NCAA Graduate Student Research Grant Program
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Analyzing the Career Pathways and Profiles of Women Head Coaches with Career Longevity in NCAA D-I Sport

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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

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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping Variables by Condition</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th></th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>68.8%</td>
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<td>Academic Self-Concept</td>
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<td>High ASC</td>
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<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low ASC</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>6.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Threat</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>Mitigation</strong></td>
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<td>Gender Identity</td>
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<td>Academic Self-Concept</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stigma, attitudes, and intentions to seek mental health services in college student-athletes
Robert C. Hilliard Ph.D., M.A. (rhilliar@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.

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.
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 REFORMED. 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 SAVIENT ATHLETIC IDENTITY THAT HAS BEEN PART OF WHO THEY ARE FOR THE MAJORITY OF THEIR LIFE. THEIR LIMITED EXPLORATION OF VAILABLE 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career commitments as labels</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career commitments quality</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career commitments knowledge</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current career exploration in-breadth</td>
<td>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 these various career options align with general features of the self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career exploration in-depth</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career identity confusion</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past career exploration in-breadth</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information about this project, please visit our website at: 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).

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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 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.

ACIEVING (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 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.

INSTRUMENTAL FORECLOSED (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 so option seriously considered without much past and current 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 to changes during any life transitions.
- As long as their commitments conform to established norms and standards, they may live a relatively satisfying life, but such a happiness is limited 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 the 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 considerations prior to making commitments and is therefore considered as a somewhat less desirable resolution to the identity crisis. Individuals placed in this status are still in a favorable position to enter adulthood, given that they are committed to pursue their career.

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.

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 nonthreatening informative 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 ancillary to their career commitments without questioning and designating 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)

**PRELIMINARY MORATORIUM (8.9%)**
- Are in the early stage of their career exploration process and highly confused with regards to their career identity because they have not been able to make firm career commitments yet.
- Experience a career identity crisis given the absence of meaningful career commitments.
- Are currently considering various career identity alternatives, but they are not exploring much in depth yet, given that they have not been able to narrow down their career options yet.
- In their attempt to forge a career identity, they may be worried and struggling to find answers to their career identity related questions and identity a career direction in their lives.

**MORATORIUM (23.3%)**
- Have already started to make some career commitments and are more advanced in the exploration process compared to individuals in preliminary moratorium. They are still considering various career identity alternatives but are also investigating more deeply on a few career options.
- Experience a career identity crisis given the lack of established career commitments.
- Are still uncertain as to what their career identity should be, but they are not as confused and worried as those in preliminary moratorium.

Note: Although temporary and a prerequisite to progress to the achievement status, these statuses may cause maladaptive and problematic functioning, as individuals experience discomfort and emotional trouble in the process of constructing their career identity.

**Recommendations**
- Individuals leaving career identity questions unresolved are in most need for help, given that the developmental process of forming a constructed career identity, especially ongoing exploration, may cause anxiety, rumination, self-doubt, and depression. Incipient search and perpetual internal conflicts that appear to be insoluble may end up paralyzing their decision-making abilities. With such challenges, former athletes, especially those who never had to search for a sense of self outside of sport, would benefit from an environment that is supportive of providing structure and oversight for their identity work that needs to be meaningful, organized, reflective, systematic, extensive, focused, and purposeful to resolve identity concerns. The developmental challenges elite athletes must face once they retire from sport call for a need to help them develop strategies, competencies, and skills essential for the formation of a constructed career identity beyond sport. It is important to encourage them to persevere in their search for a meaningful career identity and delay commitments for as long as it is necessary to achieve identity growth in spite of experiencing uncomfortable feelings of void, ambiguity, and uncertainty.

It is worthy of note, however, that the source of distress and instability may mainly stem from the initial steps of identity search, especially when individuals explore various options in a haphazard manner. Although it is advised to avoid making hasty decisions, it is important to offer emotional support in the early stages of exploration and ensure that initial identity work results in the selection of a few career alternatives to prevent them from falling into diffusion. Thus, a tradeoff must be made between aborting prematurely exploratory processes to avoid discomfort and remaining stuck in incipient explorations for fear of being locked into the wrong career choice.

Former athletes should be encouraged/advised to:
- Continue to consider various career options by gathering relevant career information and trying out career roles they might see themselves pursuing.
- Assess the extent to which those career options are in line with their potential talents, inclinations, and interests, and seek out emotional support to help them with the career decision-making process.
- 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.
- Implement and engage in their chosen career option(s) in daily lives by obtaining required education/credentials and gaining related professional experiences. As experiences are accumulated, they must continue to evaluate those chosen option(s) and monitor the attributes of the career(s) that are most personally expressive and rewarding to them. If evaluation is found to be unsatisfactory, the active consideration of and experimentation with various career identity alternatives start again, and this process will continue until stable career identity commitments are enacted. Thus, a thorough, focused, and extensive exploratory process need to be maintained until sufficient information and experiences have been collected to reach a decision and establish a stable set of career goals, values, and beliefs that will provide a direction, purpose, and meaning to their life.

**Attention:** A prolonged state of confusion may cause former athletes to shorten this exploratory process by prematurely settling into a confused sense of self in terms of their career. Without allocating enough time for career exploration, they are indeed at risk of selecting career options too early in order to avoid enduring the uncertainty that comes with searching suitable career alternatives. The protective structure of the athletic environment, in which former athletes developed, and that encourages conformity and dependence, enhances the likelihood of forming a forced career identity. While making hasty career choices to end this challenging phase would seemingly solve identity concerns and superficially alleviate distress and discomfort, forming a constructed and mature career identity would require them to capitalize on this opportunity to search for different career possibilities, develop a deeper level of self-knowledge, and eventually craft a new sense of self. As long as these statuses do not become permanent (in the case that they are stuck in an incipient exploration), they should not be considered an impediment for career development. Thus, former athletes should view this confusing and challenging period as an opportunity to grow from an emotional struggle to avoid. They should be reminded that this phase is not only necessary but also temporary, and that they are on the right path to self-understanding and self-discovery.

For more information about this project, please visit our website at: 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.

### 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.

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.

**Recommendations**

- **Turning points towards more meaningful career commitments:**
  - Start actively thinking about various career options that might interest them and gathering relevant information about these careers of interest.
  - Begin to carry out career roles they might find appealing and gain a better understanding of these careers' 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 eventually career commitments. They must also assess the extent to which those career roles 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 planned 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. Wondering 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**

- **Turning points towards more meaningful career commitments:**
  - Start actively thinking about various career options that might interest them and gathering relevant information about these careers of interest.
  - Begin to carry out career roles they might find appealing and gain a better understanding of these careers' 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 eventually career commitments. They must also assess the extent to which those career roles 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 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 planned approach to life.

For more information about this project, please visit our website at: [www.liminarsproject.org](http://www.liminarsproject.org) or contact Dr. Elodie Wendling at ewendling@gsu.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 (Aim 1).
- 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 (Aim 1).
- 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 (Aim 2).
- 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 (Aim 3).
- 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 (Aim 3).

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.
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

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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 next day).

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.
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 ($\beta = 0.18$, $p<.01$) and general social support ($\beta = 0.19$, $p<.01$) 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.
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. 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. 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. 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 (Mage = 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 ($p < .05$). 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). 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. 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, 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

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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 Saille, 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.
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 snowball 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

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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

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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 the 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

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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) programming that address the transitional barriers associated with pregnancy and motherhood to assist and educate student-athletes who become pregnant.
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 form 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

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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

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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

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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.
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 ($n = 269$) 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.