

## NCAA Graduate Student Research Grant Program Summaries of Findings

### 2019

- S. Graupensperger, [A Trending Norms Approach to Reduce Alcohol Use Intentions in Student-Athletes](#)  
A. Kuchar, [Bouncing Back from Failure: A Self-Compassion Intervention with NCAA Student-Athletes](#)  
K. Pericak, [The Thrill of Victory, The Agony of Injury: Social Support Among Injured Collegiate Athletes](#)  
M. Seward, [The Lived Experiences of Division I Black Women Student Athletes: A Narrative Inquiry](#)  
C. Vazquez, [Overcoming Socioeconomic Barriers to Being Recruited: Insights from Division I Recruiters](#)

### 2018

- A. Baeth, [Analyzing the Career Pathways and Profiles of Women Head Coaches](#)  
J. English, [I Am Not Your Student-Athlete](#)  
R. Hilliard, [Stigma, Attitudes, and Intentions to Seek Mental Health Service](#)  
L. Mordecai Tredinnick, [Student-Athletes as Active Bystanders](#)  
E. Wendling, [Career Identity Formation in the Transition to Life After College Sport](#)

### 2017

- B. Anderson, [I Didn't Learn that from the Playbook, Coach](#)  
T. Canada, [Tackling the Everyday: Race, Family, and Nation in Big-Time College Football](#)  
J. Doorley, [Understanding College Athlete Resilience](#)  
A. Russian, [From Courts to Careers: Former Women Student-Athlete Transitions from College to Adulthood](#)

### 2016

- C. Bowman, [Bystander behaviors related to potential sexual assault](#)  
S. Graupensperger, [Social identity and conforming to peer-influence in NCAA athletes](#)  
J. Jackson, [Race Related Stress Among Black Male Student-Athletes](#)  
A. Logan, [The One Dimensional Black College Football Player](#)  
B. Maher, [Psychosocial Effects of injury in relation to student-athlete academics](#)  
C. Williams, [Student-Athlete Pregnancy in Division I and Division II Athletics](#)

### 2015

- M. Bird, [Attitudes Toward Seeking Online and Face-to-Face Counseling](#)  
M. Byrd, [Impulsivity in Concussed Collegiate Athletes](#)  
L. Larsen, [Narrative Inquiry of Eight Black Female Assistant Coaches in NCAA Division I WBB](#)  
C. Schaeperkoetter, [Athletics department success for small colleges](#)  
L. van Raalte, [Student-Athletes' Stress Coping Experience](#)
-

## **2019**

- S. Graupensperger, [A Trending Norms Approach to Reduce Alcohol Use Intentions in Student-Athletes](#)
- A. Kuchar, [Bouncing Back from Failure: A Self-Compassion Intervention with NCAA Student-Athletes](#)
- K. Pericak, [The Thrill of Victory, The Agony of Injury: Social Support Among Injured Collegiate Athletes](#)
- M. Seward, [The Lived Experiences of Division I Black Women Student Athletes: A Narrative Inquiry](#)
- C. Vazquez, [Overcoming Socioeconomic Barriers to Being Recruited: Insights from Division I Recruiters](#)

# STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE: A TRENDING NORMS APPROACH TO REDUCE ALCOHOL USE INTENTIONS IN STUDENT-ATHLETES

**Principal Investigator:** Scott Graupensperger, PhD  
**Faculty Mentor:** M. Blair Evans, PhD  
**The Pennsylvania State University**

## Background

Alcohol misuse is a major public health concern on college campuses, and there is evidence that student-athletes may engage in greater alcohol misuse than their non sport-playing peers. Despite myriad benefits of collegiate sport, the NCAA Student-Athlete Substance Use Study estimated that 77% of student-athletes had consumed alcohol within the past year, with 42% reporting heavy episodic alcohol use (i.e., 5+ drinks for men, 4+ drinks for women). Thus, there is a critical need to provide NCAA stakeholders with strategies for reducing alcohol use among student-athletes.

One contributing factor to student-athlete alcohol use is that drinking is often seen as normative among athletes. Social norms—perceptions of others' attitudes and behaviors—are one of the most robust predictors of young adults' alcohol use and, as such, many harm reduction strategies seek to target the norms around drinking. Notably, young adults tend to overestimate how much their peers drink, so these norms-based strategies can correct normative misperceptions. However, effects of current norms-based interventions have plateaued so there is a need for further innovation.

Social psychology researchers have found emerging evidence that individuals align their behavior with the social norms that they anticipate being prevalent in the future, even more so than the current norms (pre-conformity). Contrary to **static norms** that reflect the current state of normative behavior, **trending norms** emphasize that a behavioral norm is *beginning* to shift. As such, trending norms may have great potential to be applied as an alcohol-reduction strategy by shifting perceived drinking norms among student-athletes. The premise of the proposed work is that, trending norms messages—highlighting the fact that more-and-more student-athletes are beginning to reduce their alcohol use—may be highly effective within harm-reduction strategies.

## Method

The current proof-of-concept study entailed an experimental design in which student-athletes were randomized into one of three conditions. The trending norms condition showed messages highlighting that more-and-more student-athletes (approximately 32%) have *started* to limit their alcohol use. Those in the static norm condition were shown very similar messages with the same numbers, but not told that this number has been increasing (i.e., approximately 32% of student-athletes limit their alcohol use). Participants in both groups were asked for open-ended feedback on these messages to ensure they had fully reflected on the information. Finally, a control condition was not shown any normative drinking estimates but were instead asked for feedback on stressful aspects of being a student-athlete.

A priori power analyses for a 3-group design indicated that 243 participants ( $n = 81$  per group) were needed to detect an estimated clinically significant effect size of  $d = 0.20$ . Participants were recruited via e-mail correspondence with Athletic Directors of NCAA DIII schools in the Mid-Atlantic region. The final sample comprised 265 student-athletes (60% women,  $M_{age} = 19.6$ ) who were randomized into the three conditions.

The two outcomes of interest were (a) intended total alcohol use in the next 30 days (frequency  $\times$  average number of drinks), and (b) intended heavy episodic drinking occasions in the next 30 days. Poisson count regression models estimated the efficacy of the trending norms condition relative to the

static norms and control conditions. Models statistically controlled for abstainer status and baseline level of the outcome variable prior to the experimental messaging to avoid confounding effects.

## **Results**

Preliminary checks of balance showed that participants in the trending-norms condition did not differ significantly from those in the static norms or control conditions on alcohol use indices prior to the experiment. Pertaining to the total intended drinks outcome, those in the trending norms condition intended to drink 17% less drinks than those in the static norms condition ( $p = .018$ ) and 35% less than those in the control condition ( $p < .001$ ). However, these results did not hold for intended heavy episodic drinking occasions, as the trending norms condition did not differ significantly from either the static norms or control conditions. It should be noted that intentions for heavy episodic drinking occasions were very low across all three groups, making it difficult to identify significant differences between the experimental conditions.

## **Conclusion**

Student-athletes who were shown trending norms messages – highlighting recent changes in student-athlete drinking norms – reported lower intentions for total alcohol use in the next month, relative to those who were shown similar static norms messages. This finding provides initial proof-of-concept for the utility of trending norms messaging and is encouraging as we seek to identify effective intervention and prevention strategies that will reduce alcohol-related harm among student-athletes.

# **Bouncing Back from Failure:**

## **A Self-Compassion Intervention with NCAA Student-Athletes**

Ashley Kuchar, The University of Texas at Austin

[ashley.kuchar@utexas.edu](mailto:ashley.kuchar@utexas.edu)

### **Background**

Setbacks are a normal part of the student-athlete experience; however, athletes' responses to mistakes, pressures, and other adversities have a significant impact on their well-being and performance. Many athletes believe that self-criticism is necessary to improve performance, but this response can lead to heightened anxiety and stress. Research suggests that self-compassion is a healthier way to respond to mistakes. Self-compassion involves providing yourself the same encouragement that you would give to a good friend when they are struggling. Currently, Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) is the most established program for teaching self-compassion; however, the substantial time commitment may discourage student-athletes from participating. Another barrier for student-athletes is the worry that self-compassion leads to complacency and poorer performance. These concerns indicate the need for a self-compassion intervention that is targeted toward athletes and considers their unique schedules, demands, and sport culture.

### **Purpose & Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to develop and test an online self-compassion intervention designed specifically for NCAA student-athletes. To test the effectiveness of the intervention, I investigated the impact on athletes' coping abilities (i.e., self-compassion, fear of self-compassion, state self-criticism, emotional suppression, overall resilience), well-being (i.e., flourishing, depression, anxiety, stress), and perceived performance (i.e., coach-rated performance, athlete-rated performance) in comparison to a waitlist control where teams only received the intervention after completing all survey measures. Treatment feasibility (i.e., participant engagement, amount of practice, ease of integration, intervention satisfaction, session attendance) was also assessed.

### **Methods**

#### **Phase 1: Intervention Development**

##### **(RESET)**

Adapted from MSC, I created and delivered a 6-session online self-compassion intervention for athletes called RESET (Resilience and Enhancement in Sport, Exercise, & Training). The goal of RESET was to help athletes learn how to productively *respond* to adversity, rather than merely *react* to it. I hosted one-hour sessions, in an online synchronous format, over the course of a month with each NCAA team. A workbook was also provided to use throughout the course.

#### **Phase 2: Quasi-Experiment**

Fourteen NCAA teams ( $N = 250$  student-athletes) participated in this study. Based on when teams were available, they were placed into the treatment group ( $n = 8$  teams; 148 student-athletes) or the

waitlist control ( $n = 6$  teams; 102 student-athletes). Participants were from both team and individual sports. The majority of the athletes were women (82%), White (63%), and on scholarship (76%).

Paired  $t$ -tests were conducted to analyze within-group changes from pretest to posttest on each outcome. Multilevel models were performed to analyze between-group changes (i.e., treatment vs control). One-sample  $t$ -tests and testimonials were used to analyze treatment feasibility.

## Results

After participating in RESET, athletes experienced several positive changes compared to those in the waitlist control. In general, the intervention was more effective for those who had the most room for growth – a common finding in intervention studies that do not recruit based on particular inclusion criteria such as high self-criticism.

Regarding coping, RESET increased self-compassion (significantly), decreased fear of self-compassion (marginally), and decreased state self-criticism (significantly). No statistically significant changes were found for emotional suppression or overall resilience. Notably, only the scales for self-compassion and state self-criticism were specific to a sports context.

Regarding well-being, no significant changes were found in the between-group analyses. However, the within-group analyses demonstrated that athletes within the treatment group experienced decreases in depression, anxiety, and stress from pretest to posttest while those in the waitlist control did not. This discrepancy is likely due to inadequate statistical power to detect these effects. Moreover, given the context of the coronavirus pandemic when teams participated, it is possible that it may take more time, or a more targeted intervention, to see improvements on global dimensions of well-being.

Regarding perceived performance, RESET led to significant improvements in athletes' self-rated performance. Additionally, the intervention improved coach-rated performance by 9%, regardless of where the athletes started at baseline.

Finally, treatment feasibility (i.e., participant engagement, amount of practice, ease of integration, intervention satisfaction, session attendance) was high and approximately 60% of participants provided testimonials.

## Conclusions

RESET is an accessible and effective self-compassion intervention for collegiate student-athletes. RESET supports adaptive coping, well-being, and sport performance. The implications of this study are potentially far-reaching and may help transform the experiences of student-athletes so they can better manage stressful situations in athletics, academics, and other life domains.

For more information about the RESET program (formerly called “Fail Better”), please visit our [website](#) or follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), or [Twitter](#).

The Thrill of Victory, The Agony of Injury: Social Support Among Injured Collegiate Athletes  
Kaitlin Pericak, Ph.D.  
North Carolina Wesleyan College

*Introduction to the Problem*

Athlete injury has been of concern to the NCAA since 1910 and remains a critical concern today. This is in part due to the “dark side” of sport that arises when an athlete experiences an injury. While athletes already feel pressure to maintain a high level of athletic performance, at times they must respond to injury. The desire to be successful is then threatened when an athlete sustains an injury and is unable to participate in their respective sport. When an athlete is injured, the typical emotional response includes processing the medical information that is provided by the medical team and coping emotionally with the injury (Putukian 2016). Based on this problem, my research questions are “What is the socio-emotional response to injury among collegiate athletes?” And “Which social support services mediate this relationship?”

To answer these questions, I utilized quantitative methods (i.e., survey) to examine the socio-emotional responses to injury. The survey created was administered to all collegiate athletes at the institution studied, with a total of 196 participants. For the survey, athletes were asked to answer a series of questions about demographics, identity, injury, and a variety of socio-emotional scales. Questions for this survey were created based on the observations and interviews conducted during a prior qualitative study. I engaged in quality control by doing an outliers check, seeing how long it took respondents to take the survey, and doing an internal consistency check (i.e., checking every case to see if answers made sense).

The university studied was a NCAA Division I Medium-sized Private University (MPU) with roughly 11,000 undergraduate students and 5,000 graduate students. There were 17 athletic teams which include baseball, women’s and men’s basketball, women’s and men’s cross country, women’s swimming and diving, men’s diving, men’s football, women’s and men’s tennis, women’s and men’s track and field, women’s golf, women’s rowing, women’s soccer, and women’s volleyball. There were roughly 490 NCAA athletes.

*Significant Findings*

**Table 1: Summary Statistics**

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<b>AIMS Scale</b>	59	3.46	2.82	0	12
<b>CESDR Scale</b>	196	5.76	7.13	0	26
<b>PSI Scale</b>	95	28.96	5.34	14	35
<b>NCAA Athlete</b>	196	0.46	0.50	0	1
<b>Race</b>					
<i>White, Non-Hispanic</i>	196	0.39	0.49	0	1
<i>White, Hispanic</i>	196	0.09	0.29	0	1
<i>Black, Non-Hispanic</i>	196	0.18	0.38	0	1
<i>Black, Hispanic</i>	196	0.34	0.47	0	1
<b>Gender</b>	136	0.79	0.44	0	2
<b>Currently Injured</b>	115	0.18	0.39	0	1
<b>Misdiagnosed Injury</b>	115	0.13	0.34	0	1
<b>Injury Unavoidable</b>	114	2.17	0.71	0	3
<b>Transfer Athlete</b>	98	0.07	0.26	0	1
<b>Some Form of Support</b>	196	0.87	0.33	0	1

While 196 participants total were surveyed, the following table will be interpreted based on 77 participants that answered questions related to depression.

**Table 2: Ordinary Least Squares Regression analyses for depression, with robust standard errors (N=77)**

	Beta Coefficient	Std. Deviation
Previous Injury	1.57	1.57
Currently Injured	3.44	1.62**
Misdiagnosed Injury	0.97	2.57
PSI Scale	0.41	0.10***
NCAA Athlete (0=No)	3.03	3.42
Gender (0=Male)	3.66	1.64*
Race (0=White, Non-Hispanic)	-0.79	0.67
Plan After Graduation	0.84	0.43*
Support Available	-3.01	1.65*
Cons	-7.65	5.32
R-squared	= 0.2767	

\*p<0.10 \*\*p<0.05 \*\*\*p<0.01

Variance Inflation Factor Score: 1.06

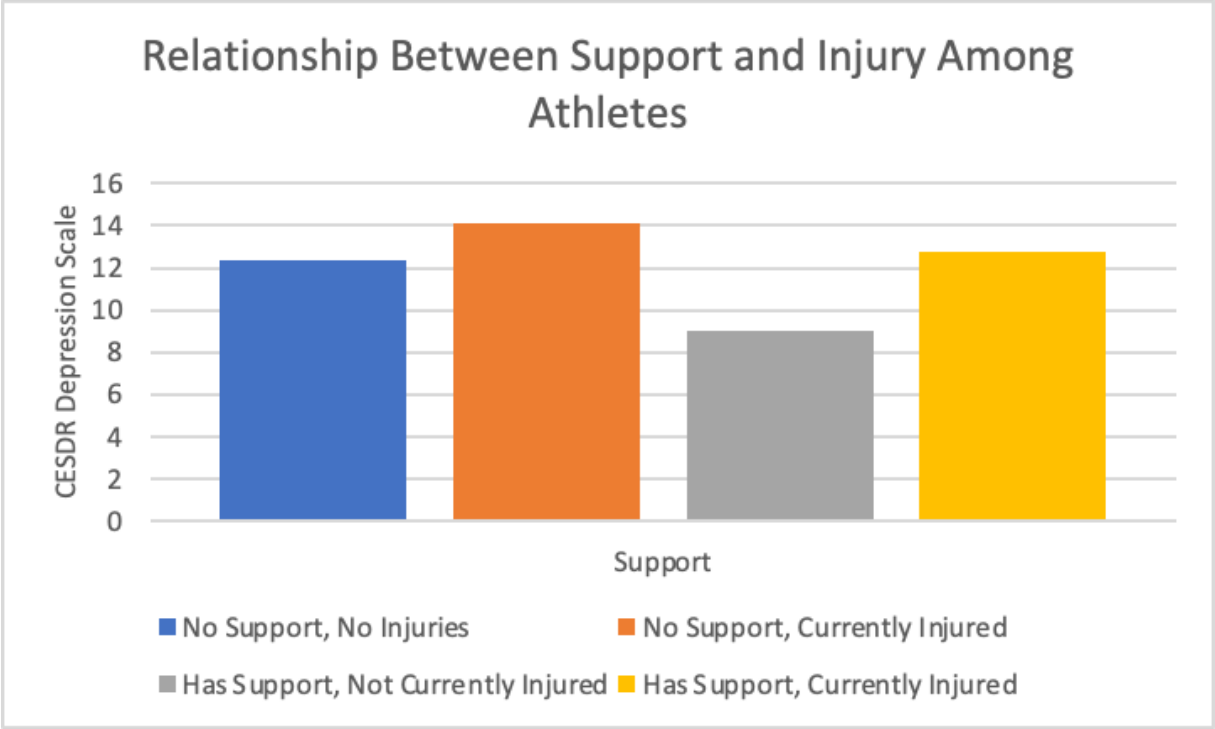
To assess one's depression and how these may be determined by factors such as past and current injuries, while also accounting for various control variables such as the COVID-19 pandemic, NCAA status, whether the athlete had some form of support as well as other factors such as gender and race, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses were conducted. Due to small sample sizes, the OLS regressions were computed using robust standard errors. To assess whether the models had high collinearity, variance inflation factors were calculated after running the regression model. The variance inflation factor score was 1.14, which is below the 10-cutoff point, meaning that the model does not suffer from serious collinearity.

Based on the results provided in Table 2, it is evident that depression is impacted by several factors including being currently injured and was also impacted by whether an athlete had some form of support ( $b=-3.01$ ,  $p<0.10$ ). Being injured currently was associated with a significant increase in depression, with an injury being associated with a 3.44 increase in the depression scale. However, having some form of support was associated with a decrease in depression by 3.01 points. Other factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic ( $b=0.41$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), gender ( $b=3.66$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), as well as one's plans after graduation ( $b=0.84$ ,  $p<0.10$ ).

To better analyze the connections between depression for those who are currently injured, several predictive margins estimates were conducted. This will allow better comparisons for depression among those who were currently injured and had no support system, compared to those who were injured yet did have a support system. These margins commands were calculated while also holding the other control variables at their means.



Figure 1



The predictive margins are provided in a visual representation in Figure 1. Based on these results, while injury is associated with an increase in depression, having some form of support system at least mitigated some of the impacts of depression. The results of these predictive margins are available in Table 3.

Table 3: Predictive Margins for Depression Based on Support Available (N=77)

	Beta Coefficient	Standard Error
No Support, Not Currently Injured	12.33	1.73***
Has Support, Not currently Injured	9.01	0.85***
No Support, Currently Injured	14.08	1.34***
Has Support, Currently Injured	12.75	1.72***

\*p<0.10 \*\*p<0.05 \*\*\*p<0.01

Practical Implications

These findings from this study have implications on how to support injured athletes. Since depression was impacted by being currently injured and having some form of support mitigated the impacts of depression, social support for athletes’ who are injured is crucial. The findings show that sports medicine staff, specifically athletic trainers, play a major role in providing social support to injured collegiate athletes. However, athletic trainers are already overworked with working 6-7 days a week for over 12 hours a day in season. This may mean that more forms of social support need to be provided in the athletic training room so that some of this work can be taken off athletic trainers. Future research should examine the socio-emotional effects, and burn out levels, of athletic trainers.

Finally, there were a handful athletes who took the survey that are not NCAA athletes. This is known, in part, because they did not fill out the type of sport question and because one respondent wrote, “Dance and cheer are excluded from the list of sports. We put a lot of time and effort into our sport and positively representing the school!” Therefore, future research needs to look at dancers and cheerleaders and their experiences, including their injury experience, in college sport.

# **The Lived Experiences of Division I Black Women Student Athletes: A Narrative Inquiry**

Miray Seward, University of Virginia  
[mriayseward@virginia.edu](mailto:mriayseward@virginia.edu)

## **Background**

When traditional aged students are entering college they are typically going through a period of development where identity exploration and commitment are taking place (Arnett, 2015). During this period, they may be grappling with questions such as: Who am I? What are my values and goals? And, what does it mean to be a Black woman student-athlete? To better understand the emergent identities of Black women student athletes, the current study utilizes Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST; Spencer et al., 1997) to understand the influence of supports and challenges on development.

## **Research Questions**

In an effort to better understand how socialization practices and environmental factors shaped Division I Black women student athletes' identities, the current study took a holistic content analysis approach to understand the pre-college and college experiences of Black women student athletes. The current study was guided by two main research questions:

- RQ1) How do social contexts (e.g., classrooms), and influential others (e.g., coaches, teachers) impact Black women student athletes' identity development?, and
- RQ2) What are the most central and salient aspects of Black women student athletes' identities?

## **Methods**

Current participants include 11 Division I Black women student athletes who completed a single 60-to-75-minute semi-structured interview as well as a demographic survey. Participants represented a variety of sports, majors, and years in school. Each semi-structured interview covered a variety of topics that elicited a description of people, and places where meaningful events occurred. The first eight interviews took place in-person prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the final three interviews took place virtually via zoom in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. All interviews were audio recorded and professionally transcribed.

## **Plan of Analysis**

Each of the 11 interviews will be analyzed using an holistic content approach (Lieblich et al., 1998). In using this approach, each individual's story will be analyzed in its complete entirety, rather than analyzing selected excerpts of each individual participants stories. In addition, analysis will focus on the content that makes up the stories shared by Black women student athletes, rather than the structure or form of the stories that Black women share. A holistic content approach was selected for analysis as it is well-equipped for understanding making meaning of an individual's identity.

## **Implications**

Overall, this study seeks to better understand the lived experiences of Black women student athletes. In using a narrative approach, the research will provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and people who are important for Black women student athletes as they make meaning of their experiences. Through understanding how challenges and supports in Black women social contents impacted their developmental, researchers, practitioners, administrator, parents, teachers, and more will be better equipped to not only better support current collegiate athletes, but also younger Black girls who are just starting their athletics journeys.

# **Overcoming Socioeconomic Barriers to Being Recruited: Insights from Division I Recruiters**

Christian Vazquez, MSW, Doctoral Candidate  
Steve Hicks School of Social Work, The University of Texas at Austin

## **Background**

The research on diversity in college athletics mostly focuses on racial/ethnic diversity and almost no research exists on socioeconomic diversity. Though socioeconomic diversity and racial/ethnic diversity often go hand-in-hand, they are not one in the same. A search for evidence of the socioeconomic diversity of the over 460,000 student-athletes playing across twenty-four sports yields no findings from robust nationally representative data. With no definitive evidence about the socioeconomic diversity in college sports, there is only anecdotal evidence to suggest that some sports appear to be better positioned to recruit student-athletes from low-socioeconomic backgrounds compared to those with higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Discovering ways to increase the recruitment of student-athletes with low-socioeconomic status (SES) across all college sports is important as it offers another avenue for attending and paying for higher education for students who would not attend or be able to afford college otherwise.

## **Research Questions**

This is an innovative study in this area because it compiles qualitative information from a diverse sample of coaches across the United States. In order to obtain key insights from Division I recruiters about how student-athletes with low-SES can better position themselves to be recruited, three research questions were developed:

- 1) What are your current practices for recruiting?
- 2) What are the barriers to recruiting student-athletes from low-socioeconomic backgrounds?
- 3) What could be done to improve the recruitment of student-athletes from low-socioeconomic backgrounds?

## **Methods**

For this study, twenty Division I college coaches from public and private institutions across all NCAA sports were recruited to participate in 45- to 90-minute semi-structured interviews. Both head and assistant coaches were eligible. Efforts were made to recruit a diverse sample in regards to coaching title, years of experience, gender, age, sport, race/ethnicity, geographic region, public/private status, and gender of sport (see Table 1). Participants were recruited through social networks and past relationships. Some interviews took place in-person and some were conducted over the phone, due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. Participants were given a \$20 electronic gift card to Starbucks upon completion of the interview. Participants consented to have the interviews audio-recorded, which were later transcribed for analysis. Thematic cluster analysis was conducted using NVivo software. This process involved finding themes in each individual interview then across all of the interviews to settle on themes that reached saturation in the data. Pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality of participants and their respective academic institutions. This study was approved by The University of Texas at Austin's Institutional Review Board.

## **Preliminary Findings**

Four main themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme included insights from coaches into how student-athletes with low-SES can make themselves more visible physically

(e.g., at camps) and digitally (e.g., email, video). For example, coaches suggested that students who don't play on 'high-profile' teams can begin to make themselves known through targeted and appropriate emailing and phone calls. The second theme included practical ways for student-athletes to educate themselves to better position themselves in the recruiting process, both athletically and academically. For example, coaches stated it is important for the prospective student-athlete to have a relationship with the high school counselor who can provide helpful information and can be key in the recruiting process. Third, coaches provided information about organizations that student-athletes with low-SES could engage with to help overcome financial barriers of the various components of the recruiting process. For example, Urban Youth Academy is an organization that provides inner-city youth with the opportunity to learn and play baseball and potentially be seen by recruiters. Fourth, suggestions were made for rules that allow coaches to combine federal and state monies (i.e., FAFSA) with athletic monies to provide families with low-SES to maximize their scholarship monies.

### Conclusions

The findings from this study suggest that the barriers related to recruitment of student-athletes from low-SES backgrounds are twofold. First, there is a lack of information about how to make themselves visible to recruiters. Second, there are financial disadvantages, both during recruitment and scholarship offering, which vary by different levels of low-SES.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Division I Coaches in Sample (N=20)

Variable	N / Range (Average)
Gender	
Male	15
Female	5
Race/Ethnicity	
White	15
Non-White	5
Hispanic	1
African-American/Black	3
East Indian	1
Coaching Title	
Head Coach	5
Associate Head Coach	2
Assistant Coach	13
Years as Division I Coach (head or assistant)	1-43 (12.55)
Age	25-67 (40.25)
Geographic Region	
West	8
Midwest	5
South	4
East	3
Institution Type	
Public	17
Private	3
Gender of Sport	
Male	12
Female	8
Sports: Soccer • Golf • Swim & Dive • Volleyball • Tennis • Basketball • Track & Field • Softball • Field Hockey • Track & Field • Baseball • Rowing	

## **2018**

- A. Baeth, [Analyzing the Career Pathways and Profiles of Women Head Coaches](#)
- J. English, [I Am Not Your Student-Athlete](#)
- R. Hilliard, [Stigma, Attitudes, and Intentions to Seek Mental Health Service](#)
- L. Mordecai Tredinnick, [Student-Athletes as Active Bystanders](#)
- E. Wendling, [Career Identity Formation in the Transition to Life After College Sport](#)



# Analyzing the Career Pathways and Profiles of Women Head Coaches with Career Longevity in NCAA D-I Sport

Anna Baeth

University of Minnesota

baeth003@umn.edu

## Rationale

Scholars have documented a drastic decline and continued stagnation in the percentage of women in collegiate coaching since 1972. While many researchers have examined why women *leave* coaching, limited attention has been given to the reasons women *stay* in coaching. This study examined NCAA D-I women head coaches with a career longevity of 20 or more years. Using quantitative profiling and qualitative interviewing to investigate the factors that have allowed them to stay, findings from this study offer strategies for coaches and administrators to better retain women in coaching.

## Research Questions

- Who are the women who have stayed in coaching?
- What factors have allowed them to do so?

## Methods

This study utilized a three-phase, mixed-method design of quantitative and qualitative methods.

- Phase I: development of a dataset of the career paths of every D-I coach with career longevity
- Phase II: survey of coaches with career longevity about supports and barriers in their careers
- Phase III: interviews to identify supports which have allowed certain women to thrive in coaching

## Findings

1. 202 women with career longevity were identified – over 93% were white, nearly 80% had attended an NCAA D-I institution, 47.4% coached softball, soccer, volleyball, or basketball, 10% work in the Ivy League, and on average, coaches had a .64 win percentage
2. The most commonly identified supports by these women were feelings of connection to their athletes, feelings that coaching matched their personal values, and only later in their careers (after year 6), finding success and having high level job performance
3. Coaches with career longevity regularly discussed feeling supported by their athletes, administrators, peers at their University or college, and coaching peers in their sport

# **I Am Not Your Student-Athlete: An Investigation of Social Identity Complexity as a Stereotype Threat Mitigation Strategy and Individual Differences That May Moderate the Effect**

**Jacob Alan English, Ph.D. *Georgia State University***

[jacobenglish@gsu.edu](mailto:jacobenglish@gsu.edu)

## **Background**

Collegiate athletes must contend with negative stereotypes about their academic ability, which label them as ‘dumb jocks’ (e.g., unintelligent, lazy, incompetent). Unfortunately, these stereotypes reject the nuances and positive benefits of the collegiate athletic experience. These stereotypes can lead to damaging effects on the academic success of collegiate athletes. Division I (DI) student-athletes, and separately, DI student-athletes of color may experience more extreme consequences as a result of stereotyping due to compounded stereotypes that are contingent on their social statuses as DI student-athletes and non-white DI student-athletes. In academic spaces, unfounded categorizations of an entire group of people can prevent access to opportunities. More harmful, these categorizations can lead to underperformance in the classroom due to anxiety and increased cognitive load in the form of stereotype threat. Research has identified stereotype threat (ST) as a contributor to the academic underperformance of collegiate athletes.

## **Purpose and Research Questions**

Currently, there is no published evidence-based strategy to reduce the effects of stereotype threat among collegiate athletes. The goal of the study was two-fold: 1) explore the impact of an ST mitigation strategy among DI student-athletes on an evaluative academic task, and 2) do so using a strength-based approach to discuss the academic performance of collegiate athletes. The strategy consisted of collegiate athletes’ engagement in a self-concept map activity that allowed them to explore their multiple social identities. This quantitative study was grounded in the theories of stereotype threat and social identity complexity. Social identity complexity theory refers to a person’s perception of the interrelationship between their multiple social identities and suggests that a more inclusive identity structure leads to more resilient identity structure. The study answered the following questions:

- Does an overt stereotype threat affect the performance of student-athletes on an academic task?
- Does the identification of multiple social identities alleviate the effects of stereotype threat on student-athletes’ academic performance?
- Does gender identity, degree of academic self-concept, or race/ethnicity affect academic performance among student-athletes?
- Does gender identity, degree of academic self-concept, or race/ethnicity moderate the relationship between the experimental conditions and academic performance among student-athletes?

## Methods

An a priori analysis suggested that a sample size of 61 was required with an alpha set at .05 and an effect size at .60 to achieve statistical power at .90. Seventy DI student-athletes, representing 15 sports, from a large research university, were randomly assigned to three different experimental groups during spring 2019 (see Table 1). The average grade point average range was 3.40 – 3.79. The three experimental conditions were: 1) mitigation: an explicit stereotype threat condition with a self-concept map activity, 2) threat: an explicit stereotype threat condition without a self-concept map activity, and 3) control: a condition without explicit stereotype threat or a self-concept map activity. Study participants completed the Academic Self-Concept Scale Short Form approximately five weeks before the experiment. Depending on the experimental condition, the students received either an ST prime or no ST prime, completed a self-concept map or a food map, completed an SAT-style academic exam, and then completed a demographic survey. A three-group factorial experimental design was used to explore the impact of the self-concept map activity on the academic performance of student-athletes when threatened with a negative stereotype. Data were analyzed using SPSS, and a series of ANOVAs were conducted.

**Findings and Implications**

- The explicit threat did not activate stereotype threat, and the mitigation strategy did not impact academic performance for all student-athletes on each academic performance measure.
- Gender identity among student-athletes did not impact academic performance or serve as a moderator.
- Academic self-concept did not moderate performance, but student-athletes with high academic self-concept performed better than student-athletes with low academic self-concept on some academic performance measures.
- A marginally significant interaction effect between race/ethnicity and academic performance showed that African American student-athletes benefitted from the mitigation strategy on difficult math items. These results should be interpreted cautiously due to the small sample size.

The study introduced 1) a potential ST mitigation strategy for student-athletes and research framework to build upon and 2) a possible identity development exercise (self-concept mapping) to address student-athlete identity conflict. Additionally, findings extended understanding of the influence of gender identity, academic self-concept and race/ethnicity on the academic performance of collegiate athletes, and data could lead to athletic programs' focus on culturally-specific and task-specific strategies to promote academic success among student-athletes.



Table 1

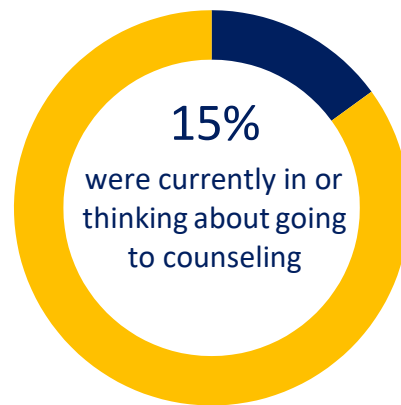
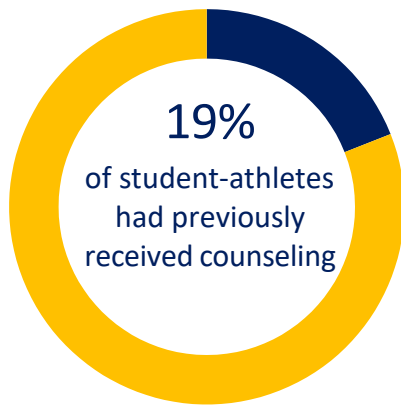
*Frequencies of Grouping Variables (Gender Identity, Academic Self-Concept, and Race/Ethnicity) by Condition*

<b>Grouping Variables by Condition</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Control</b>		
<b>Gender Identity</b>		
<i>Female</i>	5	31.3%
<i>Male</i>	11	68.8%
<b>Academic Self-Concept</b>		
<i>HighASC</i>	8	50.0%
<i>LowASC</i>	8	50.0%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
<i>African American</i>	4	25.0%
<i>Caucasian</i>	11	68.8%
<i>Hispanic</i>	1	6.3%
<b>Threat</b>		
<b>Gender Identity</b>		
<i>Female</i>	10	52.6%
<i>Male</i>	9	47.4%
<b>Academic Self-Concept</b>		
<i>HighASC</i>	8	42.1%
<i>LowASC</i>	11	57.9 %
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
<i>African American</i>	4	21.1%
<i>Caucasian</i>	11	57.9%
<i>Hispanic</i>	4	21.1%
<b>Mitigation</b>		
<b>Gender Identity</b>		
<i>Female</i>	28	80.0 %
<i>Male</i>	7	20.0 %
<b>Academic Self-Concept</b>		
<i>HighASC</i>	20	57.1%
<i>LowASC</i>	15	42.9%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
<i>African American</i>	8	22.9%
<i>Caucasian</i>	22	63.9 %
<i>Hispanic</i>	5	14.3%

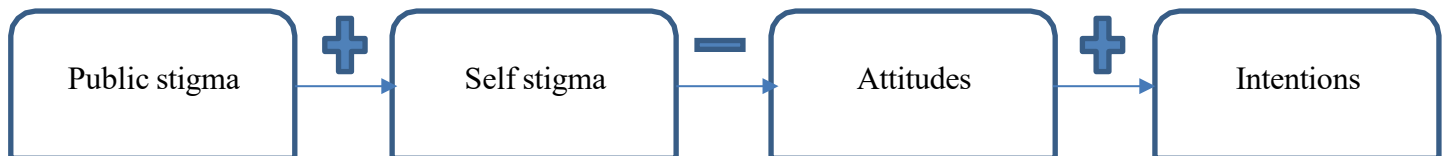
## Stigma, attitudes, and intentions to seek mental health services in college student-athletes

Robert C. Hilliard Ph.D., M.A. (rhilliard@su.edu)

DII and III athletes are not exempt from experiencing mental health concerns, but are neglected in the literature. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine DII/III student-athletes' perspectives on seeking mental health treatment. In this NCAA-funded study, 325 athletes (224 male, 101 female) from three Division II (n=81) and III (n=245) universities completed survey packets on stigma, attitudes, intentions to seek mental health services, and help-seeking topics.



- **Higher** levels of public stigma were related to **higher** levels of self-stigma
- **Higher** levels of self-stigma were related to **less positive** attitudes toward seeking counseling
- **More positive** attitudes were related to **greater** intentions to seek counseling



Finally, the student-athletes responded to various issues that people might bring to counseling. Their responses were ranked according to their willingness to seek help for each of those issues. The top five highest and lowest ranked issues are below (scored on a 1-4 scale).

### Rated most willing

- ✓ Drug problems (2.65)
- ✓ Depression (2.59)
- ✓ Excessive alcohol use (2.46)
- ✓ Anxiety (2.40)
- ✓ Stress (2.28)

### Rated least willing

- × Concerns about sexuality (1.58)
- × Difficulty with friends (1.69)
- × Body image concerns (1.71)
- × Loneliness (1.91)
- × Self-understanding (1.92)

### IMPLICATIONS

- Normalize conversations around mental health at the university to reduce stigma
- Provide education on the purpose and utility of counseling; bring counselors in to speak
- Explore strategies to improve attitudes toward seeking mental health treatment

# **Student-Athletes as Active Bystanders: Assessing Gender Role Conflict and Intentions to Access Sexual Assault Resources**

Lorin Mordecai Tredinnick

## **Problem Statement**

Bystanders play a crucial role in intervening in risky situations and supporting survivors after sexual assault occurs by accessing necessary resources. Nevertheless, the ability to intervene is contingent upon one's confidence or responsibility as well as the campus climate. Given that student-athletes spend more time together and have stronger relationships with their teammates than non-athletes, it is possible that survivors of sexual assault are more likely to disclose to one of their teammates. Student-athletes may also disproportionately witness sexual assault committed by their peers. However, student-athlete's intentions to access resources as an active bystander after an alleged assault occurs is unknown.

Gender role conflict (GRC) is a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others, including greater acceptance of sexual assault. Evidence suggests that student-athletes may experience GRC at higher rates than non-athletes as a result of the hypermasculine sports culture and immense pressures to perform both on and off the court. With a heightened sense of masculinity and invincibility, male and female student-athletes may be more reluctant to come forward about known sexual victimizations for fear of weakness or disloyalty.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to describe the extent of GRC among student-athletes and examine whether GRC may inhibit accessing sexual assault resources as an active bystander in the context of micro and macro forces. This study seeks to: 1) determine whether male and female student-athletes experience GRC; 2) assess how GRC (success, power, and competition; restrictive emotionality; restrictive affectionate behavior; and conflicts between work and leisure-family relations) and the campus climate (perceptions of organizational response to cases of sexual assault; knowledge of available services) may be associated with intentions to access sexual assault resources; and 3) explore gender differences between male and female student-athletes as it relates to accessing sexual assault resources.

## **Methods**

This study utilized a non-probability cross-sectional survey design to distribute a self-administered questionnaire through an anonymous online survey powered by Qualtrics. With data collection still ongoing, the current sample included 144 males and 162 females for a total of 306 participants. Independent-samples t-tests were used to determine GRC scores for male and female student-athletes. A series of multiple linear regressions were performed in SPSS to examine the association between GRC, perceptions of organizational response to cases of sexual assault, and knowledge of available services with intentions to access sexual assault resources as an active bystander while controlling for race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, type of sport, and division level. The moderating effect of gender on the outcome variable was also assessed.

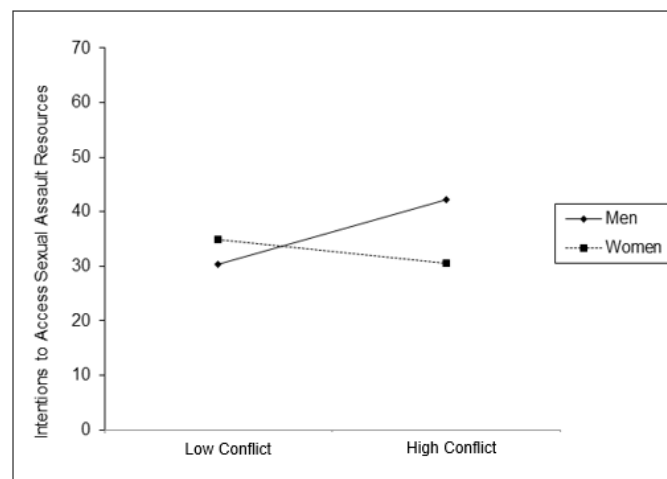
### Preliminary Results

1. While both male and female student-athletes demonstrated high GRC scores overall, males experienced greater GRC than females. Males may be more susceptible to adapting to the masculine norms of the sports culture than females.
2. When assessing GRC subscales, higher scores on the conflicts between work and leisure-family relations subscale indicated greater intentions to access sexual assault resources as an active bystander, which suggests that student-athletes may be proactive toward intervening in campus sexual assault despite potential risks, like GRC.
3. Of those with high scores for conflicts between work and leisure-family relations subscale, however, females had lower intentions to access sexual assault resources than males (See Figure 1). There may be greater pressure for female student-athletes to succeed within the masculine sports culture, which further prevents them from intervening as an active bystander.
4. In terms of analyzing GRC and the campus climate as a whole, Hispanic student-athletes had lower intentions to access sexual assault resources than Non-Hispanics. This is consistent with much of the literature, as students of color face more barriers to reporting sexual assault than White students.

### Implications

Findings from this study expand upon 30 years of research on GRC and highlight student-athletes as a vulnerable population. As a result of high GRC scores, particularly for males, mental health professionals and athletic staff should consider educating student-athletes on healthy gender identity and healthy relationships in order to promote their safety and well-being. Moreover, this study informs prevention and intervention services, as it pinpoints obstacles that prevent student-athletes from taking action as active bystanders. Building a more supportive environment that encourages help-seeking, especially for female and Hispanic student-athletes, is essential for creating a more robust organizational culture. Therefore, this research provides useful insight that could contribute to NCAA best practices for addressing sexual assault and fostering a safe environment for all student-athletes.

Figure 1. Conflicts between Work and Leisure-Family Relations on Intentions to Access Sexual Assault Resources



# CAREER IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE TRANSITION TO LIFE AFTER COLLEGE SPORT: AN ASSESSMENT OF CAREER IDENTITY STATUS AND PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONING

Principal Investigator: Elodie Wendling, Ph.D. (ewendling@ufl.edu)

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Michael Sagas  
University of Florida

*Forming a sense of self is a lifelong developmental process that evolves when individuals fall into a period of disequilibrium caused by life events and transitions that make their former identity commitments no longer fit their sense of self. Upon the end of the athletic career, elite athletes must go through processes of self-redefinition, and their career identity configuration will have to be reshaped. However, athletes' identity shift into a career upon leaving college sport can be challenging due to limited identity development beyond sport throughout their childhood, adolescence and college life as well as due to the necessity to replace a salient athletic identity that has been part of who they are for the majority of their life. Their limited exploration of viable career options prior to retiring from sport and their insufficient knowledge of who they are outside of sport can make them feel confused and directionless as they embark on a search for a new identity in life after sport.*

## Purpose

In addition to this challenging transition to a life after sport, former college athletes must also navigate the transition into adulthood. The developmental and psychosocial challenges that come with forming a career identity upon leaving college sport warrant the investigation of theoretical underpinnings around identity development, using James Marcia's identity status paradigm and extended models. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess the career identity status of a group of former NCAA college athletes and investigate how their assigned status influenced their psychosocial and career functioning post-college sport life.

## Methods

A cross-sectional survey design was used. The sample consisted of 507 former NCAA student-athletes who are enrolled on the NCAA Alumni Research Panel and are between 21 and 36 years old. Of the participants, 62% were females and 38% were males, and 84% were Whites. Fifty-three percent of the participants exhausted their athletic eligibility after 2011. The composition by NCAA division was 53.2% in Division I schools, 11.3% Division II, and 35.6% Division III. The questionnaire was comprised of the CIDI, and functioning measures such as satisfaction with life and career, overall and career self-esteem, flourishing, and core self-evaluation. CIDI includes 56 items from which seven career identity exploration and commitment dimensions (Table 1) are measured.

Table 1. Definitions of CIDI dimensions

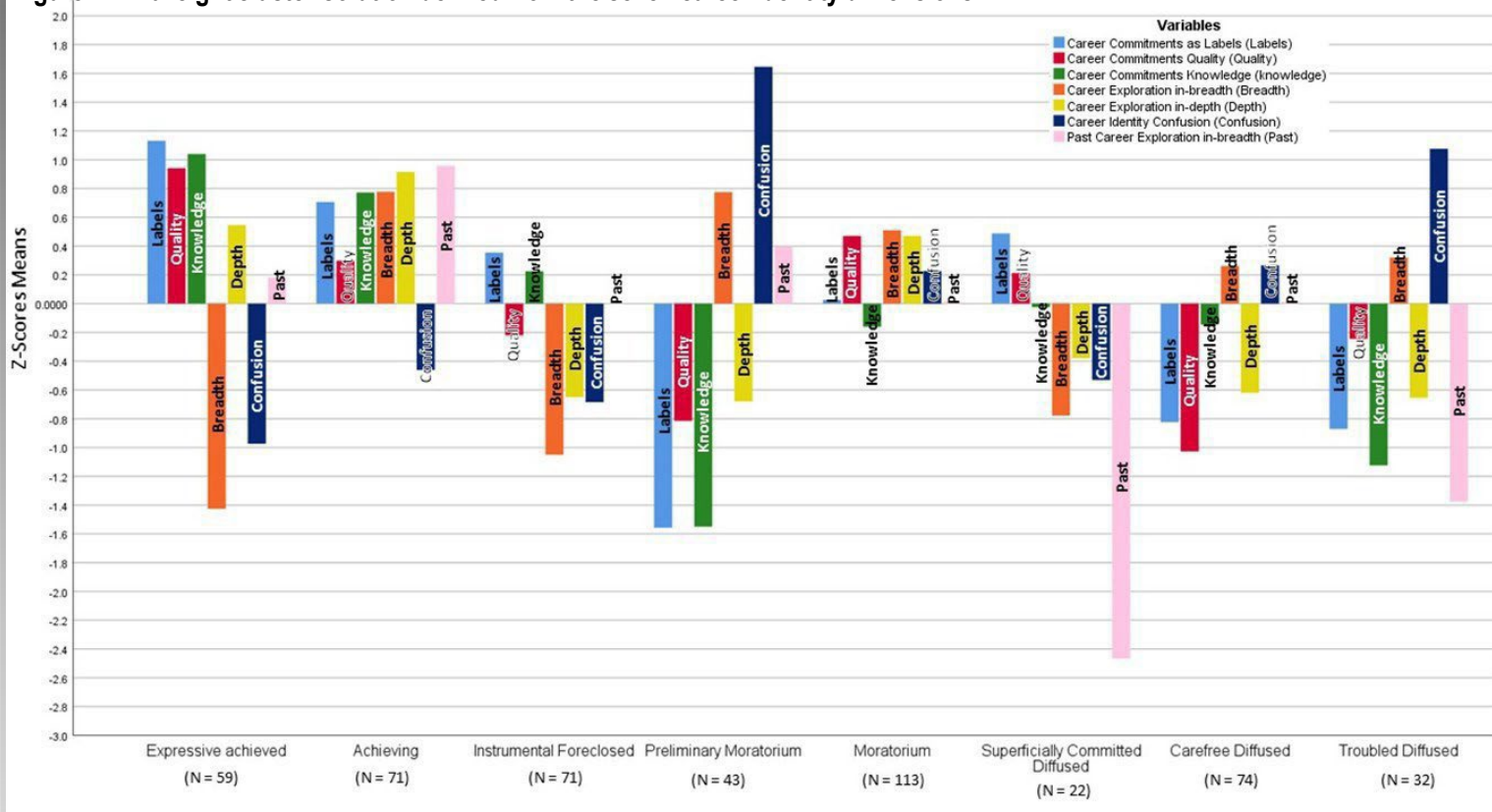
<b>Career commitments as labels</b>	The degree to which individuals have narrowed down the number of potential career identity alternatives by making a selection to adhere to one or a few of these alternatives.
<b>Career commitments quality</b>	The extent to which career identity commitments are personally expressive (i.e., promote the development of personal potentials and pursuing self-concordant goals for self-realization), intrinsically motivated (i.e., not for financial gain and/or career advancement, but instead for the fulfillment and enjoyment that doing the work brings to the individual), purposeful and meaningful.
<b>Career commitments knowledge</b>	The extent to which individuals believe to be knowledgeable about their career of interest and to have an understanding of the content and implications of their career identity commitments.
<b>Current career exploration in-breadth</b>	The extent to which individuals have been considering various career alternatives through gathering general career information with regards to the world of work, experimenting with those various alternatives, broadly learning about themselves via introspection and retrospection, and thinking about how those various career options align with general features of the self.
<b>Career exploration in-depth</b>	The extent to which individuals have been engaged in implementing their desired career commitments in order to acquire a more specific and refined understanding of these career choices and ascertain the degree to which these commitments fit core features of the self. In implementing these commitments, not only do individuals gather more specific information about the self and the world of work they are interested in, but they also develop a professional network as well as gain relevant professional experience. They are essentially monitoring the viability of existing commitments to either further strengthen these commitments or change them if in-depth evaluations are found unsatisfactory.
<b>Career identity confusion</b>	The extent to which individuals experience doubt and anxiety as well as feel confused, uncertain, disoriented, and ambiguous due to the difficulty of choosing a career. The higher the score on career identity confusion, the less likely individuals have a clear, coherent, and stable understanding of who they are as a professional worker and what they seek to pursue in their career.
<b>Past career exploration in-breadth</b>	follows the same definition as the current career exploration in-breadth, except that all activities and reflections were pursued in the past. In the questionnaire, the past was separated from the present using the following prompt: "Generally speaking, over the past several years (i.e., 2 to 10 years)..." for items of the past, and "Within the past year, I have been..." for items of the present.

For more information about this project, please visit our website at: [www.liminarsproject.org](http://www.liminarsproject.org)

## Key Findings

1. Once the psychometric properties of CIDI were established, a series of correlational and regression analyses of the career identity dimensions with psychosocial and career functioning variables was executed. Forming career commitments was important for identity development and optimal psychosocial functioning of individuals transitioning from college sport to work. While a more advanced stage in the exploration process also contributed to better functioning, career identity confusion and exploration in-breadth were negatively associated with these variables.
2. Cluster analyses generated eight career identity statuses empirically derived from the seven career identity dimensions (Figure 1). A description of these emerging career identity statuses was provided in Figures 2a and 2b.
3. MANOVAs were conducted to determine how the resulting clusters differed according to these positive psychosocial and career functioning outcomes. Individuals assigned to statuses characterized by high levels of career identity commitments tended to have better career and psychosocial functioning than individuals assigned to statuses characterized by low levels of career identity commitments. From individuals who had established career commitments, those placed in the variants of the achievement status exhibited higher flourishing than those in foreclosure. Although individuals with a conferred sense of self were satisfied with their life and career, the most optimal identity profiles were those with a constructed sense of self given their higher level of psychological well-being. From individuals who had not completely established a career identity yet, those who were in the initial steps of identity search reported some of the poorest functioning.

**Figure 1. Final eight cluster-solution derived from the seven career identity dimensions**



## Implications

One third of the former college athletes were placed in a variant of the moratorium status for their career identity, which indicates that they are still working on developing a career identity and still transitioning out of their sport career. Those, who have established career identity commitments, completed their transition. Former athletes assigned to a diffusion status (25%) demonstrated that they are not ready to enter a career beyond sport yet, as they either were not interested in forming a career identity or did not know how to establish career commitments. The placement of former athletes with similar identity functioning into groups can guide the creation and implementation of interventions that seek to promote career identity development and in turn facilitate adjustments to life after sport. Practical implications are provided for each extracted career identity statuses (Figures 2a and 2b).

For more information about this project, please visit our website at: [www.liminarsproject.org](http://www.liminarsproject.org)

## EXPRESSIVE ACHIEVED (12.2%)

Established career identity commitments that have high quality, developing their personal potentials and pursuing self-concordant goals for self-realization. Those commitments are intrinsically motivated, purposeful, and meaningful.

Carry forth stable and quality career commitments that were formed following a period of consideration and experimentation with a vast array of career options.

Formed a constructed and integrated sense of self in terms of work that provides direction and meaning in their lives.

In spite of being committed to their chosen career direction, they tend to remain flexible and accept different opinions. They are however not easily swayed by external pressures and persevere in their chosen career commitments even if they face difficulties.

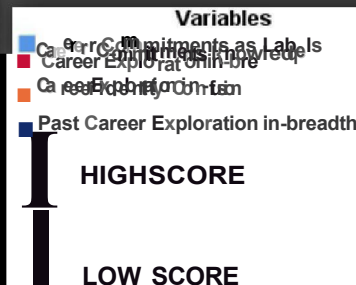
**Note:** This status is considered the most well-adjusted and self-directed identity configuration and thereby the most optimal identity profile.

## ACHIEVING (14.6%)

- Although strong career identity commitments have been formed following a period of highly active career exploration, the construction of their career identity is not finalized yet, as they continue to explore in breadth, considering and experimenting with a vast array of career options.
- They are however not affected by feelings of confusion, uncertainty and disorientation that can come with exploring various career alternatives.
- They are on the verge to reach the achieved status but are still in the process of implementing and evaluating their chosen career options.
- In spite of being committed to their chosen career direction, they tend to remain flexible and accept different opinions. They are however not easily swayed by external pressures and persevere in their chosen career commitments even if they face difficulties.

**Note:** This status is considered as one of the most well-adjusted and self-directed identity configurations and thereby one of the most optimal identity profiles.

**Figure 2a. Descriptions and recommendations of the three resulting career identity statuses in which former athletes have established firm career identity commitments (41% of sample)**



### Recommendations

Continue to support their current career choices by encouraging/advising them to:

- Gain or continue to gain professional experiences to ensure the maintenance of their career commitments.
- Explore in depth specific roles and aspects of their career commitments.
- Continue to make investments in their self-awareness, social networks, and experiential learning to assess these existing commitments.

## IN STRUGGLE FOR CLOSURE (14.6%)

- Formed strong career identity commitments that have rather low quality, extrinsically motivated and lacking purpose, meaning, and alignment with specific features of the self.
- Proceeded to establish stable career commitments to the first or second option seriously considered without much past and/or recent exploration of other career alternatives. Current commitments may have been bequeathed to them by people close to them or authority figures (parents, coaches, teachers).
- Although appearing well-adjusted, stable and reliable there is an underlying fragility to them, as they may be more limited in their ability to adapt during any life transitions.
- As long as their commitments conform to established norms and standards, they may live a relatively satisfactory life but still lack happiness in relation to the compliance of external/societal constraints.
- Seeking approval from others and exhibiting high levels of conformity, these individuals lack autonomy and tend to rely on others to make decisions.
- With a rigid identity structure, they can become defensive when facing disconfirming information rejecting or distorting them to appease any shame and guilt.

**Note:** Given that they may have formed commitments prematurely, they have less likely established a fit between their choice of commitments and who they are. They are also less likely to persevere in the occurrence of challenges/setbacks. This status is regarded as a less mature status than the achievement status due to the lack of thoughtful consideration prior to making commitments and is therefore considered as somewhat less desirable resolution to their identity crisis. Individuals placed in this status are still in an unfavorable position to enter adulthood, given that they are committed to pursue their career.

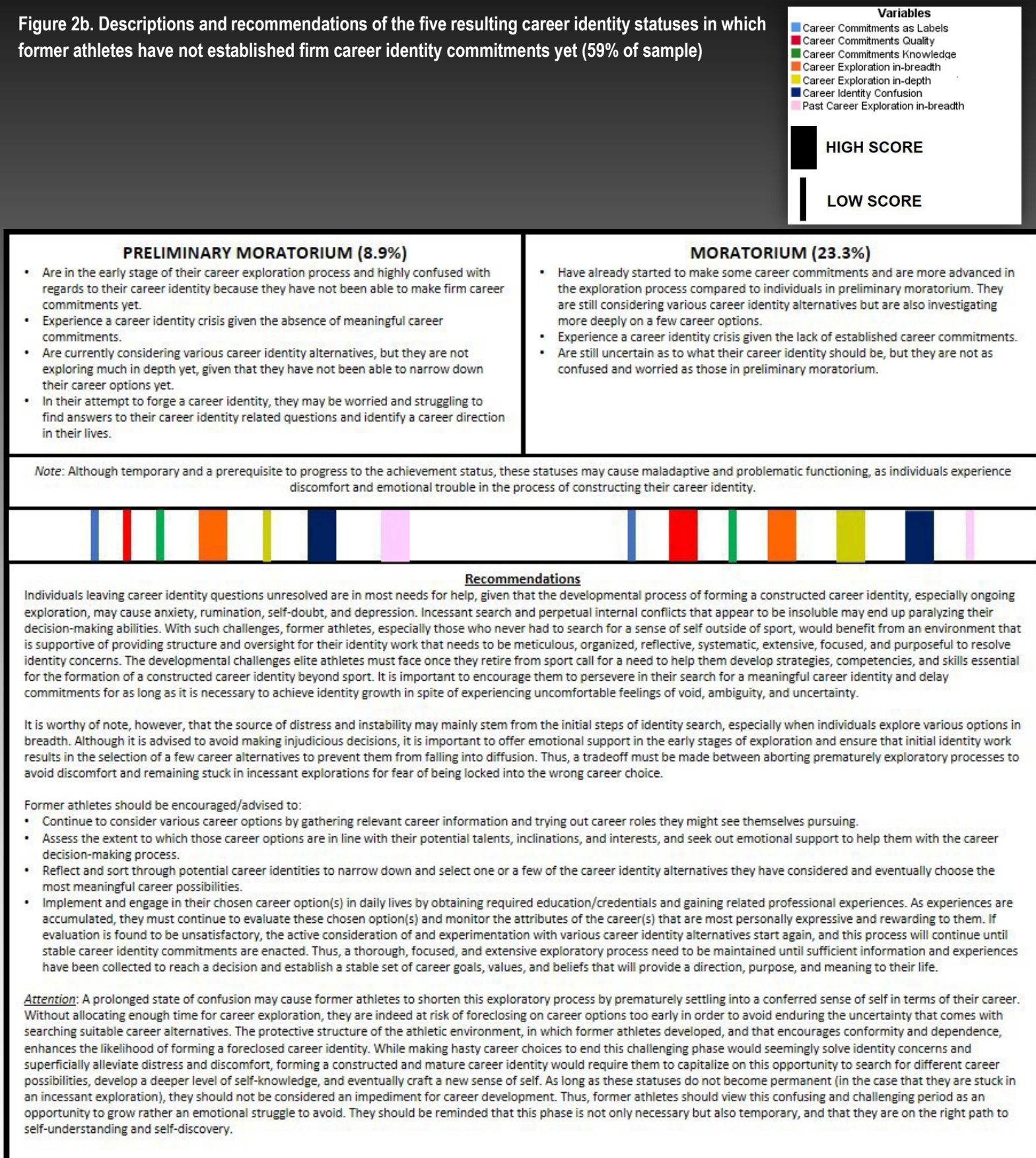
### Recommendations

Their career commitments should not be undermined just because they may not be optimal and were formed in a rather non-reflective manner or because these individuals may be vulnerable to any changes they may face in the future. The protective/buffering effects that the presence of commitments can have against symptoms of confusion, anxiety, and depression, make this status acceptable and functional. They may not need much help to carry on with their commitments other than making sure that they continue to be perceived as functional and to provide foundational directions for their lives. Thus, continue to support their current career choices by encouraging/advising them to:

- Be exposed in other career areas not yet considered in a non-threatening informational way in order to help them develop a sense of flexibility and prevent them from being unable to adapt to changes.
- Consider exploring career alternatives that are amenable to their career commitments without questioning and denigrating their current career goals, values, and beliefs. The point is not to change their commitments, but to broaden their horizons in anticipation of possible changes in their lives.
- Further understand their self-awareness, expand social networks, and gain experiential learning to continue to assess their commitments. These activities may enlighten them on alternative careers they may not have explored yet or reinforce their existing career commitments.



**Figure 2b. Descriptions and recommendations of the five resulting career identity statuses in which former athletes have not established firm career identity commitments yet (59% of sample)**



For more information about this project, please visit our website at: [www.liminarsproject.org](http://www.liminarsproject.org)



**Figure 2b (Cont.). Descriptions and recommendations of the five resulting career identity statuses in which former athletes have not established firm career identity commitments yet (59% of sample)**

**SUPERFICIALLY COMMITTED DIFFUSED (4.5%)**

- Claim to have decided on a career while having little knowledge of their career choice and exhibiting limited (if any) effort in exploring further their said career commitments.
- Lack of concern to explore career options and truly resolve career identity questions; they are less troubled and distressed than individuals placed in a variant of moratorium or even those in troubled diffusion status.

*Note:* Not only do these individuals avoid identity formation related tasks, but they are also easily influenced by external pressures. They appear to be superficially well-adjusted; however, they are at risk of making career decisions primarily based on current external pressures to address career identity concerns and rely on expectations to function on a daily basis without becoming engaged in what they do. This tendency may cause them to live a life that lacks purpose and meaning. They may also appear flexible and adaptable given that they can be whatever the external context influences them to be, but they lack self-direction and agency in their lives.



**CAREFREE DIFFUSED (15.3%)**

- Although they have not made firm career commitments yet, they show little concern to resolve their career identity questions. They do not seem to be troubled by the absence of career identity commitments as they have little or no interest to undertake exploratory activities.
- Given that their career exploration (if any was done) was likely ineffective and haphazard, these individuals are unable to make definite commitments that are internally based and with discernible boundaries.



## Recommendations

Individuals leaving career identity questions unresolved are in most needs for help, given that the developmental process of forming a constructed career identity, especially ongoing exploration, may cause anxiety, rumination, self-doubt, and depression. Individuals in these statuses are considered to have fallen into maladaptive and problematic functioning during this transition, so they need help and support to develop strategies, competencies, and skills essential for the formation of a constructed career identity beyond sport. However, certain characteristics of this identity configuration are prone to discourage development and can thwart the formation of a career identity. It is indeed one of the most problematic identity configurations that necessitates interventions of its own.

These individuals do not have much interest in engaging in career identity work and forming meaningful career commitments. As they do not seem troubled by the lack of enduring career directions, they may also intentionally avoid responding to adult responsibilities and tend to use the higher education system as a way to postpone making career commitments. This reluctance to settling down and this lack of concern towards endorsing career identity commitments would require counselors to uncover the nature of their resistance to making career identity decisions and determine the extent to which this approach to handling career identity issues spills over other domains of life.

Former athletes should be encouraged/advised to:

- Start actively thinking about various career options that might interest them and gathering relevant information about these careers of interest.
- Begin to try out career roles they might find appealing and gain a better understanding of these career(s) of interest.
- Attain a realistic self-understanding and engage in activities that test their assumptions in order to help them develop their initial career interests and commitments. They must also assess the extent to which those career options are in line with their potential talents, inclinations, and interests.
- Reflect and sort through potential career identities to narrow down and select one or a few of the career identity alternatives they have considered and eventually choose the most meaningful career possibilities.

**Attention:** Individuals in these statuses are not ready to hold career commitments, so counselors and educators need to find ways to help them prepare to transition into professional roles by eliciting exploratory behaviors in the world of work, opening doors for experiential learning and reality-testing, encouraging the engagement in vocational and self-assessments, and enhancing the benefits of a proactive and planful approach to life.

**TROUBLED DIFFUSED (6.6%)**

- Show interest in considering various career alternatives, but in conducting explorations, they become worried and fall into rumination, making them unable to develop a sense of career identity.
- Holding no career commitments, they appear to be worried and struggling to define themselves in terms of their career. This lack of internal sense of self-definition may explain why some troubled diffused individuals feel lost, empty, and isolated.

*Note:* These individuals may actually care about enacting career commitments for adulthood, and as a result, they may have exhibited some investment in identity work, but have been unable to carry a productive, systematic and organized career exploration, which is necessary to move out of diffusion and establish firm career commitments. Wandering aimlessly in diverse career paths, they are unable to make definite commitments that are internally based and with discernible boundaries and struggle to make their way into adulthood. With such a fragmented sense of self, individuals in this status may experience severe identity confusion and need to be highly supervised in their identity work.



## Recommendations

Individuals leaving career identity questions unresolved are in most needs for help, given that the developmental process of forming a constructed career identity, especially ongoing exploration, may cause anxiety, rumination, self-doubt, and depression. Individuals in these statuses are considered to have fallen into maladaptive and problematic functioning during this transition, so they need help and support to develop strategies, competencies, and skills essential for the formation of a constructed career identity beyond sport. However, certain characteristics of this identity configuration are prone to discourage development and can thwart the formation of a career identity. It is indeed one of the most problematic identity configurations that necessitates interventions of its own. Given that they lack self-direction and agency, their exploratory activities were likely ineffective and haphazard. With such challenges, former athletes would benefit from an environment that is supportive of providing structure and oversight for their identity work and offer emotional support to help them with the career decision-making process.

Former athletes should be encouraged/advised to:

- Start actively thinking about various career options that might interest them and gathering relevant information about these careers of interest.
- Begin to try out career roles they might find appealing and gain a better understanding of these career(s) of interest.
- Attain a realistic self-understanding and engage in activities that test their assumptions in order to help them develop their initial career interests and commitments. They must also assess the extent to which those career options are in line with their potential talents, inclinations, and interests.
- Reflect and sort through potential career identities to narrow down and select one or a few of the career identity alternatives they have considered and eventually choose the most meaningful career possibilities.
- Seek out emotional support to help them with the career decision-making process.

**Attention:** Individuals in this status are not ready to hold career commitments, so counselors and educators need to find ways to help them prepare to transition into professional roles by eliciting exploratory behaviors in the world of work, opening doors for experiential learning and reality-testing, encouraging the engagement in vocational and self-assessments, and enhancing the benefits of a proactive and playful approach to life.

## Variables

- Career Commitments as Labels
- Career Commitments Quality
- Career Commitments Knowledge
- Career Exploration in-breadth
- Career Exploration in-depth
- Career Identity Confusion
- Past Career Exploration in-breadth

## HIGH SCORE

**LOW SCORE**

**For more information about this project, please visit our website at: [www.liminalsproject.org](http://www.liminalsproject.org)**

**or contact Dr. Elodie Wendling  
at [ewendling@gsu.edu](mailto:ewendling@gsu.edu)**



## **2017**

B. Anderson, [I Didn't Learn that from the Playbook, Coach](#)

T. Canada, [Tackling the Everyday: Race, Family, and Nation in Big-Time College Football](#)

J. Doorley, [Understanding College Athlete Resilience](#)

A. Russian, [From Courts to Careers: Former Women Student-Athlete Transitions from College to Adulthood](#)

# **“I Didn’t Learn that from the Playbook, Coach:” The Impact of Coaches’ Identity and Team Climate on Student-Athlete Development**

**Brianna L. Anderson, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign***

[anders15@illinois.edu](mailto:anders15@illinois.edu)

College students are in the developmental period called emerging adulthood, during which the assembly of personal identity through exploration of interests and goals is central. However, for student-athletes, this time can be characterized by physical and social isolation from the general student body, limited opportunities for identity exploration, and pressure to meet performance expectations. These combined factors may result in high rates of commitment to the athletic identity, without a full exploration of other identities. Commitment to an identity without exploration is known as foreclosure. Foreclosure to the athletic identity has been linked to lowered expectations for academic performance from instructors, emotional challenges after injury, social identity struggles, lower self-satisfaction, and difficulty in the transition out of athletics.

## **Purpose**

While many studies have focused on student-athletes, few have also considered the coaches. As student-athletes are highly invested in their sport, coaches are in a position to influence student-athlete outcomes, specifically by modeling values and attitudes. The purpose of this study was to 1) explore the developmental progress of student-athletes, specifically in terms of identity development; 2) consider how coaches’ identities shape team experiences; and 3) investigate the relationship between the identities of the coaches and their student-athletes. This helped provide a better understanding of the impact a coach can have on a student-athlete’s identity, identity exploration, and development in the college years.

## **Methods**

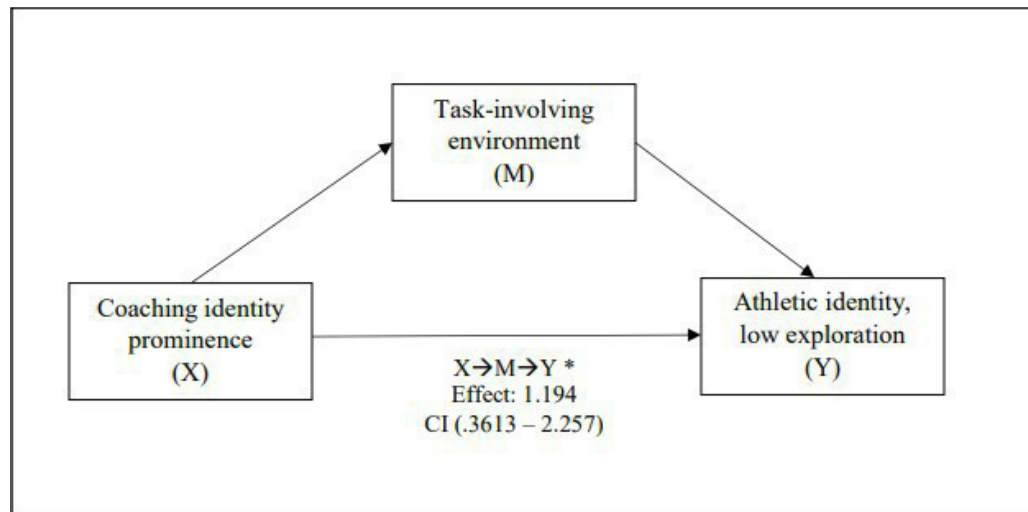
Survey data for this study were obtained electronically from 95 varsity-level student athletes and 12 coaches at a large (>15,000 undergraduate students), Division 1 university in fall 2017 and spring 2018. The majority of both samples were white. Females represented approximately 67% of student-athletes, but 8 of the 12 coaches were male. Student-athletes completed measures of athletic identity (Athletic Identity Measurement Scale; AIMS), identity exploration (Ego Identity Process Questionnaire; EPIQ), and developmental progress in emerging adulthood (Inventory of Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood; IDEA). Coaches completed measures of coaching identity (Coach Identity Prominence Scale; CIPS), coaching style (Perceived Motivational Climate in Sport Questionnaire-2; PMCS-2) and team climate (Caring Climate Scale, CCS). Preliminary analysis explored the underlying patterns and associations among demographic variables, identity, developmental progress, and team environments. Data were analyzed using SPSS software, which is a statistical tool used for conditional modeling with observed variables. In a secondary analysis, student-athletes’ data were paired with data from the corresponding coach, resulting in a sub-sample of 20 student-athletes. The relationship between coaches’ and student-athletes’ identities in the context of a task-involving team environment, also called an indirect effect, (Figure 1) was tested.



## Results

- Overall developmental progress in emerging adulthood was moderate, but accompanied by high levels of athletic identity, particularly social identity. These findings may be reflective of a circumstance unique to student-athletes or the evolution of an extended adolescent period, during which identity exploration is delayed and there is a high risk of foreclosure (Aim1).
- Students reporting low levels of identity exploration and high levels of athletic identity were categorized as foreclosed. While most student-athletes reported high levels of identity exploration, approximately 30% were categorized as foreclosed (Aim1).
- Coaches reported high levels of coaching identity. This was positively correlated with a task-involving environment. It is possible that the coaches demonstrating high levels of commitment to a coaching identity are actively working to create a positive and supportive team environment (Aim2).
- The relationship between coaches' identities and student-athletes' identities was observed only in the context of a task-involving team environment. This can be classified as an indirect effect (Aim3).
- Although this sample is small and homogenous, it appears as though coaches who are passionate about their roles may be inadvertently discouraging identity exploration by creating an environment that provides student-athletes with a wholly fulfilling experience within sport. The student-athletes who have coaches that are passionate do not feel the need to venture outside of sport due to already having found their sense of identity. This could become an issue after the athlete leaves the team and loses that part of themselves, leading to a loss of identity (Aim3).

The findings of this study provide a descriptive understanding of student-athletes' and coaches' identities and highlight the need for further investigation into ways in which coaches can encourage identity exploration outside of sport while maintaining a supportive and encouraging team environment.



**Figure 1. Proposed model of the indirect effect of coaches' identity on identity exploration among student-athletes.**

*Note: all variables were centered prior to analysis.*

## Tackling the Everyday: Race, Family, and Nation in Big-Time College Football

Tracie Canada, M.A., *University of Virginia*

[tc5zx@virginia.edu](mailto:tc5zx@virginia.edu)

**Overview:** Between August 2017 and July 2018, I completed ethnographic fieldwork with Black college football players. The following question guided this research: What are the everyday lived experiences of Black college football players as they shift across societal categories and experience paradoxical realities? By centering my study on these particular student-athletes, I considered the ways in which they negotiate their sometimes conflicting lives. Black football players are uniquely at the center of a variety of overlapping ordered and ordering systems that rely on certain rules, demand certain behaviors, and carry certain expectations. Considering systems like the serious real world and the play world of sport and like athletics and academics, these configure and constitute Black players' embodied experiences, which are already highly motivated by the distinctive intersection of race, gender, class, masculinity, and athleticism.

**Methodology:** During fieldwork, I spent extensive time with Black players at Division I universities in North Carolina and Virginia. Participant observation formed the cornerstone of my ethnographic investigation, as I immersed myself in and spent time with players in their everyday spaces. By observing lifts, practices, and scrimmages, participating in clinics and camps, attending classes and student-led meetings, hanging out in apartments and at parties, tailgating and sitting with parents at games, and eating meals with my research participants, I was present in locations and situations that were relevant to the players. Secondly, I conducted semi-structured interviews when first meeting potential participants to establish a connection with about 50 former athletes, current college and NFL players, family members, coaches, and university administrators. Through these interviews, I was able to hear about situations, events, and opinions that otherwise, I did not have access to. They also helped to add context to situations that I witnessed, but did not completely understand. Finally, I learned how student-athletes frame their own lives through life narratives. I was primarily interested in hearing how the landscapes of personal relationships and experiences look from the players' own perspectives.

**Preliminary Findings:** The four main chapters of my dissertation will argue that Black players' conceptualizations of their unique positionality affects their daily pursuits and interactions on and off the football field, as they inhabit Black, male, athletic bodies in this tense American moment. A Division I college football program strictly orders, disciplines, and surveils players' bodies and behaviors, especially while they are participating in football-related activities. Interestingly, the material realities of players' everyday lives are inextricably linked to football, as rules from the world of play transition to the world beyond, like in how they schedule their time, decide to dress, and interact on campus. However, Black players must strategically navigate this circumstance because of their racial positionality. A certain body, one that is often marked by being taller, bigger, and stronger than what is normative, is required to effectively perform and produce on the football field. Thus, Black players exist in a racialized Black male body whose form is exaggerated through participation in the football spectacle. These coded and disciplined bodies are privileged within the space of football, yet are often marked as transgressive and threatening beyond this regimented system. Therefore, both in spite of and because of tensions that arise between the multiple realms of which they are a part, Black football players create meaning within paradoxical realities by prioritizing the meaningful configuration of kin and social relations. Players depend on a number 2 of networks in college, but I see the primacy of two in particular: one featuring their mothers and older female relatives, and the other, their Black teammates. I will argue that this pair of relations shapes Black players'

ongoing commitment to football, decision-making about both trivial and serious life events, and quotidian experiences, while also highlighting their obviously gendered dynamics. Black players conceptualize, embody, and live kinship in multiple productive ways, all of which lead back to their participation in competitive sport.

**Implications:** Findings from my project have the potential to contribute a study of a previously unexplored population to the growing collection of ethnographies of African-American life, one that specifically explores the experiences of Black college football players within American society. Beyond its contribution to anthropological notions of modern sport, race, kinship, and embodiment, I believe that this research will be helpful to scholars teaching on various topics, including intercollegiate athletics; Blackness, masculinity, and family in the contemporary U.S.; and how a culture's activities mirror ideologies it deems important.

# Understanding College Athlete Resilience by Exploring Daily Responses to Positive Sport Events

Jim Doorley, M.A., *George Mason University*  
[idoorley@gmu.edu](mailto:idoorley@gmu.edu)

Researchers have devoted immense time and energy to better understand how athletes regulate their responses to negative events (i.e., cope) and what benefits these regulatory strategies confer. While important, a primary focus on coping ignores a growing literature suggesting that regulatory responses to positive events (e.g., savoring) are crucial for enhancing mental health and well-being. Savoring is defined as a set of cognitive-behavioral strategies used to generate, enhance, or prolong positive affect related to positive experiences. With grueling schedules comprised of more “journeys” (training and practice) than “arrivals” (winning games or tournaments, individual accolades, etc.), savoring may be especially important for helping Division I athletes find pleasure and fulfillment during relentless efforts to improve and achieve.

## Research Questions

While athlete coping has received much attention over the years, we still know little about how college athletes cope with sport as well as non-sport events at the daily level and how different coping strategies predict daily emotional functioning. Further, we must begin to consider how athlete’s responses to positive sport related events impact emotional functioning. To address these gaps, I posed the following questions:

1. Which daily coping strategies predict daily positive and negative emotions?
2. Does daily savoring also predict (more) positive and (less) negative emotions?
3. What is the relative strength of savoring versus coping in predicting daily emotions?
4. Do the potential benefits of savoring bleed over into the next day?
5. Is savoring associated with other mental skills for sport performance? If so, perhaps savoring deserves further study as another “mental skill” for athletes.

## Method

Participants were 53 Division I collegiate athletes representing several teams (e.g., women’s soccer, women’s volleyball, men’s and women’s cross country, men’s and women’s track and field, women’s lacrosse, and softball) who completed smartphone-based daily diaries via PACO software (Personal Analytics Companion). Athletes were pinged daily at 7:00 PM for 14 consecutive days to complete short, 5-10 minute surveys about their day, which included questions about their most positive and negative experiences that day, positive and negative emotions, coping responses to their most negative daily events overall, savoring versus dampening responses to their most positive sport-related events, and mental skills use during practice. Due to the nested structure of the dataset (i.e., daily observations nested within individuals), I used multilevel modeling and between- and within-person correlations to analyze the data.

## Results

1. Problem-focused strategies for coping with daily sport and non-sport negative events (i.e., making decisions and taking direct actions) predicted greater daily happiness and contentment and lower daily sadness, anger, and annoyance. Other coping efforts – such as acceptance, thinking about the situation in a different way, and event avoidant or distracting actions – predicted greater positive emotions (happiness, gratitude, and contentment) but not lower negative emotions at the daily level.
2. Daily savoring of positive sport-related events (e.g., wins, good practices, PRs, positive experiences with teammates) was also associated with greater daily positive emotions (happiness, gratitude, contentment), and, to a lesser extent, daily lower negative emotions (daily sadness).
3. In models containing both savoring positive sport events and coping with overall negative events, savoring was a stronger predictor of all daily positive emotions and daily sadness compared to coping.

4. Time-lagged analyses showed that savoring positive sport experiences not only predicted greater gratitude the same day, but also the next day – even after controlling for a number of other predictors (e.g., the positivity of the sport event, the negativity of the worst overall event the nextday).
5. Savoring was positively correlated with the use of various sport-related mental skills during practice and was particularly highly correlated self-talk during sport ( $r = .71$ ). While directionality/causality cannot be inferred, it may be that the ability to effectively use self-talk is part of what helps athletes savor positive sport experiences. Savoring was also associated with greater use of mental skills related to attentional control and relaxation, though these effects were smaller ( $rs = .17$ ).

Findings suggest that regulatory responses to positive sport events (savoring) and negative events overall (coping) are both associated with more positive and less negative daily emotions. Further, savoring positive sport experiences, and perhaps other types of experiences, may be even more important for daily emotional well-being and resilience to negative events (e.g., savoring predicted same-day and next-day gratitude despite the negativity daily events) compared to coping. Savoring appears to be a valuable “mental skill” that college athletes can use to enhance positivity of sport-related events, enhance positive emotions, and protect against adverse emotional outcomes from negative events.



## INTRODUCTION

This report examines how 84 former Division I (DI) college athletes use the socialization they acquired through college sport in their lives once they are no longer student-athletes. I ask: How does gender and race impact when, and under what conditions, people reject the tools and credentials acquired through college athletics or use them to their advantage? In other words, when is being a former DI college athlete seen as an asset, and when is it considered a liability? To do so, I conceptualize the socialization acquired through participation in college athletics as a cultural toolkit consisting of “symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people ” (Swidler 1986:273) use as they interact with the world around them. The former DI college athlete is a case that socializes women and men to adopt social practices and identities which emphasize athletics, teamwork, and organizational skills to a greater degree than broader society. Former college athletes are usually required to exit the sporting institution after four years, and thus undergo a similar process of negotiating norms, identity shifts, and relationships upon leaving college athletics.

To understand how former DI college athletes draw upon their cultural toolkit, I focus on the ways respondents use, negotiate, or even reject aspects of the socialization acquired through college sport in their adult lives. This report analyzes outcomes associated with four social domains: recreational sport, work, friendship, and romantic life. For each of these domains I explore: if respondents downplay or discuss their DI college athlete identity; how being a college athlete informs respondents’ current views on race and sexuality; and how respondents use or reject the tools they acquired through college athletics across various aspects of their life today.

## METHODS

I draw on data from 84 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women and men who participated in NCAA Division I College Athletics to explore how former college athletes use the skills, networks, and credentials obtained through college athletics in various social contexts in their lives today. While previous quantitative studies have detailed the impact participation in college athletics has on former student athletes upon graduation (Dwyer and Gellock 2018; Gallup 2016; Grove, Lavalley, and Gordon 1997), few have qualitatively assessed how this sample views and employs the tools they cultivated through participation in college sport in their lives today. Those that have rely on small sample sizes that are predominantly male, and focus on the impact of athlete identity loss. My study builds on existing literature to incorporate race, gender, and context. Interviews provide an ideal method for understanding, as this allows respondents to describe in their own words how being a former-student athlete impacts their current adult lives.

*Sampling Strategy:* This project was described to participants as an exploration of how their experiences as Division I college athletes and the tools they learned through said experiences impact their current adult lives. This includes, but is not limited to: relationships, identity, hobbies, etc. as they exist across five key domains of social life: Work, recreational sport, friendship, romantic, and parenting life. Interviewees were recruited through personal networks, sport-related academic listervs, and snowball sampling. After each interview, respondents were asked to share study invitation materials with eligible individuals in their own athletic networks.

While my sample is small, it provides empirical evidence on a population that is difficult to access due to the wide dispersion of these athletes after graduation.

*Sample:* The literature suggests race and gender crucially impact the lived experiences of student athletes, so I stratified my sample by gender and race. 42 women and 42 men were interviewed for this study. 20 women and 20 men identify as white, while 20 women and 20 men identify as persons of color. That is, these respondents openly acknowledged throughout the interview that their lived experiences differed from their white counterparts.

In order to be included in the study, respondents were required to have participated in NCAA Division 1 College Athletics for at least one athletic season (i.e., one academic semester) and to have graduated within the last 20 years of the interview date. 75 respondents played 4+ seasons, while 9 participated in 3 or less. 31 respondents played at an institution in the Northeast, 10 in the Midwest, 8 in the West, and 35 in the South. A goal of this project is to understand how different sporting contexts impact former student athletes., so a total of 16 sports are represented in the data. The majority of women participated in volleyball, gymnastics or basketball. The majority of men participated in football, swimming, or basketball. Respondents also participated in baseball, cross-country, field hockey, ice hockey, lacrosse, rowing, soccer, softball, track and field, water polo, and wrestling. The majority of respondents had graduated college within the last 10 years (min 1 year post grad, median 9 years, max 18 years). The majority of respondents competed at one institution (77), while 7 competed at 2 or more institutions.

Most respondents identified as heterosexual (73), while 11 identified as something other than heterosexual or straight. Respondent median age is 29, with the oldest being 41 and the youngest being 23 at time of interview. The majority (60) of respondents had never been married at time of interview, while 23 were married and 1 was divorced. 77 respondents were born in the U.S., while 7 were non-U.S. born. All respondents have a BA, and 38 have a Masters degree or higher. 9% of respondents had an annual household income of \$25,000 or less, 14% had an annual income of \$25,000-\$50,000, 48% of respondents had an annual income of \$50,000-\$150,000<sup>1</sup>, and 25% had an annual income of \$150,000 or more at time of interview. At the time of interview 28 respondents lived in the Northeast, 9 in the Midwest, 12 in the West, 32 in the South, and 3 lived outside of the US.

*Interviews:* All interviews took place over Zoom from March 2021 until June 2022. Prior to each interview, participants were emailed the study information sheet which outlines the purpose of the study along with informed consent. Interviews lasted an average of two hours and covered a range of topics including: if respondents downplay or discuss their D1 college athlete identity in various social contexts (work, recreational sport, and social life—friendship, dating, and parenting); how being a college athlete informs respondents' current views on race and sexuality; and how respondents use or reject the tools they acquired through college athletics across various aspects of their life today. I was given permission by all interviewees to record their interview using the Zoom recording application. I also relied on notes taken during the interview and memos written immediately after interviews had taken place. The Zoom application then provided me with a raw transcript file of each interview. These files were then de-identified and verified by myself or hired research assistants.

---

<sup>1</sup> Three respondents chose not to disclose their annual household income

*Data Analysis:* Once the interviews were completed, transcribed, and de-identified, I followed a flexible coding framework to code the interviews using ATLAS TI (Deterding and Waters 2021). Initially, I indexed transcripts with broad codes anchored by the interview guide (e.g., athlete identity, work context, the body, stereotyping, etc.). I then used these indices to develop analytic codes that progressed to emergent themes. Throughout the process, I wrote analytic memos on emergent themes across interviews. An interview is a form of social interaction. As such, interviewers and interviewees alike work together to successfully manage impressions (Goffman 1959). Adler and Adler (2003) document the collegiate institution of sport to be sensitive to the insider-outsider distinction. My own status as a former Division I athlete is an asset that provided me with initial access to the research setting and respondents. Further, my insider status served to establish rapport with the participants. To combat and preempt any preconceived notions projected from my own experiences as a college athlete onto respondents, I wrote self-reflexive memos regarding my own presumptions and understandings of what I expect to find in the interviews (Foster 2009). I was intentional about probing and framing my questions to elicit respondents' own experiences regarding their social worlds as college athletes and the shift away from sport.

## FINDINGS

- Overview—What comprises the cultural toolkits respondents take with them upon exiting D1 college athletics? Do these toolkits differ by sport played? By race? By gender?
- Work life—how do respondents use their athlete toolkit at work? Do their experiences with said toolkit vary by gender? By race? By occupation type?
- Recreational Sport—do respondents still participate in sport? Do respondents still consider themselves athletes? Why/why not? How do these experiences vary by gender? By race? By sport played? How do their experiences with sport impact their self-concept/body image?
- Social life: Friendship, Dating, Parenting— Does it matter to respondents to have athletic friends? To date athletic people? To raise athletic children? Do they use their college athlete credential to help them navigate and achieve success in these three social domains? Why/why not? How do gender, race, and/or sport played impact these experiences?

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

### *Work life*

Some white women follow similar patterns to white men in the workplace context, in that they largely do not experience cognitive labor when it comes to making public their former college athlete status. Other women (no matter race) actively downplay their athletic identity at work citing things like “I don’t want to be bragg”, or lack of relevance/understanding by peers. White men largely do not bring up these points. Nonetheless, it seems that currently Respondents of Color are more likely than white counterparts to exhibit cognitive labor in the work world. They actively feel their credibility is questioned and internally negotiate when and how they make known their former D1 athlete status.

- “I feel like it sounds like it's like bragging, if you like, talk about it a lot just because, especially like the environment I'm in now like I'm not around like a lot of people that

either went to college or like Definitely not around people that played sports in college. So, I feel like it sounds like I'm like slightly bragging if I bring it up.” —#66 Gemma, Black, Women’s Volleyball

- “So, you develop a lot of important life skills and I think people recognize that in both my resume and when I'm sitting in an interview with them. I think they get that character that comes off the paper.” —#31 Maya, White, Women’s Ice Hockey
- “I pick and choose [when I bring up my college athlete background]. You know you're worried about others, maybe stereotyping... You feel like you need to craft the narrative yourself because you're worried that others will misinterpret or have these, you know, negative assumptions.” —#74 Avery, Black, Men’s Soccer
- “feel like my experience as a college athlete is always relatable to everybody and something that everyone wants to hear about so like I don't know, maybe it's like a psychologist in me but I’m much more interested in like, what other people are doing and like in their life.” — #56 Peter, White, Men’s swimming.

### *Romantic Life*

Preliminary findings show: White men do the least amount of cognitive labor among my sample, while Women and Men of Color do the most. In addition, the degree to which respondents experience cognitive labor varies by gender, race, and social context (i.e., work vs. romantic). For instance, within the dating context and regardless of race, women are more likely than men to actively think about the implications behind revealing their former D1 college athletics status to potential dating partners. For example, former D1 women’s gymnasts often discuss the internal negotiation they have in revealing their gymnast status to male dates as they fear being hypersexualized by them. Comparatively, we see that Camille, a white, heterosexual softball player internally struggles with making sure she is read as heterosexual and feminine upon disclosing her former D1 softball status.

- “Because of the stereotype of being flexible...their mind goes one way and I’m like we don't even know each other... It's really annoying I feel like it's immature at times, because I’m like, well can you take your mind off of the sexual aspect of this and just understand the sport that, like you said, that I love and I truly appreciate. And that a lot of people don't do, or can't really do, and just see me, for me, but also that I’m able to do this, sport.” — #7 Cheyenne, Black, Women’s Gymnastics
- “I felt the need to tell people that I was interested in that I was also interested in men.... I always felt like that was a question in people's minds because, like they automatically hear softball player, or college athlete, and they're like oh she probably likes girls...It wasn't necessarily that I wanted them to know that I wasn't gay, more so that I wanted them to know that I was like interested in them.” — #11 Camille, white, Women’s softball

White Male counterparts in contrast emphasize how their former D1 status serves as an attractive marker of masculinity. Men of color are more likely to downplay their former D1 status in their dating life out of fear that negative racialized stereotypes will be associated with them.

- “it's done nothing but benefit...Yeah, it's not like ‘oh this guy played college baseball, he can get all the girls in the world.’ No, it's not like that. It's more of ‘hey this guy or girl, you know played soccer in college and is in really good shape; Clearly takes care of

himself', you know, 'he's disciplined and has a good work ethic, because you know he's been doing this his entire life.' It's kind of saying stuff without saying stuff" –#12 Chris, white, Men's baseball

- "I will answer questions if it comes up naturally but it's definitely not something where I just say like 'oh yeah I did this' or 'this was my experience'. I'll wait until it has to come up... The more that I talk about it, I feel like there's just more opportunity for them to kind of like think about or explore those stereotypes [of being a player/hypersexual]". – #72 Travis, Black, Men's basketball

## CONCLUSION

In summary: I asked: How does gender and race impact when and under what conditions people reject the tools and credentials acquired through college athletics or use them to their advantage? When is being a former D1 college athlete an asset, and when is it considered a liability?

I found being a former college athlete is an asset for men, especially white men, who, as athletes, embodied the pinnacle of white masculinity. This former D1 athlete status helps to compensate for any perceived deficits between themselves and that ideal.

While all respondents (regardless of gender or race) acknowledged numerous positive attributes associated with their D1 college athlete cultural toolkit and credential, the degree of positivity varied depending on social identities and context. For example, the former D1 athlete status was more often a liability for women, who, as athletes, embodied stigmatized stereotypes (either as masculine women or as hyper-sexualized women). They would vocalize how, especially in the romantic context they'd have an interest in downplaying that identity, particularly in situations where it might activate those negative stereotypes. These stigmatized stereotypes are amplified for women of color across both the romantic and work context. This is also somewhat true for Black male athletes whose athlete identities subject them to stereotypes about deservingness of admission and stereotypes of hypersexualized or overly aggressive Black men.

These findings have important implications for interactionist frameworks and gender inequality more broadly. First, as previously stated, Hill Collins (2004) argues that systems of oppression are interlocking and uphold unmarked default categories of power (i.e. whiteness, masculinity). These systems of oppression are perpetuated at the interactional level through social accountability and are worthy of empirical attention (Choo and Ferree 2010). I contribute to this theoretical gap by explicitly examining how whiteness impacts gender accountability across contexts. Second, while the Doing Gender literature has long documented the different ways in which we hold our gendered selves and others accountable (Barber 2016; Crawley and Willman 2018; Hollander 2018; Kazyak 2012), undertheorized the amount of cognitive labor required to meet accountability expectations. I expand on Daminger's (2019) analysis of the gendered nature of cognitive labor by applying the concept to contexts beyond the traditional heterosexual household. I show how racial and gender minorities disproportionately complete more cognitive labor than their white male counterparts. Third, findings also demonstrate how whiteness impacts the differential benefits women and men receive from exposure to the norms and expectations learned through participation in college athletics.

## **2016**

- C. Bowman, [Bystander behaviors related to potential sexual assault](#)
- S. Graupensperger, [Social identity and conforming to peer-influence in NCAA athletes](#)
- J. Jackson, [Race Related Stress Among Black Male Student-Athletes](#)
- A. Logan, [The One Dimensional Black College Football Player](#)
- B. Maher, [Psychosocial Effects of injury in relation to student-athlete academics](#)
- C. Williams, [Student-Athlete Pregnancy in Division I and Division II Athletics](#)

## **Bystander behaviors related to potential sexual assault: Individual and contextual predictors among student-athletes**

**Chelsey Bowman, *Boston University***

[cebowman@bu.edu](mailto:cebowman@bu.edu)

Recognizing that sexual violence is a major problem on college campuses, the NCAA released [\*Addressing Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence: Athletics' Role in Support of Healthy and Safe Campuses\*](#) in 2014. It urged athletic departments to “Educate all student-athletes, coaches and staff about sexual violence prevention, intervention, and response” (p. iv). Consistent with national recommendations, the report recommends using bystander training programs to educate student-athletes about sexual violence and appropriate ways to intervene in situations that could lead to sexual violence. The report states that bystander training programs used with student-athletes should incorporate the “voices” of student-athletes. However, there are currently no evidence-based bystander training programs specifically designed for both male and female student-athletes. Additionally, limited research has investigated student-athletes’ perceptions of bystander training and whether participating in the training is associated with attitudes toward sexual violence, willingness to intervene, and bystander behaviors.

Using data collected from 251 student-athletes (66% female, 76% white) at one Division I University in the Northeast in spring 2016, this study examined the role of individual and contextual factors associated with student-athletes’ willingness to intervene in situations of sexual violence. This study answered two research questions: RQ1: Do individual factors predict willingness to intervene in situations that could lead to sexual violence? The following individual factors were examined: sex; attitudes toward sexual violence (i.e., rape myth acceptance); athletic identity; and team belongingness. RQ2: Do contextual factors predict willingness to intervene in situations that could lead to sexual violence? The following contextual factors were examined: coaches’ expectations; coaches’ perceived discipline for inappropriate off-field behavior; and bystander training.

Findings indicated that there were no significant differences between male and female student-athletes with respect to bystander behaviors, likelihood of intervening in situations of sexual violence, attitudes about intervening, rape myth acceptance, team belongingness, athletic identity, or social support. Most student-athletes (86%) had participated in the University’s bystander training program. Female student-athletes were significantly more likely than male student-athletes to say that the mandatory bystander training program made them think and was helpful. Furthermore, females were significantly more likely to indicate they liked the bystander training program and would recommend it than were male student-athletes. The majority of student-athletes (80%) indicated that their coach or an athletic department official had talked to them about their expectations for student-athletes speaking up when they see situations that could lead to sexual violence. Additionally, 93% of student-athletes reported that their coach would strongly discipline them for poor off-field behavior related to sexual violence.

Student-athletes who had greater rejection of rape myths were more likely than their peers to report they would be likely to intervene in situations that could lead to sexual violence ( $r=0.17$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Also, student-athletes who had more positive attitudes about intervening in situations where somebody is in trouble were more likely than their peers to report they would be likely to intervene in situations that could lead to sexual violence ( $r=0.24$ ,  $p<.01$ ). However, coaches' expectations, bystander behavior, attending bystander training, athletic identity, and team belongingness were not significantly associated with likelihood to intervene. In a logistic regression, only more positive attitudes about intervening ( $OR=1.20$ ,  $CI=1.04-1.15$ ) was a significant predictor of likelihood to intervene, although greater rape myth rejection approached statistical significance.

When examining attitudes about intervening in situations where somebody is in trouble, student-athletes who reported greater team belongingness were more likely than their peers to have positive attitudes about intervening ( $r=0.23$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Additionally, student-athletes who reported greater levels of general social support were more likely than their peers to have positive attitudes about intervening ( $r=0.23$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Coaches' expectations, bystander behavior, rape myth rejection, attending bystander training, and athletic identity were not significantly associated with attitudes about intervening. In a multiple linear regression, team belongingness ( $\beta=.19$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and general social support ( $\beta=.19$ ,  $p<.01$ ) were significant predictors of attitudes about intervening.

This study provides encouraging findings about student-athletes' reported likelihood of intervening in situations that could lead to sexual violence. These findings also demonstrate the need to support team belonging as a way to potentially foster positive attitudes about intervening. Additionally, the results demonstrate that the bystander training program was more popular among females than male student-athletes, which highlights the need to incorporate male student-athletes' "voices" into the program. Future research should examine attitudes about intervening and bystander behavior longitudinally, focusing particularly on how these attitudes change before and after completion of bystander training programs.



## Everyone else is doing it: The association between social identity and conforming to peer-influence in NCAA athletes

Scott Graupensperger M.A., M.Ed., *Pennsylvania State University*

[sag40@psu.edu](mailto:sag40@psu.edu)

When building rich and cohesive teams that are vital for championship-level success, are we inadvertently fostering a team-environment that leads members to engage in *negative* health-behaviors? Given the strong social ties within sport teams, student-athletes often alter behavior (i.e., ‘conform’) to fit-in and seek acceptance from high-status teammates<sup>1,2</sup>. Although perceptions of closeness and commitment toward teammates are typically beneficial, strong identification with the team may also prompt athletes to engage in dysfunctional behaviors when they believe such behavior is the norm<sup>3,4</sup>. An individual’s social identity is their self-concept that derives from the group to which they belong, whereby individuals are motivated to internalize and conform to group norms<sup>5,6</sup>. As such, strongly identifying athletes are liable to conform to risky behaviors of teammates. To better understand how identity shapes athletes’ decision-making for risky behaviors, we conducted a study to investigate whether conformity was predicted by the strength of athletes’ social-identity within their team.

**Methods.** We recruited teams of athletes from NCAA division II and III teams to complete our survey using electronic tablets at a team meeting. In addition to providing descriptive information and indicating their social identification with their team (*Example item*: “I feel a sense of being ‘connected’ with other members of this team”), athletes indicated how they would respond to hypothetical risky behavior scenarios. Response options ranged from completely safe to extremely risky options for six scenarios (See Table 1). To test conformity to teammates, the researcher then presented average team responses to appear as though the majority of their teammates strongly endorsed the risky behaviors. Finally, athletes completed a second questionnaire where they responded to the same hypothetical scenarios. This enabled us to assess ‘conformity’ to alleged behaviors of teammates, operationalized as responding with ‘riskier’ response options in post-manipulation assessments than the original pre-manipulation assessment (i.e., a greater difference between time-1 and time-2 scores represented greater conformity). We expected that athletes who reported a stronger social identity would be more likely to increase the extent that they would engage in risky behaviors in their follow-up response.

**Results.** We sampled 379 NCAA student-athletes ( $M_{age} = 19.7$ ,  $SD = 1.3$ , 44% male) from 23 complete teams. At baseline, participants scored relatively low on risky behaviors – providing values near, or below, scale midpoints (Table 1). Across the six scenarios, 12-30% of participants conformed by showing an increase from pre- to post-manipulation. Paired samples t-tests confirmed that athletes were more willing to endorse a risky behavior following the manipulation ( $ps < .001$ ), meaning that exposure to high teammate responses swayed athletes’ follow-up responses.

We then examined whether athletes who strongly identified with their team were more likely to conform to risky behaviors. The primary analyses included multi-level modeling, where we disentangled individual-level differences (between athletes) from group-level effects (between teams), while also controlling for potential confounders (i.e., gender, self-esteem, team tenure). Strong social identities positively predicted conformity to binge drinking, marijuana use, drinking/driving, playing through concussion, and hazing incoming teammates ( $ps < .05$ ). We also uncovered interesting group-level level effects. For example, athletes who belonged to *teams* that were higher on social identity (as a whole) were more likely to conform regarding whether they would ‘play-through’ a concussion. Full results from multi-level models are available upon request.

**Implications.** The current findings expose a potential pitfall for athletes who strongly identify with their team, in that they may be more likely to conform to risky behavior when they feel that teammates partake in such activity. Considering that teams with high social identity scores were similarly likely to conform on some behaviors, we expect that strong identification (i.e., the group defines the self) might lead athletes to feel pressure to make sacrifices for the team or do things that are aligned with that identity (e.g., play through concussion)<sup>7</sup>. Coaches/trainers should be aware that strongly-identifying groups are likely to put their own physical well-being at risk for the sake of the team, especially when they believe teammates would do the same.

Our findings are concerning because collegiate athletes tend to over-estimate the extent that teammates engage in risky behaviors<sup>1</sup>. However, this understanding also points to the potential benefits of promoting group environments that foster positive behaviors. For example, behavioral interventions to reduce one or more risky behaviors may seek to help athletes establish more realistic perceptions of team norms<sup>4</sup>, promote acceptance of all athletes regardless of the extent they conform to team norms, and channel the influence of social identities toward more adaptive behaviors. Advancing this work, our research team hopes to create interventions where peer-leaders are trained to create group environments that foster social identities while also promoting adaptive behaviors.

# **The Prevalence and Experience of Race Related Stress Among Black Male Student-Athletes: A Mixed Method Study**

**Jessica Jackson M.A., *New Mexico State University***

[jacksj@nmsu.edu](mailto:jacksj@nmsu.edu)

Black male collegiate student- athlete's make-up between 46%-61% of all division I, II and III athletes in the revenue producing sports of basketball and football (Beamon, 2014) and 18.9% of all college athletes total in division I, II and III (Lapchick, Fox, Guiao & Simpson, 2015). This data suggests that Black male-student athletes constitute almost one quarter of the total National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student-athlete population. Yet, the *Mental Health Best Practices* (NCAA Mental Health Task Force, 2016) released by the NCAA Sport Science Institute in early 2016, did not emphasize cultural considerations for student-athlete mental wellness despite evidence that the psychological needs of Black male student-athletes differ from their White peers (Anshel and Sailes, 1990). Specifically, research has highlighted the significant amounts of stress that collegiate Black males experience as competitors at the college level (Melendez, 2008; Sadberry, 2013); simultaneously being valued as a representative of the university community and discriminated against as a member of a racial/ethnic minority (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991). Chronic exposure to discrimination based on race, racism, can result in a complex reaction conceptualized as race-related stress (Utsey, 1999).

This study aims to provide preliminary evidence of the prevalence of race-related stress among NCAA Division I, male student-athletes and explore the potential psychological distress that racism-related stress may have on athletes. It is intended that the results of this study will add to the literature about the need for cultural competence in addressing the mental health and behavioral health needs of Black male student-athletes. A mixed-methods sequential explanatory research design was chosen to address the following research question: How prevalent are the racism experiences of African American male student-athletes? (a.) What are their experiences specifically attached to race related stress? (b.) How, if at all, do experiences with race-related stress impact psychological functioning? (c.) How do African-American male student-athletes understand race-related stress?

Current and former Division I Black male student-athletes were recruited nationally using snow-ball sampling. Participants completed online surveys and had the option to choose to participate in an interview. Approximately 52 completed surveys of current or former student-athletes were used to analyze the data. It should be noted that surveys not fully completed were not used in this data analysis (n=30); data collection is on-going. Those participating in the study ranged from 18 to 67 years with a mean age of 25.7 years (SD=10.68). Current student athletes accounted for 57.7% of the sample (n=30). Research participants reported seven different sports: football n= 24 (46.2%), basketball n=7 (13.5%), baseball n=2 (3.8 %), track &field n= 13 (25%), soccer n=3 (5.8%), rowing n= 1 (1.9%) and other n=2 (3.8%). 6 participants (11.5%) have completed qualitative interviews. How prevalent were experiences of race-related stress within this sample?

Preliminary results:

- 53 of the participants (98.1%) reported experiencing race-related stress; more than half of the participants reported experiencing greater levels of race related stress.
- Majority of the participants did not indicate experiencing clinically significant distress (71.2 %, n=37) on the Brief Symptom Inventory-18 (BSI-18) overall global severity scale. However, it is worth noting that almost a quarter of participants met the clinical threshold for depression (21.2 %, n=11).

- Higher levels of race-related stress did not predict higher levels of psychological distress.
- Institutional and individual racism positively associated with anxiety symptoms; the higher the number of instances of these specific types of racism the more symptoms of anxiety were endorsed.
- Somatization (distress caused by the perception of bodily dysfunction) positively associated with the overall global index score on the index of race-related stress (includes all 3 subscales: individual, cultural and individual racism); the higher the number of experiences with racism the more physical symptoms were endorsed.

Preliminary qualitative themes:

- Racism is a part of daily life: Current and former student-athletes discussed how experiences and/or thoughts of racism are an anticipated part of their everyday life.
- Coping through avoidance: Current and former student-athletes discussed how they coped with their experiences of racism by trying to ignore thinking about them or dwelling on them.

A critical exploration of the effects of race-related stress among Black male student-athletes provides significant implications for a deeper understanding of the development of mental and behavioral health concerns among this population. The preliminary results of this study suggest psychologists and other mental health professionals working with Black male student-athletes should consider how experiences of racism may influence mental health when diagnosing and treatment planning.

## **The One Dimensional Black College Football Player**

**By: Alvin Logan, Jr., Ph.D., *University of Texas at Austin***  
[alo3@utexas.edu](mailto:alo3@utexas.edu)

NCAA Division-I college football provides an immense opportunity for young men to pursue a degree and a chance to attend a large university or college. This opportunity, in the form of an athletic scholarship, becomes problematic when looking at the numbers of Black males who do not graduate (approximately 48 percent) and those who do not reach the National Football League. Magnifying the issue is the fact that 54 percent of all Division-I and more than 60 percent of power-five conference football players are Black. Additionally, the media is a major partner with the NCAA and its member institutions. Historically, the relationship between Black males and the media has been one of tension due to misrepresentations. To this end, I questioned: how does the media impact the racial and athletic identity development of Black college football players and how do they make sense of it? Also, what are the implications?

In my national study Black college football players reported high levels of athletic identity, including a negatively correlated Afrocentric attitude. In essence, as their athletic identity increases their connection and internalization of Afrocentrism decreases at a significant rate. The data confirms that freshman Black college football players come in with the highest level of athletic identity and are also shielded from racism comparatively more than a departing senior. This is due to the colossal expectations to be a great athlete from their peers, professors, fans, the media, and their own community. To this end, Black college football players found refuge in exercising multiple identities, thereby rupturing the development towards athletic identity foreclosure. The prevalence of Black college football players who feel exploited by their institution is a larger issue than many are willing to admit. They describe experiences that show athletic isolation, being negatively sensationalized and attacked by the media, and inauthentic support for academic endeavors.

In order to remedy the attacks of exploitation and media sensationalism, the study's football players and athletic administrators discussed some impactful approaches. The suggestions were to offer a critical sports media course, targeted mentoring programs, and embracing civically engaged role model profiles as well as multidimensionality. A media education course is fundamental for anyone majoring in communications or media studies, however the usefulness of the course far precedes the classrooms of those specialized studies. Black college football players are continual subjects of 24-hour sports media that inundates consumers with images of criminals, domestic violence, and academic fraud. Thus, learning the tools to critically read and interact with media is imperative to increase positive psychosocial experiences for these young men.

In addition, institutional support for mentoring programs that connect Black players with community professionals and graduate students beginning freshman year can increase their association with multiple identities. This also includes connecting them to Black faculty and staff, as it is a proven catalyst for increasing graduation rates of Black males. NCAA institutions do a great job of connecting current college football players to NFL players, however this method alone may hamper the expression of multiple identities. Tailored mentoring develops networking possibilities, critical consciousness, and exploration of non-athletic opportunities. Through media education and the connection with mentors, a burgeoning class of civically engaged role models can be highlighted, reconfiguring the media landscape from Black males as just exceptional athletes.

The creation of an environment to foster multidimensionality is the job for all campus partners. Although methods vary, the need for academic centered study abroad programs in exchange for athletic abroad trips is a crucial piece. Black college football players are often dissuaded from studying abroad due to their athletic commitment, yet are transported to Ireland and Australia for football related activities. Sponsoring academic focused trips or eliminating consequences for participation in study abroad programs can further progress young men towards graduation and intensify satisfaction with their collegiate degrees. For the young men who do not make it pro, this can be the life changing experience that creates confidence outside of their athletic pursuits. In essence, planting a deep seed that football is not the end-all-be-all as the media overwhelmingly perpetuates for Black college football players.

## **How the Psychosocial Effects of Serious Injuries are Related to the Academic Lives of Student-Athletes**

**Bernadette Maher, *Temple University***

[tue69839@temple.edu](mailto:tue69839@temple.edu)

Student-athletes are a unique population on college campuses, who must tackle the difficult task of balancing their athletic and academic commitments in order to be successful college students. Competing within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) also involves an inherent risk of injury. For the student-athletes who experience serious injuries, the subsequent difficulties can be hard to navigate. While most research focuses on the athletic identity of recovering student-athletes, little is known about how they are affected within the classroom. This study aims to explore this gap in the literature, to gain a better understanding of this aspect of a student-athlete's injury experience.

With Wiese-Bjornstal et al.'s (1998) integrated model of response to sport injury as the theoretical framework, and through a qualitative research design, this study aims to explore the following research questions:

R1: What are some of the psychosocial responses (cognitive appraisals, emotional and behavioral responses) student-athletes experience in response to a serious injury?

R2: How are these psychosocial responses related to a student-athlete's academic life (psychologically and behaviorally)?

R3: How are these psychosocial responses related to the balance between a student-athlete's athletic and academic responsibilities (psychologically and behaviorally)?

In response to the first research question, the related findings were meaningful in that they supported the use of Wiese-Bjornstal et al.'s integrated model of response to sport injury (1998) as a theoretical model through which to analyze and organize student-athletes' experiences with serious injuries. Of the 19 possible responses listed in the model—six under cognitive appraisals, six under emotional responses, and seven under behavioral responses—18 were observed in at least one of the 10 participants.

The most common cognitive appraisals, experienced by all ten participants in the study, were goal adjustment, sense of loss or relief, and cognitive coping. The most common emotional responses, also experienced by all participants, were fear of unknown, frustration/boredom, and positive attitude or outlook. In terms of behavioral responses, those experienced by all ten participants included adherence to rehabilitation as well as the use/disuse of social support.

The data for the second research question revealed that all 10 participants had psychosocial effects of their injuries that were related to their academics in some way. Psychologically, the effects of serious injuries caused these student-athletes to experience academic goal adjustments, similarly to how many of the participants adjusted their athletic goals as well. The emotional effects of their injuries also psychologically affected these student-athletes. For example, sadness and frustration from their injuries sometimes made it difficult for the participants to focus on their schoolwork. Others felt that having to deal with their injury and their schoolwork at the same time was incredibly stressful, and caused them to feel overwhelmed. The biggest behavioral change that occurred in terms of academics was a shift in time management, which was necessary due to changes to their daily routines because of their injury.

Regarding the third research question, what was found through data analysis was that many of the

participating student-athletes experienced changes in the way they split their time and energy between these two commitments, both psychologically in terms of which of the two they prioritized, as well as behaviorally in terms of changes in routines.

One of the key aspects of Wiese-Bjornstal et al.'s integrated model of response to sport injury (1998) is the individualized nature of the experience. What is evident in the data collected from this study is that this is true in terms of student-athletes' academic lives as well. Just as the effects of injury are unique to each person, the same appears to be true for how these effects are then related to academics, as well as the balance between athletic and academic commitments. A student's academic life, similarly to their athletic journey, is complex and different for each person, so it will likely be affected differently in the occurrence of a serious injury.

What was true for all ten participants was that their injury experience was related in some way to their academic life, as well as the balance between their sport and schoolwork. In this study, there wasn't anyone who had experienced a serious injury and then found that it had absolutely no effect on their academics, either psychologically or behaviorally. It appears that the effects of serious injuries are related to student-athletes' academic lives, and most importantly this study shows that this previously unexplored topic is worth studying further.



## **Student-Athlete Pregnancy in Division I and Division II Athletics**

**Candice D. Williams, MA, LPC, *Sam Houston State University***

[candice.williams@playerstrust.com](mailto:candice.williams@playerstrust.com)

Realizing the choice of being a mother and student-athlete is not easy. Pregnant student-athletes must decide whether to continue or terminate the pregnancy, whether to parent or place the child in an adoptive home, how to continue with academic goals and professional goals, how to pay for medical and living expenses, and how to tell significant others such as their coaches, peers, partner, and family members about their pregnancy. Furthermore, the emotional, social, and financial responsibilities associated with being both a parent and student may significantly impact a student-athlete's overall wellbeing, especially if there is no readily apparent support to help mediate the transition into motherhood.

Just how prevalent is student-athlete pregnancy? Data detailing the number of student-athletes who experience a pregnancy is absent in the literature. Previous research investigating the effect of pregnancy on elite athletes has observed that while competing in recreational and professional sports enhances the physical and psychological well-being of women, their participation is often compromised by domestic responsibilities. However, few studies focus primarily on the experiences of pregnant and mothering student-athletes who compete at the collegiate level. Therefore, understanding the meaning of maternity for college student-athletes may help to enhance resources for female student-athletes confronted with challenges linked to pregnancy while competing at the collegiate level.

The following research question guided this study: What are the lived experiences of a select group of female student-athletes who experienced a pregnancy while competing at a NCAA Division I or Division II University? In-depth interviews were conducted with twelve student-athletes who experienced a pregnancy while competing in college sports and was a mother to at least one child at the conclusion of their collegiate athletic career. Participants represent four different sports across two NCAA divisions which included basketball, track and field, volleyball, and tennis. Ten (83%) of the participants reported competing at the Division I level and two (17%) reported competing at the Division II level.

The ages of the participants ranged from 22 to 35 with a mean age of 21.2 years. Years since last participating in a collegiate sporting activity ranged from 0 to 10 years with mean years of 3 years. All participants (100%) reported receiving an athletic scholarship during their career as a student-athlete. In addition, seven (58%) reported they competed in college sports for 2-4 years and five (42%) reported they competed during all 5 years of their athletic eligibility. Of the total participants in this study, six (50%) were Black or African American, four (33%) were Multiple Heritage, and two (17%) were White or Caucasian.

Among the twelve athletes who represented the research sample, eleven (92%) reported that their pregnancy was not planned and one (8%) reported that their pregnancy was planned. Nine (75%) of the participants reported competing in collegiate athletic activities (i.e. practice/or a game) during their pregnancy and three (25%) reported they did not compete in any collegiate athletic activities while pregnant. When asked if they were made aware of their legal rights as a pregnant student athlete by anyone on the athletic department staff, five (42%) reported they were informed and seven (58%) reported they were not. Nine (75%) of participants reported returning

back to their sport and three (25%) reported they did not return back to their sport following the birth of their child due to the following: graduated from college or financial reasons.

Major themes that emerged from the interviews included: (1) pregnancy decisions, (2) maternal mental health, (3) access to prenatal care and parenting resources, (4) the effect of pregnancy/motherhood on training and competing, (5) the effects of training and competing on pregnancy/motherhood , (6) social support, (7) organizational support, and (8) advice and recommendations. The shared experiences of the women in this study offer insight into improving the NCAA's development of resources and model policies for pregnant and parenting student-athletes in the following areas: (a) the development of more congruent support and resources for student-athletes faced with a pregnancy crisis, (b) accommodations that support the physical and mental health, and academic progress of pregnant and parenting student-athletes, and (c) programing that address the transitional barriers associated with pregnancy and motherhood to assist and educate student-athletes who become pregnant.

## **2015**

M. Bird, [Attitudes Toward Seeking Online and Face-to-Face Counseling](#)

M. Byrd, [Impulsivity in Concussed Collegiate Athletes](#)

L. Larsen, [Narrative Inquiry of Eight Black Female Assistant Coaches in NCAA Division I WBB](#)

C. Schaeperkoetter, [Athletics department success for small colleges](#)

L. van Raalte, [Student-Athletes' Stress Coping Experience](#)

## **Student-Athlete and Student Non-Athletes' Attitudes Toward Seeking Online and Face-to-Face Counseling**

**Matthew D. Bird and Graig M. Chow, *Florida State University***

[mdb14b@my.fsu.edu](mailto:mdb14b@my.fsu.edu)

Student-athletes face a number of stressors when entering college such as moving away from home, balancing their academic commitments with athletics, dealing with high pressure situations and performance results, injury, and the eventual end of their athletic career. Due to the additional stressors faced by student-athletes, it should come as no surprise that this population experiences mental health disorders at similar rates compared to their non-athlete counterparts. Furthermore, student-athletes experience a number of unique barriers that may deter this group from seeking the psychological help which they need. These barriers included a perceived lack of time, a negative view toward seeking help, and the stigma associated with receiving mental health treatment. Online counseling is a form of mental health help that possesses a number of benefits such as anonymity and convenience which could help reduce the barriers that student-athletes face, however, little is known about the attitudes that student-athletes hold toward this method of counseling.

The purpose of this study was to investigate student-athletes' and non-athletes' attitudes toward online and face-to-face counseling. More specifically, the authors wanted to investigate the difference in attitudes that student-athletes hold toward online and face-to-face counseling, the difference in student-athletes and non-athletes' attitudes toward online and face-to-face counseling, and the influence of athletic status (student-athlete or non-athlete), athletic identity, self-stigma, and perceived stigmatization from others, on attitudes toward online and face-to-face counseling.

Participants in this study included 101 NCAA Division I student-athletes and 101 non-athletes from a large southeastern university. Non-athletes were matched to student-athletes on gender and ethnicity as these variables have been found to influence attitudes toward counseling in previous research. Attitudes toward counseling held by participants were assessed by scales that provide measures of participant's value, and discomfort, toward each form of counseling. Additionally, self-stigma, perceived stigmatization from others, and athletic identity were measured using existing measurement scales.

Results of this study would show that student-athletes favor face-to-face counseling over online counseling. That is, student-athletes report more value in face-to-face counseling, and less discomfort in face-to-face counseling compared to online counseling. Moreover, student-athletes hold less favorable views toward both forms of counseling compared to non-athletes. In this study, student-athletes reported less value in both forms of counseling compared to non-athletes, but the groups did not differ on the levels of discomfort placed in each form. Results from this study would suggest that neither athletic status nor athletic identity influence the amount of self-stigma, or perceived stigmatization from others experienced by participants. As self-stigma increases however, all participants report less value and more discomfort in online counseling, and student-athletes report more discomfort in online counseling. In contrast, when perceived stigmatization from others increases in the sample, participants report more value in online counseling.

The less favorable attitudes held toward online counseling by student-athletes may be explained by a lack of knowledge that student-athletes have in regard to this method of counseling. Although online counseling was presented as counseling using videoconferencing, participants in

this study may have been unaware as to what online counseling involves, and what the relationship between a client and a professional entail. Therefore, they may not fully understand the benefits that this modality of service delivery offers. Due to the matching used in this study, the lower value placed in counseling by student-athletes may not be due to differences in gender or ethnicity between the groups. Furthermore, as athletic status did not influence the levels of stigma reported by participants, the lower values placed in both forms of counseling by student-athletes may not be explained by a difference in levels of stigma between the two groups. Despite face-to-face counseling being the favored method in this study, online counseling may be particularly beneficial for those presenting higher levels of stigma as it was seen that those with higher levels of perceived public stigma reported more value in the online method.

Findings from this study have implications for campus counseling centers and athletic departments. Future research in this area should focus on educating student-athletes as to the outcomes that can be achieved by engaging in mental health treatment. If more is known about how counseling can help, then student-athletes may place higher value in these services. Future studies should also focus on teaching student-athletes about what online counseling involves and the benefits provided by this form of counseling. If student-athletes better understand the process of online counseling, attitudes toward this form of therapy may increase, and more individuals would be willing to seek this kind of treatment.

# Experiences of Impulsivity, Anxiety, and Anger in Concussed Collegiate Athletes: A Mixed Methods Study

Megan Byrd, *West Virginia University*

[mbyrd15@gmail.com](mailto:mbyrd15@gmail.com)

The effects of sport-related concussions are a public health concern (Kelly, 1999) that have garnered attention with researchers and practitioners alike. The somatic and cognitive effects, which are often used for concussion diagnosis, have been studied more extensively than the emotional effects commonly reported by athletes. The emotional effects, specifically impulsivity, anger, and anxiety, have been studied more rigorously in a clinical population following head trauma, but these findings have not been extended in an athlete population. Athletes, specifically collegiate athletes, have emotional responses to injury as evidenced in research pertaining to musculoskeletal and orthopedic injuries (Tracey, 2003), but there is a lack of research specifically targeting concussed athletes.

To add to the existing research in this area, this study used a dual approach to examine impulsivity, anxiety, and anger in collegiate athletes following sport-related concussion. A repeated-measure design, followed by semi-structured interviews was utilized to determine if athletes are experiencing these emotions, and if so, when during the recovery process. The interviews provided athletes with the opportunity to talk about these emotions and describe how they make sense of and cope with these experiences.

Athletes were recruited from multiple universities in the East and Midwest regions of the United States. Surveys were administered within 10 days of the athlete's diagnosed concussion and again 10 days later. Impulsivity was measured using the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale –II (BIS-II; Patton, Stanford, & Barratt, 1995), anger was measured using the state scale of the State-Trait Anger Inventory (STAXI-2; Spielberger, 1999), and anxiety was assessed on the Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item screening measure (GAD-7; Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & Lowe, 2006). Interviews were completed after the athlete had been medically cleared to return to play.

Currently, 12 athletes have completed the surveys and of those, five consented to the follow-up interviews. The athletes had an average of four concussions in their collegiate career and the most experienced in their current season was two. The athletes endorsed the strongest feelings of all three variables during the first survey time point, with anxiety and anger consistently scoring the highest. Two of the athletes scored above a ten on the GAD-7, which is indicative of severe anxiety. Both athletes were referred to the counseling services at their university by the principal investigator. The athletes' scores were monitored for their second survey and both of their scores dropped below ten. Both were participated in an interview where their anxiety scores were addressed and counseling was again recommended.

Several themes were identified from the interviews with athletes. The major themes were school, loss of control, isolation, and frustration. Athletes discussed how they were unable to keep up with school work due to their symptoms. Loss of control referred to their recovery and feeling as if they could not do anything to return to play sooner as well as not feeling in control of their own emotions. One athlete said, "I felt angry all the time and I didn't know why." Similarly one said, "I had all these feelings.. were they normal? Do other people feel like this too?" Another athlete discussed how feeling isolated led to her frustration, "Because I didn't look injured, people didn't think I was injured. That was hard because you're hurting but you can't talk about it because people don't understand." Athletes believed that people wanted to understand, but their symptoms were difficult to explain.

Based on the data collected from surveys and interviews in this study, there are recommendations for medical professionals and staff. The first is the inclusion of an anxiety measure in return to play concussion protocols. All athletes spoke about their anxiety in regards to different aspects of their recovery, including their unknown playing status and how long their

symptoms would last. Most importantly, of the two athletes who endorsed severe anxiety symptoms, only one had previously been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. A second suggestion is to offer athlete education groups on campuses specifically for concussed athletes led by a sport psychology practitioner or someone who is educated in the emotional symptoms of concussions. This would provide athletes a place to discuss their symptoms and help normalize their experience so that they can better understand why they feel the way they do.

By incorporating anxiety measures into the return to play concussion protocol and offering education groups on campuses, athlete mental health can be addressed in a proactive way. Too often athletes suffer in silence and it leads to tragedies in the college sport world that can be prevented.

# **“I Haven’t Worked to be a Token:” A Narrative Inquiry of the Experiences of Eight Black Female Assistant Coaches in NCAA Division I Women’s Basketball**

**Leslie K. Larsen, PhD, CC-AASP, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville***

[LLarsen234@gmail.com](mailto:LLarsen234@gmail.com)

## **The Scout**

In the 2014-2015 academic year, 4,984 women played NCAA Division I women’s basketball (NCAA, 2016). Of these women, 2,543 identified as Black women, while only 50 of the 345 head coaches and only 314 of the 1044 assistant coaches of these athletes identified as Black women (NCAA, 2016). To state this more simply, 51% of the athletes in NCAA Division I women’s basketball are Black females; in contrast, only 26% of the coaches are Black females. While initiatives encouraging Black women to pursue careers in coaching are being implemented by the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) and the NCAA (e.g., *So You Wanna Be A Coach*), little research has been conducted to probe the underlying issues related to the underrepresentation of Black female coaches. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to use narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of Black female assistant coaches in NCAA Division I women’s basketball by examining three important components: (a) the roles they are asked to fill; (b) the ways being a Black female has impacted the participants’ experiences as an assistant coach; and (c) the ways that Black women cope with the multiple oppressions they face in NCAA Division I sports.

## **Film Session**

During face-to-face interviews, participants described their path into coaching, the roles they are asked to fill, and the ways they cope with the multiple oppressions they experience as Black women in coaching. Four themes arose throughout a thematic analysis of these narratives, and each will be discussed below.

### ***Pregame: Learning to coach***

All of the participants in the current study were former high-level basketball players, and the majority of them were influenced to go into coaching because of the positive impact of the Black females who coached them. Additionally, the participants discussed gaining coaching knowledge from informal (e.g. daily experiences) and informal learning situations (e.g. conferences).

### ***First half: Experiences from the first 10 years***

The participants in this study who had been in coaching for less than 10 years stated that being a Black female often put them in a better position to obtain jobs. Rhea said, “Everybody wants a Black female on staff.” Though they felt confident in being hired as assistant coaches, the participants recognized that they would likely be the only Black female on the staff and that their role would be recruiting and mediating. These coaches accepted this because they believed that if they worked hard, good things (e.g. career advancement) would eventually happen for them.

### ***Second half: Experiences from the last five years***

A noticeable shift occurred in the narratives of the participants with more than 10 years of coaching experience. These participants spoke of being prepared to be a head coach; however, they were not sure that they would be allowed that opportunity. They also discussed that as Black females they were stuck in a “box” and “pigeonholed” as recruiters even though they wanted more on-court coaching responsibilities. Lastly, the participants expressed frustration in their need to constantly prove themselves to be taken seriously as coaches.



### ***Overtime: Thinking about the future.***

The participants indicated a desire to become a head coach despite realizing the added pressures and lack of leeway that many Black female head coaches experience when compared to their White male and female counterparts. They also brainstormed several ways to get more Black females into coaching including more workshops geared toward Black females, administrators being more open to hiring Black females, and more Black female coaches being intentional about mentoring future generations of coaches.

These results speak to the importance of giving Black female coaches a variety of roles to expand their coaching knowledge. Limiting the roles that Black female assistant coaches are assigned could hinder their opportunities for growth as a coach and as a result, reduce their likelihood of becoming a head coach in the future. These results also bring to light the unjust hiring practices at the institutional level and the possible negative effects gendered racism has on the psychological health of Black female assistant coaches.

### **Game Plan**

It is hoped that these findings will lead to the development of interventions that can empower NCAA Division I Black female coaches as well as challenge current structural ideologies that disadvantage Black female coaches in this context. Further, creating a more inclusive environment at NCAA Division I institutions could enhance the experiences and coaching career aspirations of Black female student-athletes by allowing them to see empowered Black female role models in coaching.

# **“Alternative Success Theory”: An examination of what athletics department success means for small colleges**

**Claire C. Schaeperkoetter, *University of Kansas***

[claires@ku.edu](mailto:claires@ku.edu)

What?

The small college athletics environment is a distinctive faction of the university that has arguably represented a shift in approaches and strategies for enrollment attainment goals. The stakes for many of these small schools are perhaps higher than simply competing for on-field success. For a school where student-athletes make up a small percentage of the student body and where athletics departments measure success on wins and losses, if the athletics program loses or ceases to exist, the school will still survive. If a small school “loses” with their definition of success and the athletics department does not attract student-athletes (and their tuition dollars), the school may not survive. Further, by gaining a holistic understanding of the small college athletics environment, we can better understand how such an “Alternative Success Theory” contextualizes sport as its own entity but also as an important faction of macro-level campus-wide processes.

## **Purpose and Method**

The primary purpose of this study was to explore alternative definitions of success and the overall role of athletics in the survival of small colleges where student-athletes make up 20% or more of the student body population. Specifically, in-depth interviews were conducted with NCAA Division III athletics directors, administrators (e.g., president, provost, Vice President for Enrollment Management), and faculty athletics representatives to better understand how university and athletics administrators define athletics program success at small colleges and how such definitions impact financial and organizational priorities and decision-making. In all, 33 in-person interviews were conducted at 11 different Division III institutions across seven different states. At each of the 11 schools, the athletics director, one high-level administrator, and one faculty athletics representative were interviewed for a total of 33 interviews.

## **Main Takeaways**

- In general, expectations about winning/losing were not discussed as part of the hiring process when athletics directors were hired.
- Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs) were asked if they ever had to navigate any tensions between groups in their roles as the FAR. Each of the interviewees indicated that tension was almost exclusively about student-athletes missing class time for competitions. As a result,

while conference competition scheduling tended to be mostly out of the control of the athletics department, factions of faculty blamed the athletics department for class-competition conflicts. Many FARs did indicate they felt it was part of their FAR role to dispel this misconception amongst faculty members.

- When asked what goes into judging whether the athletics program was successful or not, many interviewees indicated the importance of the student-athlete experience, enrollment, retention, gaining more resources, and competitiveness. Importantly, competitiveness was not usually at the top of the list regarding what was valued most. Rather, valuing the student-athlete experience was considered to be mutually beneficial for enrollment and retention.
- Interviewees were asked what role tuition discounting for the general student body played in the overall institution's financial stability. Respondents indicated that the high tuition-high discount model was extremely important and represented a change in the financial landscape of small colleges. Further, there was an emphasis on the importance of coaches' recruiting in order to make up gaps in financial aid packages between their institutions and the financial aid packages of competitors.
- Interviewees were asked to think about what would happen to the institution if the athletics department ceased to exist. Respondents used words such as "devastating," "catastrophic," "big trouble," "cripple us almost completely," and "we would close down," further demonstrating the critical role of small college athletics to the overall institution.
- Interviewees were asked about athletics department strategies to add stability to the athletics department and the institution. Many spoke of the role of having specific roster size targets and of the notion of adding sports to increase enrollment, all as a shared discussion between coaches, athletics directors, and campus administrators.
- The willingness to adapt was emphasized as well. Athletics directors, campus administrators, and faculty spoke of the trend of adding more full time head and assistant coaches. Doing so dually helps with recruiting/enrollment and also with student-athlete experiences because more full-time coaches provide stronger on-campus mentors.
- Athletics directors, campus administrators, and faculty were asked about the specific missions of the athletics department and the university. Many relied on the Division III philosophy with programmatic development. Interviewees indicated using the Division III philosophy as a guide was extremely helpful because it contains a large a set of measurable, actionable items.
- When asked how level of a playing field Division III athletics is, nearly all respondents indicated that it was clearly not a level playing field because of varying levels of resources, academic offerings and prestige, differing endowments and enrollment numbers, and whether the institution is public or private.

# Evaluating Student-Athletes' Stress Coping Experiences in their Academic and Athletic Lives: A Test of the Stress-Buffering Model

Lisa van Raalte, *Arizona State University*

[Lisa.vanraalte@asu.edu](mailto:Lisa.vanraalte@asu.edu)

A formidable research literature indicates that stress can significantly harm one's physiological and psychological well-being, and there is extensive agreement that social support can help assuage those negative effects. Theorists of the stress-buffering model predict that social support will moderate the stress coping response. For collegiate student-athletes, the stress that accumulates across their dual roles as a student and an athlete is arguably unavoidable. Stress sources may include pressures from meeting scholarship criteria, athletic culture-shock, brawn-no-brain stereotypes, and managing their dual roles as a student and athlete. Fortunately, student-athletes are also afforded a myriad of support networks that can help mitigate the harmful effects of stress. For example, athletic departments have ensured student-athletes have access to free academic advising, tutoring, student study centers, athletic training, and doctors among other interpersonal support groups. Student-athletes may also receive support from family, friends, teammates, and the community. The purpose of this study was to test the stress-buffering model and to examine how five different types of social support influence the stress-coping process for student-athletes.

This study included  $N = 459$  Division I collegiate student-athletes. The sample included student-athletes from 18 different sports and 18 different colleges, were predominantly Caucasian, and included those on partial scholarship ( $n = 189$ ), full scholarship ( $n = 119$ ), and those not on scholarship ( $n = 99$ ). The sample included both men ( $n = 140$ ) and women ( $n = 267$ ) and the average age of participants was  $M = 20.18$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ . Student-athletes were sent an online survey where they were asked to think about their role as a student and as an athlete and completed the following measures: stress, social support, self-efficacy, and performance. It was predicted that (H1) stress would negatively predict self-efficacy, (H2) social support would moderate the relationship between stress and self-efficacy, and (H3) self-efficacy would positively predict performance (in both an academic and athletic setting). A research question was also posed that asked how student-athletes' dual roles influenced performance in each setting. To test these predictions, a series of hierarchical linear regressions were conducted. Results were mixed and provided partial support for predictions as well as interesting exploratory results.

For the first hypothesis, in both an academic and athletic setting, stress negatively predicted performance such that the more self-reported stress reported, the worse performance student-athletes felt in their academic and athletic lives.

For the second hypothesis, social support did not moderate the relationship between stress and self-efficacy, however, social support was a positive predictor of self-efficacy such that the more social support a student-athlete perceived was available, the higher their feelings of capability in their academic and athletic lives. Exploring this finding further, esteem support and information support were the only significant support types of self-efficacy (emotional, network, and tangible support were not significant predictors of either academic or athletic self-efficacy).

The third hypothesis was supported; self-efficacy positively predicted performance in both an academic and athletic setting such that the more capable a student-athlete reported feeling, the better they reported their performance. Additionally, and only in an *academic* setting, social support moderated the relationship between stress and performance such that when stress is low, it did not matter if social support was high or low, your performance was about the same, but when stress is high, social support makes a significant impact on performance such that the more support

you for during high stress times, the better your performance. High levels of stress and low levels of social support resulted in the lowest performance scores.

The research question was also explored with hierarchical linear regressions. *Academic* stress was a negative predictor, and *academic* self-efficacy was a positive predictor, of *athletic* performance. *Athletic* stress was a negative predictor, and *athletic* social support, self-efficacy, and performance were positive predictors of *academic* performance. Overall, partial support for the stress-buffering model is provided.

Several important implications can be gleamed from these results. First, as esteem support and information support were the only significant predictors of self-efficacy in both an academic and athletic setting, social support structures designed to help student-athletes in their endeavors should reinforce in these two social support types. For example, athletic departments might include training for coaches or teams, or slogans that boost self-confidence (esteem support), and workshops and materials that provide facts and advice for student-athletes in their academic and athletic lives (informational support). Especially as student-athletes dual-roles are influencing performance in each setting, it would be helpful for student-athletes to learn how to manage their time and understand how their roles are not separate constructs, but intermixed in their self-identity.