North Texas, Austin, TX.
- Monaghan, P. (1994). Matching athletes with colleges. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, A37-A38*.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2000). *NCES fast facts: Enrollment*. Retrieved from <http://www.nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=18>.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2000, January 1). *NCAA sports lists—The number of schools that sponsor NCAA sports*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/sponsorships/sponssummary.html>.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2003, March 4). *Composition of the NCAA*. Retrieved from http://www1.ncaa.org/membership_svcs/membership_breakdown.html.
- Nicodemus, K. A. (1990). Predicting the college choice of the female student-athlete: An application of the linear additive expectancy-value model (Fishbein Model) (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 51*, 144.
- Reynaud, C. (1998). Factors influencing prospective female volleyball student-athletes' selection of an NCAA Division I university: Towards a more informed recruitment process (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 59*(02), 445.
- Sanders, N. F. (1986). The college selection process: Research within the twelfth-grade marketplace. *The Journal of College Admissions, 111*, 24-27.
- Sevier, R. A. (1993). Recruiting African-American undergraduate: A national survey of the factors that institutional choice. *College and University, 68*(1), 48-52.
- Simmons, A. (1969). Students in recruiting and selection. *Journal of National Association of College Admissions Counselors, 14*(3-4), 25-27.
- Slabik, S. L. (1995). Influences on college student-athletes at National Collegiate Athletic Association Division III institutions (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 54*(04), 1265.
- Speer, G. B. (1992). Factors or criteria used by female basketball player selecting a college. (Doctoral dissertation, University of North Texas, Denton, TX). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 53*, 133.
- Stordahl, K. E. (1970). Student perceptions on influences on college choice. *The Journal of Educational Research, 63*(5), 209-212.
- Ulferts, L. (1992). Factors influencing recruitment of collegiate basketball players in institutions of higher education in the upper Midwest (Doctoral dissertation, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 54*(03), 770.

Walker, M. B. (2002). *Factors influencing the college choice of prospective student athletes*. Unpublished master's thesis, Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS.

Weiler, W. C. (1996). Factors influencing the matriculation choice of high ability students. *Economics of Education*, 15(1), 12-36.

Widdison, J. M. (1982). Factors influencing recruiting female intercollegiate volleyball players in their selection of a university. Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT.

Table 1
Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Percentage of Factor Choices Influencing the Decisions of NCAA Division I Softball Players to Attend a Selected College/University

Factor	M	SD	% rated extremely or very important
Availability of major or academic program	4.33	0.94	86.4
Head coach	4.28	0.89	85.8
Career opportunities after graduation	4.25	0.84	79.3
Social atmosphere of the team	4.04	1.00	76.8
Amount of financial aid offered	3.95	1.07	71.5
Academic program reputation	3.90	0.97	63.2
Campus	3.87	0.96	67.1
Meeting team members	3.82	1.16	71.0
Campus visit	3.82	1.02	71.4
Academic reputation of the university	3.78	1.07	60.0
Availability of resources (i.e., money, equipment, etc.)	3.76	0.92	63.7
Assistant coach(es)	3.75	1.13	63.2
Location of the university	3.75	0.96	65.8
Overall reputation of the university	3.74	0.90	60.7
Amount of athletics grant-in-aid offered	3.72	1.13	63.0
Amount of playing time	3.66	1.05	60.0
Support services offered to student-athletes (i.e., tutors, study tables, etc.)	3.63	1.13	61.1
Athletics facilities (specifically for softball)	3.57	0.97	53.6
Opportunity to win a conference or national championship	3.41	1.09	45.2
Conference affiliation of the softball team	3.31	0.96	43.5

Table 1 (cont.)
Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Percentage of Factor Choices Influencing the Decisions of NCAA Division I Softball Players to Attend a Selected College/University

Factor	M	SD	% rated extremely or very important
Housing	3.30	1.05	41.9
Softball team's schedule	3.25	1.10	40.6
Social life at the university	3.25	1.00	40.7
Cost of the university	3.23	1.20	45.4
Opportunity to play immediately	3.21	1.14	42.6
Size of the university	3.21	1.07	39.0
My parents	3.19	1.25	40.6
Softball team's tradition	3.12	1.00	33.5
Softball team's win/loss record	3.09	0.97	33.6
Fan support of the softball team	2.88	1.08	29.2
My friends	2.64	1.33	25.2
Affiliation of the university (religious, public, private)	2.60	1.14	20.8
Media coverage	2.36	0.98	10.3
Softball team Web site	2.31	1.20	18.1
Softball team sponsorships	2.25	1.30	16.8
My high school coach	2.16	1.33	19.4
Ethnic or gender ratio of the university	1.85	1.05	8.4

Note: n=155.

Table 2
Summary of Most Important College/University Choice Factors of NCAA Division I Softball Players Ranked by Percent

Factor	5	4	3	2	1
1. Availability of major or academic program	55.2	31.2	7.8	3.2	2.6
2. Head coach	48.4	37.4	9.7	2.6	1.9
3. Career opportunities after graduation	47.7	31.6	18.1	2.6	----
4. Social atmosphere of the team	38.1	38.7	14.8	5.8	2.6
5. Amount of financial aid offered	37.7	33.8	18.2	7.1	3.2
6. Campus visit	25.3	46.1	17.5	7.1	3.9
7. Meeting team members	32.9	38.1	16.1	5.8	7.1
8. Campus	29.0	38.1	25.8	5.2	1.9
9. Location of the university	21.3	44.5	24.5	7.1	2.6
10. Availability of resources (i.e., money, equipment, etc.)	22.1	41.6	27.3	8.4	0.6
11. Assistant coach(es)	29.0	34.2	26.5	3.2	7.1
12. Amount of athletics grant-in-aid offered	27.9	35.1	25.3	4.5	7.1
13. Support services offered to student-athletes (i.e., tutors, study tables, etc.)	24.7	36.4	20.1	14.9	3.9
14. Overall reputation of the university	21.3	39.4	31.6	7.1	0.6
15. Academic reputation of the university	32.3	27.7	27.7	10.3	1.9
15. Amount of playing time	22.6	37.4	27.1	9.0	3.9
17. Academic program reputation	34.2	29.0	29.7	6.5	0.6
18. Athletics facilities (specifically for softball)	18.1	35.5	34.8	9.0	2.6
19. Cost of the university	14.9	30.5	27.9	16.2	10.4
20. Opportunity to win a conference or national championship	18.1	27.1	38.7	9.7	6.5

Table 2 (cont.)
Summary of Most Important College/University Choice Factors of NCAA Division I Softball Players Ranked by Percent

21. Conference affiliation of the softball team	8.4	35.1	40.3	11.0	5.2
22. Opportunity to play immediately	14.2	28.4	28.4	22.6	6.5
23. Housing	13.5	28.4	38.1	14.8	5.2
24. Social life at the university	9.7	31.0	40.0	13.5	5.8
25. My parents	18.7	21.9	31.0	16.8	11.6
25. Softball team's schedule	13.5	27.1	36.8	15.5	7.1
27. Size of the university	11.7	27.3	38.3	15.6	7.1
28. Softball team's win/loss record	6.5	27.1	40.6	20.6	5.2
29. Softball team's tradition	7.7	25.8	44.5	14.8	7.1
30. Fan support of the softball team	5.2	24.0	37.7	20.1	13.0
31. My friends	12.9	12.3	26.5	22.6	25.8
32. Affiliation of the university (religious, public, private)	5.2	15.6	34.4	23.4	21.4
33. My high school coach	8.4	11.0	13.6	22.1	44.8
34. Softball team Web site	3.9	14.2	25.8	21.3	34.8
35. Softball team sponsorships	7.1	9.7	26.6	13.6	42.9
36. Media coverage	0.6	9.7	39.4	25.8	24.5
37. Ethic or gender ratio of the university	1.9	9.7	26.6	13.6	42.9

Note: $n=152$; 5=extremely important, 4=very important, 3=moderately important, 2=slightly important, 1=unimportant.