

An Examination of Athletic Identity and Identity Foreclosure among Male Collegiate
Student-Athletes

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ABSTRACT

Evelyn M Oregon: An Examination of Athletic Identity and Identity Foreclosure among Collegiate Student-Athletes
(Under the Direction of Dr. Richard Southall)

This study was designed to extend the previous investigation of athletic identity and identity foreclosure among male college athletes. Specifically, utilizing previously developed scales; Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) and the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS), this study assessed a sample of male college athletes' AIMS and OM-EIS levels in order to investigate college athletes' levels athletic identity and foreclosure. Further, the study sought to determine if there is significant variance in athletic-identity and identity-foreclosure levels, based on selected independent variables: ethnicity, academic grade, sport, parents' socioeconomic class, educational attainment and ones professional aspirations. Participants were members of the men's football, basketball, lacrosse, and track and field teams at a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division-I institution at the time the data was obtained.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Montcal Moman, who made so many things possible for me, and Emily C. Vickers who opened my eyes to a world I never knew existed.

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I could not have completed this project without the support of all my family, friends and committee. I must first give all the glory and honor to God for without him I would not be where I am. I am most especially grateful to my mother, Regina Ferguson for continually encouraging me to always do what I am anointed and appointed to do and do never doubting me, my Grandfather for all his prayers and support, my closest friends for always supporting me and their understanding. Last but not least I can't go without thanking my Western Kentucky University Family; Dr. Larson for introducing me to research, Dr. G; for being like a father to me and always believing in me and my WKU friends who are now my family.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

College years are a vital period of development and identity formation for students. Developmental tasks include building independence, solidifying a firm identity, learning to maintain relationships, and planning for future lifestyle goals (Cornelius, 1995). Identity formation, in simple terms, is known as the process of development of the explicit personality of an individual in a specific stage in life. It has been suggested that athletics can provide college students with valuable life skills and psychological benefits that may aid in identity formation. The process of identity formation occurs throughout life, but substantial strides are made during ones college years (Miller & Kerr, 2003).

Until recently, there has been little investigation of identity formation among college athletes. However, in the past few years, researchers from various disciplines have begun to explore the degree or strength of athletes' commitment to their athletic role/identity (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Miller, et al., 2003).

College student-athletes exemplify a “nontraditional” group on campus. Student-athletes “are part of a complex social and political system within the university” (Harrison, Stone, Shapiro, Yee, Boyd, & Rullan 2009, p. 78). Student-Athletes attend college, in part, to play at the highest amateur level of their sport, and also to meet the academic requirements necessary and required to participate in their sport (Harrison & Lawrence, 2003). How a

student-athlete manages to balance the many conflicting roles required of them during this already developmentally challenging time is remarkable.

The term “student-athlete,” constructed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in response to the imminent threats of workers’ compensation claims filed by injured college football players (Byers, 1995), is intended to describe a college athlete’s singular existence (role); but – in actuality - it represents college athletics’ duality. In reference to Goffman’s (1959) theory of role engulfment, Adler & Adler (1985, 1987, 1991) documented an environment in which college athletes become engulfed in their “athletic” role at the exclusion of their academic or social roles. Adler and Adler (1987) propose this role engulfment may result from athletes being structurally, socially and academically isolated from other students – both inside and outside of classroom settings. For example, on many campuses, college athletes eat, live, study, practice, and travel together. They share the same workout facilities, the same study facilities, the same tutors, and the same coaches. In addition, many schools offer ‘athlete only’ dining and academic facilities, further segregating athletes from the general student body.

Ryska (2002) noted that over-commitment to an athletic role restricts these students’ active participation in academic, vocational and social achievement domains. Further, high athletic identity increases an athlete’s likelihood of having trouble dealing with sport career or status changes, including career-threatening injuries or the end of athletic an career (Murphy, Petipas, & Brewer, 1996). Studies dealing with athletic identity and identity foreclosure in collegiate athletics have focused on the lack of scholastic achievement and career maturity by college athletes (Diaz, 2008). A limited amount of research addresses explicit characteristics of those with a strong athletic identity (Childs, 2002). Since previous research has shown high athletic identity is not limited to any specific athletes, it is important

to explore athletic identity and identity foreclosure among a wide spectrum of college athletes, utilizing such independent variables as ethnicity, academic grade, sport, and parents' socioeconomic class and educational attainment.

Statement of Purpose

This study has three purposes. First, utilizing previously developed scales: Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) and the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS), this study will assess the levels of Athletic Identity and Identity Foreclosure. Second, this study will provide an assessment for significant differences in athletic identity, and identity foreclosure levels based on the selected independent variables: ethnicity, academic grade, sport, and parents' socioeconomic class and educational attainment. The third purpose will be to compare the athletic identity and identity foreclosure scores of athletes who plan, or hope to continue an athletic career on a professional level to those who do not.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

What are the levels on Athletic Identity and Identity Foreclosure from our sample?

Research Question 2

Are there significant mean differences in athletic identity, and identity foreclosure based on

- a. Ethnicity
- b. Year in School
- c. Revenue vs. Olympic sport
- d. Socioeconomic class (Average yearly income)
- e. Parent's educational attainment.
- f. Future professional aspirations

Research Question 3

Are there significant differences in those who hope to or plan to play professionally based on

- a. Ethnicity
- b. Year in School
- c. Sport

Definition of Terms

- African American/Black: a person having origins in any of the black ethnic groups in Africa (except those of Hispanic origin).
- Athletic Identity: the degree of importance, strength and exclusivity attached to the athletic role that is maintained by the athlete and influenced by their environment (Creslak, 2004) as measured by the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS).
- Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS): single factor sport specific measure to assess the strength and exclusivity of the respondent's identity with the athletic role.
- Division-I (DI): the highest level of intercollegiate athletics sanctioned by the NCAA.
- Educational Attainment (EA): the highest level (grade or degree) of education the participant's parent has completed.
- Ethnicity: as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States.
- Grade of Participant: the grade level at which the individual is classified as freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, or 5th year.
- Identity Foreclosure: an individual who has failed to thoughtfully investigate other available roles and has made a premature, serious commitment to a socially prescribed role (Miller & Kerr, 2003).

- Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS): identity foreclosure measurement instrument.
- Olympic Sport: sports that do not generate revenue for the athletic department or university on a consistent basis.
- Revenue Sport: there is an expectation that the sport will operate at a gain and generate revenue for the university. The NCAA reports that the only sports that consistently generate revenue are Football and men's Basketball.
- Role engulfment: Adler & Adler termed this transformation "role engulfment" When one is forced to narrow their roles and goals from many to putting a focus of all time and energy towards one role.
- Socioeconomic Class (SES): based on the average yearly household income of the participants.
- Student-athlete (SA): are undergraduate college or university students who are participating in intercollegiate athletic (Miller & Kerr, 2003).
- White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, people who indicate their race as "White"

Assumptions

1. It is assumed completion of the survey is voluntary.
2. It is assumed each respondent is a Student-athlete at his respective institution at the time of the survey.
3. It is assumed that all student-athletes are told their answers are kept confidential.
4. It is assumed that all participants understood each aspect of the questionnaire.
5. It is assumed subjects answered objectively and honestly in completing the AIMS and the OM-EIS and demographic survey.

Limitations

1. Due to time and resource constraints, this study is limited to a sample of current male student-athletes at a select institution in the Southeast region of the United States.
2. This study was limited by the subjects' ability to understand and respond to each question accurately.

Significance of Study

The results of this study will suggest a better understanding of the characteristics that lead to a higher athletic identity and identity foreclosure. By understanding the factors that go into a strong athletic identity, a framework will be provided for better meeting the needs of college athletes in a preventive manner (Williams, 2007). Strong athletic identity has both positive and negative effects for college athletes; therefore, it is necessary to examine the distinctiveness between those who have strong athletic identity and identity foreclosure and those who do not.

Coaches and other support staff will benefit from this information by knowing the dangers of over identification with a single role or identity, and may consider providing information about identity development and the dangers of over identifying with the athlete role when the student-athlete first enters the college or university. By knowing the factors that lead to a high athletic identity and athletic foreclosure, university personnel will be able to develop and implement programs that may prevent a singular focus on athletics and benefit the student-athlete in various ways (Miller & Kerr, 2003).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

College is a vital developmental period for students. Fundamental developmental tasks consist of establishing independence, learning to manage relationships, solidifying a firm identity, and planning for future and lifestyle goals (Cornelius, 1995). Although identity formation occurs throughout life, critical strides are made through late adolescents (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1959; Miller & Kerr, 2003). One of the most important developmental challenges facing an adolescent is the establishment of a sense of identity (Miller & Kerr). College students struggle with a variety of issues such as establishing identities, managing relationships, and planning the future. It has been suggested that college athletics can provide students with valuable life skills and psychological benefits that help with developmental tasks (Griffith & Johnson, 2000). Although there have been benefits found with the participation in college athletics, there also exist some disadvantages. College athletics has also been found to be the most time-consuming extracurricular activity (Richards, 1999). Because of the time commitment necessary to train and compete on a national level, athletes are forced to balance multiple roles during one of the most developmentally challenging times of their lives.

Recent work on identity formation among collegiate student-athletes has focused on the degree or strength of their commitment to the athletic role. Attention has been focused on

two identity variables: athletic identity (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder. 1993) and identity foreclosure (Marcia, 1966, 1980, 1993; Murphy, Peptipas, & Brewer. 1996). To understand the dynamics of athletic identity and identity foreclosure in student-athletes, it is beneficial to have a basic knowledge of aspects regarding identity development. College is a dynamic period for young adults' psychosocial development.

Aspects of Identity

The process of developing an identity begins at infancy, and continues throughout childhood, and becomes the focus of adolescence. Ericson (1956) identified the importance of a goal of adolescence as achieving a coherent identity and avoiding identity confusion (Bullock, Merry, & Lukenhaus 1990). A person's identity is multidimensional and includes such elements as physical and sexual identity, occupational goals, religious beliefs, and ethnic background. Whitbourne (1987) contends adolescents explore these dimensions and usually make commitments to a developed identity as they move into early adulthood.

In 1991 Marcia extended Ericson's work and hypothesized identity development involving two steps. First, the adolescent must break away from childhood beliefs to explore alternatives for identity in a particular area. Second, an adolescent makes a commitment to a chosen individual identity. Specifically, Marcia identified four "Identity Statuses" (e.g. Identity Diffusion, Identity Foreclosure, Identity Moratorium, and Identity Achievement) that describe this process of identity development. The core idea is that one's sense of identity is determined largely by the choices and commitments made regarding certain personal and social traits. Marcia suggests that a well-developed identity gives one a sense of one's strengths, weaknesses, and individual uniqueness. A person with a less well-developed identity is not able to define his or her personal strengths and weaknesses, and does not have a well articulated sense of self" (Marcia, 1966). Children begin developing their athletic

identities as early as infancy and continue throughout their childhoods. Parents contribute significantly to their children's early athletic identity development. From posing their children with baseball bats and football helmets, to enrolling their kids in tee-ball, parents have ample opportunity to shape their children's early athletic identities.

Multidimensional Self-Concept

Harter (1990) conceptualized Athletic Identity within the broader theory of multidimensional self-concept. Because multidimensional self-concept theory provides a framework from which to examine the effects of a strong identification with the athlete role (Cornelius, 1995), it is important to discuss self-concept theory as well as the dynamics of multiple roles and potential role strain among college athletes.

Researchers have long contended an individual's athletic identity is one dimension of their psychological self-concept (Brewer, 1991; Brewer, Denson, & Jordan, 1992; Brewer & Linder, 1992; Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1991, 1993; Markus, 1977; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). Studies have found that, an individual's self-concept is determined by their "...perceptions of him or herself and may be influenced by interactions with significant others, reinforcements and attributions for one's own behavior" (Marsh & Shavelson, p. 20). A person's self-concept is often described as being multidimensional, since individuals divide the enormous amounts of received information about themselves into several subcategories or dimensions which are subsequently used to recreate an overall, global self-concept (Harter, 1998).

For each individual, these self-concept dimensions may vary in importance and centrality (Markus & Wurf, 1987). This means certain subcategories may become more developed and more strongly affect an individual's information processing, responses to success or failure in salient dimensions, and choices about activities and relationships

(Cornelius, 1995). In short, “People will choose to participate in activities that are consistent with more highly developed and central aspects of their self-concept, and will be more satisfied with relationships that tend to confirm or validate highly salient dimensions of their self concept” (Cornelius, p. 561).

Social psychologists have pointed out that self-concept plays an important role in social perception, which is the process by which we form impressions of others. Self-concept differs from self-esteem in that self-concept involves peoples’ assessment of their real selves, while they develop self-esteem through comparisons between their actual ideal selves (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Multidimensional self-concept theory suggest that having an athletic identity as a central focus and salient self-concept dimension influences social relationships, chosen activities, and the manner in which individual experiences are processed (Cornelius, 1995).

Role Conflict for The Student-Athlete

Roles have been defined as “the behavioral expectations that are associated with, and emerge from, identifiable positions in social structure” (Callero, 1994, p. 229). For instance, the role of student is defined by the behavioral expectations of a student (i.e., attend class, do homework, and study for exams). Athletes are expected to practice, compete, and train. In some cases, there are social assumptions that athletes behave as “dumb jocks” (Nelson, 1983), and act aggressively (Visek & Watson, 2005) or violently (Otodole, 1997). These expectations may lead to the behaviors of those individuals who hold positions within a social structure (Williams, 2007). Individuals may also choose to behave in a way that is more suited to their personality within the parameters of that social structure (Piliavian, Grube, & Callero, 2002). Individuals can often use aspects of certain roles as a reason for their individual behavior to meet their needs or benefit others (Piliavian et al. 2002).

Role conflict has been defined as “the extent to which a person experiences pressures within one role that are incompatible with the pressures that arise within another role” (Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983 p. 201). One of the first national studies done in 1985 to examine the conflicting demands of being both a student and a collegiate athlete was sponsored by the Center for Athletes’ Rights and Education (CARE). The study focused on a national sample of male and female basketball players from Division I, II and III. The study included a number of questions that addressed the issue of role conflict. In response to the question “Do you feel pressure to be an athlete first and a student second?” Forty One percent of Division I athletes said “yes.” This study also noted that males are more likely than females to feel pressured by coaches. Furthermore the CARE study reported that Division I athletes reported that being a student-athlete had forced them to take fewer courses a semester, cut classes, take less demanding majors, miss important exams, and engage in a variety of other academic shortcuts.

In 1984 Adler and Adler began conducting a qualitative research study of role conflict with the men’s basketball team at a major university. They found that most student-athletes entered the university feeling confident about their academic possibilities. It was reported that this changed by the end of the first year, when the athletes realized how difficult it was to play sports and keep up with academics. Adler and Adler noted that after the first year the athletic role began to dominate all facets of their existence what Adler and Adler refer to as “role engulfment,” In what Schur (1971) defined as where individuals who are engaged in deviant activities become increasingly centered on their deviant role through the effects of labeling.

Adler and Adler’s study also showed that as the student-athletes advanced through school, they began to make a series of practical modifications in their academic attitudes and

goals. It was shown that 75 percent of those who had initially enrolled in professional programs ended up changing their majors to a more feasible one. Others began to do the minimum to get by. According to one player, “If I was a student like other students, I could do well, but when you play the caliber of ball we do, you just can’t be an above-average student. What I strive for now is just to be an average student” (151).

Both the study done by CARE (1985) and Adler and Adler (1991) give a greater understanding into college athletics but also had a number of methodological weaknesses. The CARE study was based on a scientifically insufficient sampling design. The Adler’s study, while a great case study for a single institution, it can and is easily disputed as it only represented one university’s program (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998).

Aware of the imperfections of the above studies in 1987, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), commissioned a multimillion dollar study on college student-athletes. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted the study which was mainly comprised of a survey that compared 4,083 student-athletes with students in general. The study came out with some indicative findings regarding big-time college athletes. It noted that student-athletes were more likely to run into obstacles to getting a quality education. Football and basketball players, were noted to be more likely than other students who participated in extracurricular activities to say that their sport made it much harder to keep up with coursework, study for exams, prepare for classes, and to get the grades they thought they were capable of receiving upon entering school. Football and basketball players also reported that they felt compelled to suppress or ignore their injuries. Student-athletes overall were found to cut twice as many classes.

In addition to validating the findings of earlier research pertaining to the conflicts in the student-athlete role, the AIR study comprised of questions that specifically explored

whether or not sport provides opportunities for self-discovery and personal growth. The findings were alarming. “When compared to students intensely involved in other extracurricular activities, Division I athletes found that sport participation made it harder to take on leadership responsibility, develop new abilities and skills, and learn about themselves” (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998, p. 103). Athletes also had difficulty making their own decisions and speaking their minds. “In other words, the women and men in the AIR study reported that being an athlete had made it harder to experience the personal growth and self discovery that an undergraduate education is suppose to encourage” (Sack & Staurowasky, 1998, p. 103).

Athletic Identity

College athletes have been socialized to identify themselves as both students and athletes (Hinkle, 1994). Within this duality are inherent conflicts based upon time and physical commitments. The amount of time, effort, and identity athletes choose to exert toward the chosen self-identify with one or the other has an effect on the behaviors they choose associated with that identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Since the late 1980s, athletic identity has been linked to a variety of attitudes and behaviors. Brewer, Van Raalte and Linder (1990) originally defined athletic identity as “...the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role” (p. 27). Since the 1990s, scholars have altered the definition of athletic identity but all definitions maintain the original key components of the original definition.

Brewer et al. (1993) defined athletic identity as “...the strength and exclusivity of an individual’s identification with the athlete role” (p.2). Hurst, Hale, Smith and Collins defined it as “...the degree athletes identify with the athletic role” (2000, p.432); while Horton and Mack (2000) contend it represents “the extent to which a person identifies with the athlete

role” (2000, p.102). While these definitions provide solid foundations, this study will utilize Creznak’s (2004) definition of athletic identity: “The degree of importance, strength and exclusivity attached to the athlete role that is maintained by the athlete and influenced by their environment” (p. 38).

It has been noted that for athletes, athletic identity holds a unique position in relation to other identities because it is formed early in life (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). Brown and Hartley noted sport-psychologists and sport-sociologists agree that athletes’ strong identification to their sports’ roles begins as early as childhood and continue throughout their developmental and adult years (McPherson, 1980; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982). In 2008 Diaz contended, “Athletic participation can provide one with opportunities for making assessment of one’s talents, values, interest, and place in social networks” (Diaz, 2008, p. 28). Brewer et al. (1993) stipulated that a high athletic identity may prove to be beneficial to an athlete (e.g. Hercules’ muscle), but may also be a liability (e.g. Achilles’ heel).

Negative Effects of Athletic Identity

According to Harter (1990) and Rosenburg (1989) a person’s self-esteem and motivation are more likely to be affected by performances in self-concept areas perceived to be highly important. As has been previously noted, strong athletic identity may have both negative and potential consequences (Brewer et al. 1993). It has also been noted that individuals who possess a high athletic identity are more likely to experience difficulties in transitioning out of the sport role such as being cut from the team, suffering a career ending injury, difficulty making career related decisions. Lalley and Kerr (2003) concluded strong exclusive commitment to an athletic role discourages college athletes from considering the possibility of investigating non-sport career possibilities.

In 1986 Werthner and Prlick conducted in-depth interviews with 28 recently retired elite Canadian amateur athletes. The study revealed that 22 of the athletes expressed having experienced moderate to extreme difficulty in adjusting to retirement from their sport (Partridge, 1998). It should also be noted that of the six athletes who did not express problems in adjusting to retirement, five had remained involved in their sport.

In 1983 Eldridge noted that individuals ascribe a great deal of psychological significance to their involvement in sport and thereby strongly identify with their athlete roles, seemingly unaware of the athletic role's heavy demands and conflict with other roles and activities, such as peer relationships and other social-development opportunities (Brown, & Hartley, 1998). Meyer, (1990) and Parham (1993) reported athletes social development was interrupted by involvement in athletics.

Over a five-year period, Adler and Adler (1989) conducted a study of a major college basketball program at a medium-sized private Mid-South university. Players from this program were predominately black and ranged from lower to middle class. "In general, the basketball program was fairly representative of what Coakley (1986) and Frey (1982) term 'big-time' collegiate athletics" (Adler & Adler, 1989 p. 300). They found these athletes' commitment to the athletic role grew beyond anything imagined or intended. Adler and Adler discovered the more the athletic role served as their "master status", the more difficult these athletes found it to conceive any other identity. The male basketball players invested so heavily in athletics and in their athletic identity, they failed to invest in other immediately available student or social roles, (Adler & Adler, 1991).

Sparkes (1998) did a qualitative study on a participant who was an athlete at the age of 13 was ranked 11th in the country in the tetrathlon and had aspirations to participate for her country in the 1996 Olympics. Then it was found she had a tumor on her back. She admitted

that she invested so heavily in her athletic identity that she disregarded all other possible roles. She even admitted to doing this even after her tumor and medical complications from surgery.

Positive Effects of Athletic Identity

Although a high athletic identity is known for the negative effects it may have the potential to be advantageous to the student-athlete's life satisfaction or overall well-being (Derrick, 2007). Danish (1983) suggested that athletic performance might be improved through a strong, exclusive identification with the athletic role. Increased exposure to athletic experiences coupled with a desire to perform successfully in athletics is a likely motivator that will help one increase his or her athletic skills. In 1990 Pearson and Petitpas noted that a individual with a high athletic identity is more likely to engage in sport and exercise behaviors, and is therefore more likely to benefit from the development of athletic skills, increased and improved social interaction, opportunities to build confidence, and comparative skill assessment. Settles, Sellers, and Damas (2002), found a high athletic identity to be correlated with positive psychological well-being. Gatz and Mseener (2000) noted that athlete self-identities have helped student-athletes develop the appropriate behaviors and ways of expressing their attitudes and beliefs in other social areas.

How athletes view themselves, what is important to them, and what they value all define an athlete's level of identity. Athletic performance is often a key factor in athlete's lives, especially in regards to their identity. This may be due to the perception that sports are a representation of who they are. In 1999, Balague noted how important it is that sport psychologist and coaches understand the difficulty athletes might have in maintaining a balance between sports and other life areas.

Athletic Identity and Academic Year

Research involving athletic identity and academic grades has produced different results. Adler and Adler (1991) determined that collegiate basketball player's athletic identities increased with age. Those results contradict the findings of Brewer et al. (1993) who reported that the results of Athletic Identity Measurement Scale of college students were significantly and negatively associated with the academic year. They agreed that as students get older and are exposed to multiple opportunities that their exclusivity of athletic identity begins to depreciate. Weichman and Williams (1997) studied high school athletes and reported increases in athletic identity throughout the freshmen, sophomore, and junior year with decreases found in their senior year. Former studies show that academic year is related to athletic identity and suggest that an increase in age may result in an increase of athletic identity for those who participate in sports.

Athletic Identity and Ethnicity

There is a lack of research examining the relationship between athletic identity and race (Wiechman & Williams, 1997). Generally athletes who have greater expectations of success in athletics or want to continue sport careers in college or professionally have stronger athletic identities (Brewer et al. 1993). Blacks have been shown to have a significantly higher expectation of playing at the collegiate or professional level (Wiechman & Williams, 1997). This would leave one to believe that Blacks would have a higher athletic identity than Whites. Yet there is an inadequate amount of research that explores athletic identity and ethnicity.

Identity Foreclosure

Identity foreclosure explained by Marcia (1966) occurs when “individuals prematurely make a firm commitment to an occupation or ideology” (p. 558). He went on to explain that people who are foreclosed have not allowed for exploration of their internal needs and values; instead they concede to the demands of their environment and adopted social role identity. Researchers have found evidence of identity foreclosure among college athletes, including a lack of autonomy, low moral development, and career plans (Blann, 1985; Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Sowa & Gressred, 1983). Murphy and Petitpas (1996) note that many authors have “suggested that the physical and psychological demands of collegiate athletics, coupled with the restrictiveness of the athletic system, may isolate athletes from mainstream college activities, restrict their opportunities for exploratory behavior, and promote identity foreclosure” (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Nelson, 1983; Petitpas & Champagne, 1988) (p.240).

There have been both quantitative and qualitative studies that have provided descriptions of identity foreclosure. In 1990 Adler and Adler, in their 5 year study with a top men’s basketball program described the process of role engulfment “whereby individuals engaged in deviant activities become increasingly centered around their deviant role through the effects of labeling” (Adler & Adler, p. 308).

In 1993 Good, Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raatle, and Mahar conducted a study that explored the relationship between athletic identity, sport participation, and identity foreclosure. Participants of this study included 202 males and 301 females from various colleges and universities in the northeast region of the United States. Their sample included varsity athletes, intramural athletes and non student-athletes. Sports participation had an influence on the degree of athletic identity and foreclosure. Good and colleagues found that

non-athletes were significantly less foreclosed with their identity. “It is possible that the demands of sport participation and the restrictive sheltered nature of the competitive sport environment discouraged student-athletes from exploring alternative identities” (Good, Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raatle & Mahar, 1993, p. 7). The researchers also found no significant differences between male and female athletes in their athletic identity and identity foreclosure.

In 1996 Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer conducted a study involving 124 student-athletes, 99 males and 25 females at a Division I institution to examine the relationship between identity foreclosure, athletic identity, and career maturity. The study also investigated the differences in identity foreclosure, athletic identity, and career maturity as a function of gender, playing statuses, and sport participated in. As hypothesized “identity foreclosure and athletic identity were both inversely related to career maturity” (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996, p. 242). There seems to be a negative relationship between high athletic identity, identity foreclosure and realistic career expectations indicating that the athlete role is assigned a degree of importance compared to other activities and roles (Williams, 2007).

In 2003 Miller and Kerr did a study that took place at a large Canadian university and examined the role experimentation of student-athletes using interviews. Researchers found that over-identification with the athlete role was “temporary instead of coexisting or being a precursor to premature identity foreclosure, was succeeded by a period of deferred role experimentation” (Miller & Kerr, p. 214). The findings of their study were inconsistent with previous evidence of identity formation among student-athletes (Adler& Adler, 1989; Blann, 1985; Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Murphy et al. 1996: Sowa & Gressard, 1983; Sparkes, 1998). Miller and Kerr (2003) noted that, “identity foreclosure may be unique to varsity

athletes participating in high-profile programs such as men's basketball and men's football and not prevalent among the general population" (p. 215).

Summary

The majority of research dealing with athletic identity and identity foreclosure has focused on the lack of scholastic achievement, and career maturity by college athletes. Few studies have actually looked at the specific student-athlete characteristics and factors that lead to it. It is essential to identify those athletes who may be at risk for experiencing setbacks due to maintaining an exclusive athletic identity (Brewer & Cornelius, 2001). The effects of a strong athletic identity and identity foreclosure are well known, but the occurrence of athletic identity and foreclosure among specific athletes has not been studied. With that noted, it is imperative to identify characteristics associated with athletes who not only exhibit strong athletic identity, but also those who are foreclosed in the athletic role which leads to identity foreclosure.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The study had three purposes. First, utilizing previously developed scales: Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) and the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS), this study will assess the levels of Athletic Identity and Identity Foreclosure of our sample. Second, the study will provide an assessment to see if there are significant differences in athletic identity, and identity foreclosure levels based on the selected independent variables: ethnicity, academic grade, sport, and parents' socioeconomic class and educational attainment are related to athletic identity and identity foreclosure levels. The third purpose of this study will be to compare the athletic identity and identity foreclosure scores of athletes who plan, or hope to continue an athletic career on a professional level to those who do not.

Research Setting - Survey Participants

Survey participants were chosen based on one main factor. All survey participants were required to (1) be a member of a varsity athletic team roster during the 2009-2010 academic year at the university being tested. Surveys were then distributed to these athletes at a selected Southeastern University.

Members from the men's football team, basketball team, track and field, and men's lacrosse team at the university participated in the survey. The athletes surveyed at a campus that enrolls approximately 18,000 undergraduate and 10,000 graduate students. The

university is considered a premier academic institution and has an annual ranking of successful athletic programs. The University sponsors 26 varsity sports with approximately 800 student-athletes and has an operating budget of approximately \$50 million.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument contained three sections – demographic, AIMS, and OM-EIS questions. In the demographic section, survey participants were asked for their, ethnicity, year in school, socioeconomic class out of a choice of four, and parent’s educational attainment out of a choice of five. At the end of the demographic section the question was asked regarding the participants hope to continue an athletic career on a professional level. The second section of the survey consisted of the AIMS which contained 10 questions. The third part of the instrument consisted of 6 questions from the foreclosure section of the OM-EIS measurement scale

Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS)

The Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) was created in 1993 by Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder. The AIMS is designed to be a single-factor sport-specific measure to assess the strength and exclusivity of the respondent’s identity with the athletic role (Cornelius, 1996). The AIMS has shown a high internal consistency in several studies (coefficient alphas of .93, .87, and .81) and sufficient retest reliability ($r = .89$) (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993).

The AIMS contains 10 questions regarding the respondent’s identification with the athlete’s role. Respondents are asked to rate each statement regarding how much they disagree or agree with the statement based on a 7 point Likert type scale. For example, “other people see me mainly as an athlete” 1 = strongly disagree 7 = strongly agree. Each item is then calculated by adding the response of each question. A higher score on the AIMS is

associated with a greater athletic recognition while low scores are associated with a weaker athletic identity.

Identity Foreclosure Measurement Scale (OM-EIS)

The Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS) was by created in 1979 by Adams, Shea, and Fitch to be an easily administered scoring instrument that can be used for classification purposes or a general measure of individuality or self differentiation ranging from a diffused to an achieved-identity individual state. The OM-EIS in total is composed of 24 items with six items reflecting each of the four identity stages (*Diffusion, Foreclosure, Moratorium, Identity Achievement*) with responses made on a 6-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Adams, 1998).

From the beginning, considerable research has focused on the levels of reliability and validity of the OM-EIS and there has been provided evidence of the internal consistency and convergent validity of the Foreclosure subscale (Adams, 1998). For this particular study Identity Foreclosure was tested with the Foreclosure subscale of the objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS) which consisted of 6 items. Such as “If it’s right for my parents it must be right for me” on a 6 point Likert type scale.

Survey Distribution and Collection Procedures

The department of athletics was contacted to obtain permission for using varsity athletes in the study. Concurrent with seeking institutional approval for the study, the athletic department was contacted and their assistance in administering the survey was granted. Multiple dates and locations for survey completion were determined. The primary researcher served as the survey administrator. Each survey was accompanied by a cover letter that explained the purpose of the study, emphasized the voluntary nature of participation, and provided contact information for the lead researcher in the event of questions. The survey

was distributed to participants in groups at the beginning or end of team meetings for three of the teams. The football-team surveys were administered at nightly study hall and collected as they were completed.

Survey (Data) Analysis

SPSS Statistical Software was utilized to develop descriptive statistics from collected demographic data and frequency counts were taken to build a sample profile of students. The demographic data included: ethnicity, academic grade, sport, parents socioeconomic class, parents educational attainment. All completed surveys were identified with an identification code according to sport.

In order to test for significant differences in the AIMS and OM-EIS factors based upon developed independent variables, independent sample t-tests (alpha .05) were conducted. Since ethnicity and revenue vs. non revenue were only divided into two levels, further post-hoc tests were not required for these variables. In order to test for significant differences in athletic identity and identity foreclosure based upon the independent variables: academic grade, SES, and EA, one-way between subjects ANOVAs were conducted. To determine if a relationship existed between those who plan or hope to continue an athletic career on a professional level to those who do not T-test were run.

After running the above test, significance differences were found between means. The differences among means were so closely related that further tests were needed to validate these results and secure significance. Pearson chi-square analyses were performed to validate the results found between certain variables. Using crosstabs in Chi-square analysis, additional results were seen that could not be understood by simply looking at a mean value. Significant mean values are presented in Table 2. The validation of these means using Chi-square tests are presented in Tables 3-9.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The current study had three purposes. First, utilizing previously developed scales: Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) and the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS) levels of Athletic Identity and Identity Foreclosure were assessed. Second, the study sought to determine if there were significant differences in athletic identity, and identity foreclosure levels based on the selected independent variables: ethnicity, year in school, sport, socioeconomic class, parent's educational attainment and future professional aspirations. The third purpose was to determine if there were significant differences in levels of Athletic Identity and Identity Foreclosure between those who hope to or plan to continue an athletic career on a professional level to those who do not based on ethnicity, year in school, sport and socioeconomic class.

The sample consisted of 83 athletes from the following men's varsity teams: basketball, football, lacrosse, and track and field. These subjects answered a set of demographic questions: ethnicity, year in school, socioeconomic class (household income), and parent's educational attainment (See Table 1.).

Demographics of Participants

Table 1 gives details of all survey participants by team, ethnicity, academic year in school, mother's and father's highest level of education reported average yearly household income and lastly whether they hope to or plan to play professionally. Table 1

Participant Demographics

| | Basketball | | Football | | Lacrosse | | Track and Field | | Total | |
|--|------------|------|----------|------|----------|------|-----------------|------|-------|------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | | | | | |
| Black | 4 | 50 | 10 | 55 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 37.5 | 22 | 26.5 |
| White | 4 | 50 | 8 | 45 | 39 | 95 | 10 | 62.5 | 61 | 73.5 |
| Year in School | | | | | | | | | | |
| First Year | 4 | 50 | 13 | 72.5 | 12 | 29 | 8 | 50 | 37 | 44.5 |
| Sophomore | 4 | 50 | 4 | 22 | 11 | 27 | 4 | 25 | 23 | 28 |
| Junior | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5.5 | 9 | 22 | 3 | 19 | 13 | 15.5 |
| Senior | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 19.5 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 11 |
| 5th yr Sr. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Mother's Education | | | | | | | | | | |
| High School | 1 | 12.5 | 2 | 11.5 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 19 | 8 | 10 |
| Some College | 1 | 12.5 | 5 | 27.5 | 5 | 12 | 5 | 31 | 16 | 19 |
| Bachelors Degree | 4 | 50 | 5 | 27.5 | 22 | 54 | 4 | 25 | 35 | 42 |
| Masters Degree | 1 | 12.5 | 6 | 33.5 | 7 | 17 | 2 | 13 | 16 | 19 |
| Professional Degree | 1 | 12.5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 12 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 9 |
| Ed.D | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ph.D | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| MD (Medical Doctor) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Father's Education | | | | | | | | | | |
| High School | 0 | 0 | 4 | 22.5 | 1 | 2.5 | 5 | 31 | 10 | 12 |
| Some College | 3 | 37.5 | 4 | 22.5 | 6 | 15 | 2 | 13 | 15 | 18 |
| Bachelors Degree | 5 | 62.5 | 3 | 16 | 21 | 51 | 4 | 25 | 33 | 40 |
| Masters Degree | 0 | 0 | 7 | 39 | 7 | 17 | 3 | 19 | 17 | 20.5 |
| Professional Degree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 3.5 |
| Ed.D | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ph.D | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| MD (medical Doctor) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 5 |
| Average yearly Household income | | | | | | | | | | |
| Below \$25,000 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 27.5 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 12.5 | 7 | 8.5 |
| \$25,000 - \$50,000 | 2 | 25 | 2 | 11.5 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 12.5 | 9 | 11 |
| \$50,000 - \$75,000 | 1 | 12.5 | 5 | 27.5 | 5 | 12 | 4 | 25 | 15 | 18 |
| Over \$75,000 | 5 | 62.5 | 6 | 33.5 | 33 | 80 | 8 | 50 | 52 | 62.5 |
| Professional Aspirations | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 6 | 25 | 17 | 94.5 | 9 | 22.5 | 11 | 69 | 43 | 52.5 |
| No | 2 | 75 | 1 | 5.5 | 31 | 77.5 | 5 | 31 | 39 | 47.5 |

AIMS and OM-EIS Descriptive

The mean scores, standard deviations, minimum, maximum and range for all the scales and subscales of the instruments used in the study are all presented. Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) was on a possible scale of 1 to 7. The Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS) was on a possible scale of 1 to 7. Table 2, provided below, gives detailed descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum and range).

Looking at the descriptive statistics, although the means are relatively related within the independent variable for athletic identity measurement, the ranges vary on a larger scale. For example, the AIMS mean score for black athletes was 5.1 and white athletes 4.9, a difference of .2. For the same variable, the ranges were 2.7 and 3.9 respectively. The difference in ranges was 1.2. The same pattern arises with the OM-EIS scale inquiring about professional aspirations. Those who answered yes had a mean score of 3.68 with a range of 6 as opposed to a mean score of 3.5 with a range of 4.4. The difference in means was fairly small at .18 whereas the difference in ranges was 1.6. Additional examples can be found on Table 2. Although it appears that student-athletes are fairly moderate on the measurement scales, the large ranges suggests that both sides of the spectrum are represented.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics Analysis of all Variables

| Variable | <u>AIMS</u> | | | | | <u>OM-EIS</u> | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|------|-----|-----|-----|---------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| | Mean | SD | Min | Max | Ran | Mean | SD | Min | Max | Ran |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | | | | | |
| Black | 5.1 | 0.79 | 3.7 | 6.4 | 2.7 | 4.04 | 0.92 | 2.4 | 6 | 3.6 |
| White | 4.9 | 0.83 | 2.9 | 6.8 | 3.9 | 3.46 | 1.35 | 1 | 7 | 6 |
| Year in School | | | | | | | | | | |
| Freshmen | 5.05 | 0.92 | 2.9 | 6.8 | 3.9 | 3.89 | 1.41 | 1.6 | 7 | 5.4 |
| Sophomore | 4.8 | 0.72 | 3.5 | 6.1 | 2.6 | 3.42 | 1.06 | 1 | 5.2 | 4.2 |
| Junior | 5.12 | 0.85 | 3.8 | 6.4 | 2.6 | 3.52 | 1.32 | 1 | 5.8 | 4.8 |
| Senior | 4.73 | 0.62 | 3.8 | 5.6 | 1.8 | 3.11 | 1.14 | 2.2 | 5.2 | 3 |
| 5th yr Sr. | 4.9 | . | 4.9 | 4.9 | 0 | 3.6 | . | 3.6 | 3.6 | 0 |
| Revenue vs. Olympic | | | | | | | | | | |
| Revenue | 5.1 | 0.77 | 3.9 | 6.8 | 2.9 | 4.06 | 1.37 | 1 | 7 | 6 |
| Olympic | 4.9 | 0.84 | 2.9 | 6.5 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 1.19 | 1 | 6.2 | 5.2 |
| Mothers Education | | | | | | | | | | |
| High school | 5.02 | 1.05 | 2.9 | 6.1 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 1.02 | 2.2 | 4.8 | 2.6 |
| Some College | 4.95 | 0.62 | 3.8 | 6.4 | 2.6 | 3.23 | 0.9 | 2.2 | 5.2 | 3 |
| Bachelors Degree | 4.86 | 0.77 | 3.5 | 6.3 | 2.8 | 3.76 | 1.3 | 1 | 5.8 | 4.8 |
| Masters Degree | 5.34 | 0.97 | 3.5 | 6.8 | 3.3 | 3.84 | 1.58 | 1.8 | 7 | 5.2 |
| Professional Degree | 4.59 | 0.7 | 3.8 | 5.8 | 3 | 3.56 | 1.54 | 1.6 | 6.2 | 4.6 |
| Ph.D | 4.4 | . | 4.4 | 4.4 | 0 | 3 | . | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| MD (medical Doctor) | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |
| Fathers Education | | | | | | | | | | |
| High school | 5.21 | 0.68 | 3.9 | 6.1 | 2.2 | 3.62 | 0.82 | 2.4 | 4.8 | 2.4 |
| Some College | 4.86 | 0.6 | 3.8 | 6.3 | 2.5 | 3.48 | 1.18 | 2.2 | 5.4 | 3.2 |
| Bachelors Degree | 4.97 | 0.79 | 3.7 | 6.4 | 2.7 | 3.74 | 1.36 | 1 | 6 | 5 |
| Masters Degree | 5.08 | 1.15 | 2.9 | 6.8 | 3.9 | 3.63 | 1.42 | 1.8 | 7 | 5.2 |
| Professional Degree | 4.47 | 0.7 | 3.8 | 5.2 | 1.4 | 3.53 | 2.38 | 1.6 | 6.2 | 4.6 |
| Ph.D | 5.3 | . | 5.3 | 5.3 | . | 2.2 | . | 2.2 | 2.2 | 0 |
| MD (medical Doctor) | 4.32 | 0.29 | 3.9 | 4.5 | 0.6 | 3.25 | 0.64 | 2.8 | 4.2 | 1.4 |
| Average Household income | | | | | | | | | | |
| Below \$25,000 | 4.91 | 0.6 | 3.9 | 5.9 | 2 | 3.83 | 1.03 | 2.2 | 5.2 | 3 |
| \$25,000 - \$50,000 | 4.72 | 0.69 | 3.5 | 5.9 | 2.4 | 3.29 | 0.69 | 2.4 | 5.4 | 3 |
| \$50,000 - \$75,000 | 5.13 | 0.91 | 3.8 | 6.4 | 2.6 | 3.56 | 0.91 | 2.2 | 6 | 3.8 |
| Over \$75,000 | 4.95 | 0.85 | 2.9 | 6.8 | 3.9 | 3.65 | 0.85 | 1 | 7 | 6 |
| Professional Aspirations | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 5.18 | 0.74 | 3.8 | 6.8 | 3 | 3.68 | 1.4 | 1 | 7 | 6 |
| No | 4.72 | 0.84 | 2.9 | 6.4 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 1.1 | 1.8 | 6.2 | 4.4 |

Results of Research Questions

Independent t-tests were used to compare mean scores on the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale AIMS and Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status OM-EIS for each of the following: ethnicity (Blacks versus Whites), revenue (basketball and football) and Olympic sports (Lacrosse and track and field), and athletes who hope to play professionally versus those who do not.

A statistically significant difference was found on the OM-EIS between Blacks ($M = 4.04$, $SD = .92$) and Whites ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.36$), $t_{(81)} = 1.86$, $p = .03$. Blacks were shown to have a higher identity foreclosure score than Whites. A significant difference was also found among participants in revenue sports ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.37$) and Olympic sports ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.19$), $t_{(81)} = 2.23$, $p = .03$. Student-athletes in revenue generating sports demonstrated a higher identity foreclosure score than those participating in Olympic sports. A significant difference was found on the AIMS scale between student-athletes who hope to or plan to play professionally ($M = 5.18$, $SD = .74$) and those who do not hope to or plan to play professionally ($M = 4.72$, $SD = .84$), $t_{(80)} = 2.5$, $p = .01$. Those aspiring to play professionally had a significantly higher athletic identity.

Statistically significant differences were found for the above variables using independent t-tests. Although statistically significant, the difference between the means for each t-test was not empirically large (approximately half a point) and each mean was near the center of the 7-point scale. Subsequently, additional analyses were conducted. Chi square tests were conducted to examine the pattern of response for each question on the OM-EIS and AIMS measurement scale for the individual questions that for which there were significant relationships between response and the other variable.

Identity Foreclosure (OM-EIS) Measures

Using Pearson Chi Square, significant relationships were found for the following questions on the OM-EIS measurement instrument. Table 3 displays percentages of response for the participant’s ethnicity for question 6 on the OM-EIS scale : *I’ve never really questioned my religion. If it is right for my parents its right for me.* The Chi-Square analysis enables observation of differences in the pattern of response by ethnicity that is not apparent in a comparison of means. Nearly 20% of Whites responded 1 (strongly disagree) compared to no Blacks choosing that response. Whites are approximately evenly spread on the scale of 1-7. Whereas Blacks more often responded by indicating “Agreement” as over 64% chose a 6 or 7.

Table 3

Percentage Response by Ethnicity Group: I’ve never really questioned my religion. If it is right for my parents its right for me.

| Variable | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
|----------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Blacks | 0% | 9.1% | 9.1% | 13.6% | 4.5% | 27.3% | 36.4% |
| Whites | 19.7% | 13.1% | 13.1% | 18.8% | 14.8% | 13.1 | 13.1% |

$$X^2_{(6)} = 13.28, p = .01$$

Table 4 displays the Chi Square analysis of participants’ ethnicity (Black and White) and their answer to question 1 on the OM-EIS scale: *I might have thought about a lot of different things but there has never really been a decision since my parents said what they wanted.* Nearly 60% of Whites responded 1 (strongly disagree) compared to 30.8% of Blacks. No Whites responded with a 6 or 7. Thirty-seven percent of Black reported scores between 5-7, compared to 7% of Whites.

Table 4

Percentage Response by Revenue vs. Olympic sport: I might have thought about a lot of different things but there has never really been a decision since my parents said what they wanted

| Variable | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
|----------|-------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|----|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Revenue | 30.8% | 23.1% | 7.7% | 3.8% | 19.2% | 0% | 15.4% |
| Olympic | 57.9% | 17.5% | 13.5% | 14% | 7% | 0% | 0% |

$$X^2_{(5)} = 16.53, p = .01$$

Table 5 displays the Chi Square analysis of participant's sport (revenue vs. Olympic) and their answer to question 2 on the OM-EIS scale: *My parents had it decided a long time ago what I should go into and I'm following their plans*. Nearly 60% of Whites responded 1 (strongly disagree) compared to 30.8% of Blacks. Thirty-seven percent of Blacks reported scores between 5-7, compared to 7% of Whites.

Table 5

Percentage Response by Revenue vs. Olympic sport: My parents had it decided a long time ago what I should go into and I'm following their plans.

| Variable | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
|----------|-------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|----|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Revenue | 30.8% | 23.1% | 7.7% | 3.8% | 19.2% | 0% | 15.4% |
| Olympic | 57.9% | 17.5% | 13.5% | 14% | 7% | 0% | 0% |

$$X^2_{(5)} = 16.53, p = .01$$

Table 6 displays the Chi Square analysis of the participant's sport (revenue vs. Olympic) and their answer to question 6 on the OM-EIS scale: *I've never really questioned my religion if it's right for my parents its right for me*. Nearly 40% of revenue sport

participants responded 7 (strongly disagree) compared to 10.5% of those in Olympic sports. More than 73% of revenue sport participants responded with a 5, 6, or 7 compared to 35% of Olympic sport participants. Olympic sport participant responses are approximately evenly distributed over the 7-point range of the scale.

Table 6

Percentage Response by Revenue vs. Olympic sport: I've never really questioned my religion if it's right for my parents its right for me.

| Variable | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
|----------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Revenue | 7.7% | 11.5% | 3.8% | 3.8% | 15.4% | 19.2% | 38.5% |
| Olympic | 17.5% | 12.3% | 15.8% | 19.3% | 10.5% | 14% | 10.5% |

$$\chi^2_{(6)} = 14.16, p = .03$$

Table 7 displays the Chi Square analysis of those participant's who hope to play professionally and those who do not and their answer to question 2 on the AIMS scale: *I have many goals related to sport*. No participants recorded a response between 1 and 4. Of those aspiring to play professionally 76.7% responded with a 7, versus 38.5% for those who have no aspirations to play professionally.

Table 7

Percentage Response by Those who plan to play professionally to those who do not: I have many goals related to sport

| Variable | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
|----------|-------------------|----|----|-------|-------|-------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Yes | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 14% | 9.3% | 76.7% |
| No | 0% | 0% | 0% | 12.8% | 15.4% | 33.3% | 38.5% |

$$X^2_{(6)} = 17.16, p = .01$$

Athletic Identity (AMIS) Measures

Table 8 displays the Chi Square analysis for those participant’s who hope to play professionally and those who do not and their responses to question 4 on the AIMS scale : *sport is the most important thing in my life*. No participants hoping to go play professional chose “strongly disagree”. Of those aspiring to play professionally 67.4% chose between 5-7, compared to the 38.4% of those not aspiring to play professionally. Approximately thirty-six percent of those not aspiring to play professionally (versus 9.3% who do plan to play professionally) strongly disagreed that sport is the most important thing in their life.

Table 8

Percentage Response by Those who plan to play professionally to those who do not: sport is the most important thing in my life

| Variable | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
|----------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Yes | 0% | 7% | 2.3% | 23.3% | 27.9% | 20.9% | 18.6% |
| No | 5.1% | 10.3% | 20.5% | 25.6% | 15.4% | 17.9% | 5.1% |

$$X^2_{(12)} = 39.68, p = .01$$

Table 9 displays answer to question 4 on the AIMS scale and the Chi Square analysis for those participants who hope to play professionally and those who do not: *Sports is the most important part of my life*. No participants hoping to play as a professional chose choice 1. Those aspiring to play professionally 67.4% responded 5-7 compared to 38.4% of those not aspiring to play professionally. Responses between 1 and 3 were found for 48.7% of those not aspiring to play professionally versus only 14% of those who do.

Table 9

Percentage Response by Those who plan to play professionally to those who do not: I spend more time thinking about sports than anything else.

| Variable | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
|----------|-------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Yes | 0% | 7% | 7% | 18.6% | 23.3% | 20.9% | 23.3% |
| No | 5.1 | 5.1% | 38.5% | 12.8% | 20.5% | 10.3% | 5.1% |

$$X^2_{(12)} = 22.37, p = .03$$

There were no significant findings found for the ANOVA's on the AIMS between Blacks ($M = 5.1, SD = .79$) and Whites ($M = 4.9, SD = .83$), $p = .337$, in revenue sports ($M = 5.1, SD = .77$) and Olympic sports ($M = 4.94, SD = .84$), $p = .31$. A one-way ANOVA was used to

answer if the variables, year in school, socioeconomic class and parent's educational attainment had a significant difference on the AIMS measurement scale. No significant differences were found on the AIMS mean based on year in school ($F = .6, p = .7$), socioeconomic class ($F = .477, p = .7$), or parents educational attainment ($F = .207, p = .9$).

There was no significance shown on the OME-IS between student-athletes who hope to or plan to play professionally ($M = 3.68, SD = 1.41$) and those who do not ($M = 3.51, SD = 1.12$), $P = .548$. A one-way ANOVA was used to answer if the variables, year in school, socioeconomic class and parent's educational attainment had a significant difference on the OM-EIS measurement scales. No significant differences were found on the OM-EIS mean based on year in school ($F = .9, p = .47$), socioeconomic class ($F = .26, p = .84$), or parents educational attainment ($F = .48, p = .7$).

Based on the research question: "Are there significant differences in those who hope to or plan to play professionally based on ethnicity, revenue versus Olympic, year in school, and socioeconomic class?" independent t-test results indicated significant difference between Blacks ($M = 1.2, SD = .39$) and Whites ($M = 1.6, SD = 1.36$), $P = .0$. Blacks were shown to have higher aspirations of playing professionally than Whites. A significant difference was also found among participants who participate in revenue sports ($M = 1.12, SD = .33$) and Olympic sports ($M = 1.6, SD = .53$), $P = .0$. Student-athletes in revenue generating sports demonstrated a higher aspiration of playing professionally.

One-way ANOVA'S were used to find significant difference in those who hope to or plan to play professionally based on year in school, and average yearly house hold income. A significant difference was found in year in school ($F = 4.3, P = .01$). Results showed no significant differences in average yearly house hold income classes and those who aspire to play professionally ($F = 2.23, P = .09$)

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary

This study had three purposes. The main purpose was to determine if there were significant differences in athletic identity and/or identity foreclosure levels based on the selected independent variables. These variables included ethnicity, year in school, sport, socioeconomic class, parent's educational attainment and future professional aspirations. A subsequent purpose was then to determine if there are significant differences in those who hope to, or in fact plan to, continue an athletic career on a professional level versus those who do not, based on ethnicity, year in school, sport and socioeconomic class. The final purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of combining previously developed scales such as the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) and Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS) on the aforementioned variables.

Athletic Identity

Athletic identity is defined as the degree of importance, strength and exclusivity attached to the athletic role maintained by athletes and influenced by their environment (Creslak, 2004). Relating athletic identity to race, prior research suggests Blacks identify less with athletics than do Whites. Wiechman and Williams (1997) found that Whites had significantly stronger athletic identities than Blacks. Contrary to Wiechman and Williams'

findings (1997), this study's results showed no significant difference between Blacks and Whites.

Regarding athletic identity and year in school, this study found no significant differences in result across grade levels. This data contradicts prior research (e.g. Adler and Adler, 1991) that found the athletic role in collegiate student-athletes became stronger and more exclusive with age. Adler and Adler (1991) did note, however, that a majority of their participants came in to college with a preexisting strong athletic identity. In another study, Brewer et al. found an inverse relationship as the AIMS score correlated negatively with age in college athletes. They suggested, "...as college students mature and become exposed to a variety of activities and influences, their exclusive identification with the athlete role decreases" (Brewer et al. 1993, p. 13). A later study, completed in 2003 by Miller and Kerr, found the athletic role among college student-athletes was the most important of the student-athlete's identities during their early university years. The inconsistencies between Miller and Kerr's 2003 study may be attributable to setting, as Miller and Kerr's was conducted at a Canadian university that does not offer sizable athletic scholarships or generate significant revenue from athletic events. In this study, participants are part of a high-profile athletic department that supports fully-funded programs, producing normal recognition from peers, fans and nationwide media attention.

In support of this study's results at another level, Wiechman and Williams studied high-school athletes and found no difference across grade levels. Their data failed to indicate that athletic identity strengthened as athletes moved from freshman to senior year. These inconsistencies suggest the need to study athletes from their freshman to senior year to determine if athletic identity remains consistent through the college years. Since over-identification to the athletic role results in poor career planning (Murphy et al., 1996), as well

as greater risk of emotional and psychological distress upon withdrawal from sport (Mainwaring, 1999; Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998), one may assume that it is healthier for athletic identity to dissipate over time. This suggests that those involved in student-athlete development would hope to foster a shift in central focus from athletics to academics in the latter years of a student-athlete's education.

Two relationships added to this study that were not included in previous research include the relationship between athletic identity and the athlete's socio-economic class as well as the relationship between athletic identity and the athletes' parents educational attainment. No statistical significance was found for either of these factors. Further, no statistical significance was found when comparing athletic identity scores in revenue sports versus Olympic sports.

In agreement with Brewer et al. (1993) and Wiechman and Williams (1997), athletes hoping to continue with athletic careers were found to have a significantly stronger athletic identity. Athletes who do not plan to continue their sports careers are less likely to depend on athletic ability to define or label their identity.

Identity Foreclosure

An identity foreclosed individual is defined as one "who has failed to thoughtfully investigate available roles, yet who has made a premature, serious commitment to a socially prescribed role" (Miller & Kerr, 2003, p. 212). Adler and Adler (1989) note that one of the consequences of identity foreclosure is the inability to foresee and plan for future roles. Miller and Kerr (2003), suggest that identity foreclosure may be unique to varsity athletes participating in high-profile programs. Consistent with Murphy et al., (1996), the current findings revealed a significant variance in identity foreclosure scores based on sport

participation, most notably with those in revenue-producing sports having higher levels of identity foreclosure.

Murphy et al. noted that student-athletes may commonly believe a narrow focus on sport is necessary for competitive success (1996). The source of this thought process in revenue generating sports, such as basketball and football, may come from the coach, who reinforces a myopic scope due to his/her own job security issues grounded in winning. As a result, student-athletes may be less inclined to pursue and place emphasis on external activities that distract from their primary focus in sport, and thus helping them foreclose in their identity.

Another significant finding showed that Black athletes had higher identity foreclosure scores than Whites. No past research has focused on a relationship between identity foreclosure and ethnicity. No significant differences in identity foreclosure as a function of year in school, sport, socioeconomic class, parent's educational attainment, and professional aspirations emerged, suggesting that impact on identity foreclosure may be unique to student-athletes who participate in high profile athletic programs (Miller & Kerr, 2003). These findings, however, allow for some interesting speculation. Based on the definition of identity foreclosure, those who plan to play professionally should have a significantly higher identity foreclosure score, yet Miller and Kerr's (2003) findings supported that student-athletes did shift in focus from athletics to academics in upper years of school. It was noted that some were even looking into graduate course work. Those who wish to play professionally would be expected to maintain or strengthen their identity foreclosure as the proximity to their professional career draws closer. That exploration of the student role suggested those student-athletes did not experience identity foreclosure. Although 52% of the participants in this study hope or plan to play professionally, no statistical significance was found on the

identity foreclosure scale, and there was barely any difference in the mean identity foreclosure scores of those who aspire to play professionally versus those who do not.

Professional Aspirations

Statistical significance was found when considering ethnicity and student-athletes' professional-sport aspirations. Results found that more Blacks hoped to play professionally than did Whites. The relationship between ethnicity, athletic identity, and the aspiration to play professionally is two-fold. This study supported previous findings by Wiechman et al. finding that Blacks are known to have lower athletic identity scores than Whites. What comes into question is an assumed reflection of professional athletic aspirations on athletic identity: Since Blacks had a lower athletic identity score than Whites, one would may assume that, Blacks have lower hopes to play professionally than Whites. Based on this study, this likely consistency was not so. What is supported by an analogous assumption is that Blacks had a higher identity foreclosure score along with higher hopes to play professionally than Whites. Based on this finding, one may question the reliability of the athletic identity measurement scale (AIMS). Does it truly measure athletic identity exclusivity, or does it assimilate into aspects of identity foreclosure.

In addition, 82% of the Blacks who participated in this study expressed hope of a professional-sport career. Wiechman & Williams (1997) had similar results, finding that more than half of the entire high-school male and female Black student had goals of playing professionally. As a result, this finding supports McCallum's (2002) contention, that "[we] have a society now where every black kid in the country thinks the only way he can be successful is through athletics" (p. 6).

The societal fixation on a professional sport career stands in sharp contrast to the fact that there are only approximately 1,400 African Americans with professional basketball,

baseball, and football (Gates, 2004). As Gates (2004) noted, such unrealistic expectations is mirrored among college athletes, “Too many have come to believe that it’s easier to become a black professional athlete than a doctor or a lawyer” (p. 2). This perception that sport offers Blacks a unique socioeconomic and career advancement opportunity has a long history (See Edwards, 1990), prompting many Black parents to be more likely than White parents to view their children’s sports participation as a potential economic mobility vehicle for the entire family (Edwards). The embellishment of athletic achievement in the Black family is further intensified by the disproportionate media coverage given to athletes (Edwards, 1990). This should not be much of a surprise, considering the athletic glory, monetary rewards, sponsorship contracts, and subsequent fame derived from these luxurious life styles that the media continually depict as standard of professional athletes.

Professional athletes are idolized and seen as principal male role models for young men and women dreaming of the rewards involved with being successful in professional sports (Johnson, 1992, Sellers, & Kuperminc, 1997). One rarely witnesses the glorification of successful doctors, lawyers, professors, architects, engineers etc., self-made from rags to riches and returning to give back to the community. Blacks should motivate, inspire and encourage each other to explore and fulfill tremendously important, viable roles outside professional athletics, such as in medicine, education, law, media, public service, and so forth (Edwards, 1990; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004).

While no statistical significance was found between those aspiring to play professionally and socioeconomic class in this study, there remains a common belief that within the Black culture excellence in sport will ensure social and economic upward mobility (Braddock, 1980; Coakly, 1994; Stanley, 2006). Stanley (2006) did find significance in those who have reported upward mobility to be a main motivator for Black males who aspire to a

professional-sport career. However, 80% of the study's Blacks who hoped to play professionally reported an average yearly household income of over \$75,000 a year (the highest choice on this survey) reflecting an income category not typically deemed low in American society.

Lastly, there was statistical significance found in relation to sport played, revenue and Olympic sport, and year in school when it came to professional aspirations. A greater number of younger students hoped to play professionally, which may suggest that older students form more realistic expectations as they progress through school. This finding may also be a result of a lack of representation in upper classmen in revenue-producing sports.

The results in significance by sport may be supported by the fact that a majority of those indicated hopes to play professionally participate in those revenue producing sports with more professional status opportunities than their Olympic counterparts. There are obviously national professional leagues for both basketball and football, and the majority of participants in basketball and football in this study were Black.

Limitations

Although steps were taken to reduce potential limitations, this study's results should be viewed in the context. Most notably, the sample consisted of students from one Southeastern NCAA Division-I institution. Thus, there may be limitations in generalizing these findings to those with potentially different levels of playing experiences and views in other parts of the country. In order to provide for ethnic comparison, participants were chosen from basketball, football, lacrosse, and track and field. This final sample is less representative of the actual NCAA population of student-athletes, based on ethnicity as well as revenue to non-revenue participation ratio.. This sample reflected a greater number of first-year and sophomores in revenue sports with a general lack of seniors throughout.

The collection procedures also posed potential limitations. The data-collection setting may have influenced the participant demographic fluctuations in addition to attitude towards the survey. For example, football study hall participants are usually younger athletes, whose attendance is required. Data was collected from those athletes in-season and those out-of-seasons. In addition, although subjects were instructed to respond honestly to items, the administrator could not control outside events that may have influenced how participants responded to items on the measurement instrument.

Although measurement instruments with reported high reliability and validity were used, all the study instruments were self-reported instruments. This creates the risk of participants responding to items with the most socially acceptable response according to them, rather than responding to the items honestly.

Implications and Conclusions

Those hoping to play professionally had a significantly higher athletic identity score than those who do not. There was a significant statistical variance in identity foreclosure based on ethnicity. Blacks were shown to have a higher identity foreclosure score than Whites. There was also a significant difference found among revenue versus Olympic sport participants. Those in revenue sports were shown to have a higher identity foreclosure score than those participating in Olympic sports. Significant differences in those who hope or plan to play professionally were found in the independent variables of ethnicity, sport, and year in school.

Those involved with student-athletes need to have an awareness of and sensitivity towards the ongoing conflict between role identities, and begin to develop programs that prepare those who are foreclosed in their athletic role, assisting in exploration of other roles. Student-athlete development staff, along with coaches, should first be aware of the dangerous

effects of over-identification with a single role and the need for exploration of multiple roles. Secondly, support staff and coaches should provide information on identity foreclosure and athletic identity, and the negative effects of over-identifying with the athlete role.

Studies continue to show that revenue producing sport participants have a higher identity foreclosure score, as well as greater aspirations to play professionally. With this in mind, career planning as a contingency for post sport-career retirement, rather than as an alternative to an athlete's professional sport dream, has been proven to be effective (Nelson, 1982; Peptipas et al. 1992). As a result, those working with student-athletes with high aspirations of playing professionally may find it more effective to be sensitive to ongoing role conflict and aware of athletes' professional aspirations. Such tactics involve not challenging a student-athletes' dream through an emphasis on negative statistics, but exposing them to other available positive options.

Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this study has added to literature discussing athletic identity and identity foreclosure among male college athletes. Since this study was conducted at one university, similar studies should be conducted at other universities, in order to increase the number of participants with different levels of playing experiences and demographic backgrounds. Future research should consider doing in-depth qualitative studies focusing on identity foreclosure among the college athlete (Miller & Kerr, 2003). Research investigating athletic identity and identity foreclosure may benefit from longitudinal, qualitative analyses that may better specify the relationships among athletic identity and identity foreclosure among student-athletes. Research should also consider examining the AIMS' ability to measure athletic identity exclusivity, as Blacks have a higher aspiration to play professionally and a higher identity foreclosure but have a lower athletic

identity score. Additional research should consider a larger sample size to potentially increase discovery of significant relationships between the variables given in this study.

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