**Walking-On: A Narrative Inquiry of Division II Non-Scholarship Student-Athletes'
Identity Development and Pursuit of Success**
by

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Abstract

Student-athletes have long been a population of interest to researchers regarding identity development and academic success. More specifically, researchers have looked into the identity foreclosure of student-athletes; its impact on academic success, motivation, and career outlook; and differences of this foreclosure among student-athletes. Most research, however, centers on the experiences of Division I and scholarship student-athletes, leaving an ambiguity to the experiences of Division II and non-scholarship student-athletes. The little research conducted with this group primarily focuses on academic motivation, athletic motivation, and graduation rates. Because of this ambiguity surrounding Division II non-scholarship student-athletes, I conducted a narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes to understand their identity development and how they define and pursue success. Utilizing an unstructured, life story interview protocol, I interviewed six former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes three times each for 18 interviews. I engaged in a narrative analysis using the theoretical frameworks of the theory of self-authorship and the theory of motivational action conflicts to identify any overlapping themes across the six participants' experiences. I then rearranged the themes into a narrative arc that cohesively examines the participants' experiences. The findings of this study revealed that Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their college experience primarily from the student perspective, attend to professional and other social identities, and define success from an academic and athletic perspective. With these findings, I proposed different implications for practice and future research to continue learning about the experiences of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes.

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List of Abbreviations

DI   Division I

DII   Division II

NCAA   National Collegiate Athletic Association

SES   Socioeconomic Status

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

College student-athletes must meet certain obligations. These obligations can range from academic responsibilities (e.g., attending classes) to athletic responsibilities (e.g., going to practice; Exkard, 2010; Hodes et al., 2015; Mignano et al., 2006; Purdy et al., 1982; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). Student-athletes are tasked with having to balance their roles as students and as athletes as they navigate higher education (Mignano et al., 2006; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). Student-athletes are not always able to maintain the balance between these two roles. They can often prioritize one role over the other (Brewer et al., 1993, Murphy et al., 1996; Miller & Kerr, 2003). This notion rings all too true to me, as a former Division II scholarship student-athlete, as I recall my experiences of navigating the rigors of higher education.

My Division II Scholarship Student-Athlete Experience

I was a Division II student-athlete in track and field with an athletic scholarship. I was like the 10% of other high school student-athletes (NCAA, 2020) who found an opportunity to continue playing sports after high school. Although student-athletes must navigate both identities (Brewer et al., 1993; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996;), I was always told to be a student first and an athlete second. The reality was that my life was primarily athletics for four years.

During my undergraduate career, being an athlete meant much more to me than being a student. I remember the excitement of being a college athlete, knowing that I could compete at a higher level and keep doing my sport. During my first year, I remember the excitement and difficulty of being a freshman student-athlete. The thoughts of competing with a new team,

traveling to different universities, breaking school records, and even reaching the national championship meet were ideas that I obsessed over. From the very first meeting with my team, I was "all in" on being an athlete. This initial semester influenced who I would become in college: an athlete first and a student second. I quickly changed my persona and attitude towards sports, dressed more like an athlete (adorned with my team's apparel) and found spare time outside of practice to learn more techniques and drills. The thought of being an athlete defined who I was during my freshman year. It was something that I was proud of and something that I wanted to share with others.

While I was entirely focused on my role as an athlete, I was a good student. Majoring in psychology, I cared about my grades. I dedicated whatever free time I had towards my coursework, which often meant staying up late reading and doing homework or even studying on the bus ride home from track meets. I did whatever I could to do well academically each semester despite my heavy involvement in athletics. Even with my work ethic towards my major, I experienced moments where I had low academic self-efficacy. I felt I was just a "dumb jock" and that other students thought I was not capable of completing the more advanced courses. I knew I was not the typical college student, but I often wondered if athletics hindered my academic performance. These feelings led me to establish my niche within the student-athlete population, and I primarily associated with student-athletes. While I considered myself a psychology major, I was still an athlete first and a student second.

During my freshman and sophomore years, I identified as an athlete, but it was around my junior year when I identified more with being a student. Fall semester of junior year was a particularly tough period because I took an incredibly difficult research methods course. To me it was a class that would determine if I would continue to be a psychology major. Despite the class

being difficult, I formed friendships with others in the course and established a small community of psychology majors. I recognized multiple people in my courses and soon began to associate more with them. The greatest factor that led me to altering my perspective of who I was in college was that I was invited to join a psychology research lab. I began to think that I was doing something right in my coursework and that I was recognized for my efforts. Joining the psychology lab was the stepping stone I needed to get into my major, introduce myself to more faculty members, and begin forming relationships with others in my field. Even though I began to see myself more as a student during my junior year, I still considered myself to be an athlete.

It was not until my senior year when I disassociated with my identity as an athlete and transitioned more into my role as a student. During my senior year, my track team hired a new coach that specialized in my events. I was excited and focused more on athletics than I ever had while in college. I was at my best as I broke school records and set personal bests. Unfortunately, several different things happened in my last spring semester that changed my perspective. I started to dislike my event coach, as there were issues with that coach that turned me off to the sport. I became frustrated and began to stop enjoying the sport altogether. Despite these frustrations, I soon found comfort in the relationships I formed in the psychology department. I began to experience a shift in who I was in college. My plan post-college also contributed to this shift. I knew that a professional career in sports was not for me. Even though I wanted to be an athlete in college, I knew it was not the career path I would ever reach since the beginning of college. My goal was to eventually get into a graduate program to get my master's degree and then eventually my Ph.D. in some area of psychology. The moment I got into a graduate program, I knew that I was no longer an athlete, and I fully felt like I was a student. The athlete chapter of my life ended, but it shaped my undergraduate experiences in profound ways.

I eventually went on to complete a master's program after I earned my bachelor's degree. During this master's program, I also coached student-athletes on my university's track & field team. I was no longer a student-athlete, but being a coach allowed me to work with student-athletes. I did not know it initially, but my experiences a collegiate coach would influence my future research interests. After completing my master's degree, I continued my graduation education at Auburn University. It was during my early graduate career at Auburn University where I began to become more interested in the student-athlete identity. As a former student-athlete, I found that I could relate to the experiences shared by participants in past studies, especially as it related to my identity development. I became more curious as to what aspects contribute to this identity development for student-athletes.

Student-Athlete Identity Development

The identity development of student-athletes has been of particular interest amongst researchers. Researchers have investigated how student-athletes come to know and interact with their identities and which identity they affiliate with more (Brewer et al., 1993; Murphy et al., 1996). Student-athletes' identity formation is important because these identities are linked to performance and motivation. For example, if a student-athlete has a greater affiliation with this athlete identity, they typically experience lower academic performance (Feltz et al., 2013; Foster & Huml, 2017; Paule & Gilson, 2011; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000; Simons et al., 1999; Weatherly & Chen, 2019). This association suggests that these student-athletes prioritize their athletic responsibilities and de-emphasize the need to fulfill their academic responsibilities. Researchers also found that student-athletes who affiliated more with their student identity have higher academic performance and motivation (Chen et al., 2010; Gaston-Gayles, 2004;

Weatherly & Chen, 2019). The evidence suggests that student-athletes, rather than finding a balance between the two identities, tend to one identity over the other.

There are several characteristics that are related to this identity development. One characteristic in particular is a student-athlete's career outlook. For example, student-athletes in higher education have a small chance to pursue a professional career in their sport post-college (Melendez, 2006; Van Rheenen, 2012). Student-athletes then realize that their chances to become professional athletes are unlikely, and so they alter their priorities from athletics to academics to help get into a career field that is outside of sports (Bell et al., 2018; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Lally & Kerr, 2013; Melendez, 2006; Murphy et al., 1996; Navarro, 2015; Pauline et al., 2008; Weatherly & Chen, 2019; Sack, 1987). Not all student-athletes have a well-developed sense of their career outlook. It is often the case that student-athletes continue to stay with their athlete identity because of misled promises of becoming professional athlete (Beamon, 2008). However, maintaining this affiliation with the athlete identity can lead to difficulties transitioning into life post-college if they do not become a professional athlete (Beamon, 2008; Bell et al., 2018; Foster & Huml, 2017; Murphy et al., 1996). In addition to career outlook, researchers have also investigated other areas that may be in association with a student-athlete's identity development. One factor can be the type of institution or environment student-athletes attend. The NCAA consists of three different divisions in which each division prioritizes academics and athletics differently (Griffith & Johnson, 2002). In conjunction with this, sport type may shape identity formation based on whether a sport is classified as revenue or non-revenue generating (Feltz et al., 2013; Weatherly & Chen, 2019). Career outlook, institution type, and sport type are but a few different aspects that influence a student-athlete's identity formation.

Differences amongst student-athletes, in relation to this identity formation, have also been explored. These differences range from gender (Feltz et al., 2013; Melendez, 2006; Weatherly & Chen, 2019) race/ethnicity (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Snyder, 1996), and other characteristics that highlight the diversity of the student-athlete population. Even with the variety of characteristics, it often seems that the focus and understanding of student-athletes stems from those who attend Division I institutions and have an athletic scholarship. Often the site of studies involving identity development and experiences, Division I institutions tend to offer more athletic scholarship opportunities (Pauline et al., 2008; Weatherly & Chen, 2019), recruit athletically strong student-athletes because of the popularity of their programs (Beamon, 2008; Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Gayles, 2009; Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Smith, 2000), and provide several different resources to allow student-athletes to focus more on athletics rather than academics (Hodes et al., 2015; Navarro, 2015; Paule & Gilson, 2011). These institutions do provide a great environment to understand how student-athletes can navigate the rigors of higher education and intercollegiate sports. However, not all student-athletes are Division I scholarship student-athletes. The student-athlete population is diverse, signaling that not everyone can fit under this generalized understanding rooted in the Division I scholarship student-athlete experience. Often it seems that the population of Division II and non-scholarship student-athletes are not included in or the center of inquiry.

Division II non-scholarship student-athletes are hardly included in discussions about student-athletes, especially in the context of identity formation or pursuing success. There is little information as to how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their collegiate experiences. This gap in research places these student-athletes within an umbrella primarily tailored to Division I and scholarship student-athletes. The literature that does include non-

scholarship student-athletes primarily investigates athletic motivation in sports (Medic et al., 2007; Kingston et al., 2006) or to compare academic performances and graduation rates with scholarship student-athletes (Milton et al., 2012; Rubin & Rosser, 2014). The current study seeks to contribute to the limited existing literature about Division II non-scholarship student-athletes.

A Pilot Study

Knowing that there has been this general lack of an understanding regarding the experiences of Division I and II non-scholarship student-athletes, I designed an initial study that looked into Division I and II non-scholarship student-athletes' institutional decision making. Over the course of the study, there was one consistent theme amongst the participants' experiences. This theme was the idea that they chose to be a student-athlete because they intrinsically valued the sport. In fact, this decision did not impact their overall institution selection as they selected their university based on scholastic interest. This aspect was something I found to be incredibly interesting as this differs amongst other Division I and scholarship student-athletes who considered more athletic factors in selecting their institution (Pauline et al., 2008). While this was a facet that was shared across all of the participants, it seemed that the academic factors were much more prevalent amongst the Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. When I noticed this emerging trend amongst the Division II participants, I began to wonder what else about this student-athlete population may be different from what we know about the experiences of Division I and scholarship student-athletes. With such great ambiguity surrounding the experiences of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes, I expanded this line of inquiry to explore their experiences in relation to their identity development and success.

Statement of the Problem

The research conducted thus far has primarily excluded non-scholarship student-athletes that attend Division II institutions. There is still a great deal of ambiguity regarding these student athletes and how they navigate their experiences in their dual roles. This ambiguity could be problematic as the resources and models (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011) developed may not meet the goals and needs of this student-athlete population. While there has been a great deal of work in uncovering how the student-athlete identity operates and its impacts, there is still a general lack of knowledge concerning non-scholarship student-athletes' collegiate experiences regarding identity and success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the collegiate experiences of former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. This study explored how these non-scholarship student-athletes navigated their sense of identity while in higher education. Additionally, the other purpose of this study is to see how these Division II non-scholarship student-athletes defined and achieved success during their collegiate careers; this idea of success extended to both their personal definition as well as academic success.

Statement of the Research Questions

This study's research questions focus on how non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their identities and how they understand and pursue success. Specifically, I explore the following:

1. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their experiences as students and as athletes?

2. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes interact with their other identities?

3. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes define and pursue success?

4. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes try to achieve academic success?

Significance of the Study

There are several implications for the findings of this study. Primarily, this study provides an opportunity to add to the growing body of literature concerning student-athlete identity. It explores how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes' identities develop while in higher education and accounts for their other emerging identities. The study also provides context for how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes define and perceive success while navigating these different identities. Individuals such as higher education administrators or Division II athletics staff members may benefit from the findings of this study, as it provides a new understanding of how to interact with collegiate student-athletes. Such interactions may help administrators to better identify student-athlete needs when it comes to helping them achieve their goals while in higher education. The findings may also help administrators better combat the "dumb jock" stereotype, which insinuates that all student-athletes only care about their sport and are unintelligent (Chen et al., 2010; Comeaux, 2011; Feltz et al., 2013; Wininger & White, 2015). Primarily, the findings signified how non-scholarship student-athletes consider their academic responsibilities incredibly important. Having this provided information could help administrators in dispelling this stereotype. These findings, overall, better equip these administrators and staff members to help this sub-population of student-athletes in hopes of bettering their higher education experience.

The study's findings also play a significant role in understanding graduation rates amongst student-athletes. The NCAA often celebrates how collegiate student-athletes graduate at a higher rate than does the general student population (Melendez, 2006). Exkard (2010),

however, reveals that this is not the case under certain conditions. Exkard (2010) found that when part-time students are excluded, the general student population graduates at a higher rate in comparison to student-athletes. Providing this context suggests that it is important to understand why student-athletes may be graduating at a slower rate than the general student population. To understand this topic, more information is needed regarding the student-athlete population and their approach to graduation. Rubin and Rosser (2014) found that scholarship student-athletes graduate faster than non-scholarship student-athletes. While this study does not directly address graduation rates amongst non-scholarship student-athletes, it provides context as to why non-scholarship student-athletes may possibly take longer to graduate. The findings of this study indicate that non-scholarship student-athletes focus more on their academic interests as far as these interests relate to their overall post-college career outlook. The study can provide context as to the differences in graduation rates amongst student-athletes and possibly prompt future research to further break down the student-athlete population to explore differences in graduation rates.

Assumptions

This study follows constructivist philosophical assumptions centered on making sense of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes' experiences in the context of identity and success. One assumption is that non-scholarship student-athletes compete in a sport at their institution with student-athletes on scholarships (Le Crom et al., 2009; Medic et al., 2007; Milton et al., 2012; Rubin & Rosser, 2014). This assumption stems from the few studies that have analyzed the differences amongst the two different types of student-athletes. Student-athletes have their variations of perceived success in either graduating with a degree or even becoming a professional athlete; however, there is little information about student success perceptions

amongst Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. The research on identity development and its impacts on student-athlete's pursuit of success in a post-college reality focuses primarily on the experiences of scholarship student-athletes from Division I institutions (Beamon, 2008; Kimball, 2006; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy, 1996; Pauline et al., 2008; Sack, 1987). Non-scholarship student-athletes from Division II institutions differ from student-athletes at Division III institutions. This is because Division III institutions do not offer athletic scholarships while Division II institutions do offer these scholarships (Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Mignano et al., 2006; Pauline et al., 2008; Stansbury, 2003). Division III institutions also place less emphasis on athletics and more on academics in comparison to Division II institutions (Heuser & Gray, 2009; Mignano et al., 2006). Fueled by the literature, these assumptions helped guide the study in producing a more detailed depiction of the Division II non-scholarship student-athlete collegiate experience.

Limitations

As with any study, there are limitations. One of the major limitations of this study involved the study participants. The lack of diversity in the study posed as the major limitation. The study consisted of primarily white student-athlete men, meaning the findings are rooted in mainly these experiences. The findings do not provide a completely accurate representation of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes who are women or student-athletes of color. This lack of representation prevents others from fully understanding how gender or racial/ethnic identities come into play for Division II non-scholarship student-athletes while navigating higher education. The study provides a good foundation regarding the overall understanding of the Division II non-scholarship student-athlete's experience, despite the lack of representation. Another limitation could be in my interviewing abilities. The current study included an

unstructured interview protocol that led to many improvised conversations with the participants. Even with the list of sample questions, there is still the possibility that I overlooked some areas because I did not probe certain these areas when needed. However, I did take measures to ensure that each of the participants' experiences was thoroughly explored (e.g., writing down areas to revisit for the next interview in my post-interview memos).

Delimitations

This study focuses on how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their identities while defining and pursuing variations of success in higher education. This study was limited to 18 one-on-one interviews with six former student-athletes who, at some point in their collegiate careers, identified as a non-scholarship student-athlete at an NCAA Division II institution across the United States.

Operational Definitions

Student-athlete: Students in higher education competing in intercollegiate sports and categorized as amateurs (Smith, 2000).

Athlete identity: The portion of the student-athlete identity in which there is a commitment to the athletic role and responsibilities associated with intercollegiate athletics (Murphy et al., 1996; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000).

Student identity: The portion of the student-athlete identity in which there is a commitment to academic responsibilities and performance in higher education (Lally & Kerr, 2013; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000).

Scholarship student-athlete: Student-athletes who attend and compete for an institution and have been given financial aid in the form of an athletic scholarship (Le Crom et al., 2009; Medic et al., 2007; Milton et al., 2012; Rubin & Rosser, 2014).

Non-scholarship student-athlete: Student-athletes who attend and compete for an institution but do not have any form of athletic financial aid (Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Le Crom et al., 2009; Medic et al., 2007; Mignano et al., 2006; Milton et al., 2012; Rubin & Rosser, 2014;).

Student-athlete success: The student-athlete's success, often measured by academic performance and graduation rates, is also about the specific post-college career goals of becoming a professional athlete or obtaining a degree from their institution (Beamon, 2012; Sack 1987).

Institution type: The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) overall consists of three different divisions: Division I (which primarily emphasizes athletics over academics), Division II (less emphasis on athletics than in Division I but more than in Division III; more focus on academics than in Division I but less than in Division III), and Division III (primarily emphasizes academics over athletics; Feltz et al., 2013; Gayles, 2009; Pauline et al., 2008).

Sport type: The differing sports in intercollegiate athletics can be categorized based on whether or not the sport is capable of generating revenue, that is, revenue (e.g., football) and non-revenue (e.g., track and field) sports (Feltz et al., 2013; Purdy et al., 1982; Scott et al., 2008; Sullivan et al., 2019; Weight et al., 2014).

Conclusion

Researchers have discovered that student-athletes often have difficulty balancing and maintaining their dual identities and will even foreclose upon their athlete identity. Aspects such career outlook, institution type, or even sport type can influence this foreclosure. Much of the research conducted seems to have generalized the experiences of scholarship student-athletes to

the entire student-athlete population. This generalization has left a gap in the literature on how non-scholarship student-athletes, especially those from a Division II institution, navigate their identity or define and pursue success. This gap has become an issue as it leaves an ambiguous understanding regarding the experiences of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. To resolve this issue, the current study addresses this gap and explores the Division II non-scholarship student-athlete collegiate experience. This study explores this by investigating how these student-athletes navigate higher education as students and athletes, how they interact with their other separate identities, and how they define and pursue success in higher education.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Student-athletes have been studied regarding their higher education experience, especially in their identity development. From these studies, researchers have discovered that student-athletes may foreclose on an athlete identity; doing so leads student-athletes to focus primarily on their athletic responsibilities, which negatively impacts their academic performance (Comeaux et al., 2011; Hodes et al., 2015; Parker et al., 2018). This research has prompted the NCAA and university administrators to provide educational resources for student-athletes (Hodes et al., 2015; Navarro, 2015; Nite, 2012; Paule & Gilson, 2011). Many of these studies, however, do not include Division II non-scholarship student-athletes and their experiences in higher education. In response, I conducted a pilot study that investigated the institutional decision making of non-scholarship student-athletes, which consisted of mostly Division II but also some Division I student-athletes. From the results of this study, I noticed stark differences between the participants' experiences and previous research. In the current chapter, I discuss the lack of peer-reviewed research concerning non-scholarship student-athletes from Division II institutions and how researchers have primarily focused on the experiences of Division I scholarship student-athletes. Self-authorship and the theory of motivational action conflicts are presented as theoretical lenses to guide the study's analysis, development, and recruitment phases.

Literature Review

Student-athletes in higher education are required to maintain at least two roles or identities. They are required to uphold their responsibilities of being a student, for example,

attending courses and meeting requirements for graduation (Heuser & Gray, 2009; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018), and they are required to uphold their responsibilities of being an athlete, for example, attending practices and competitions (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Heuser & Gray, 2009; Greer & Robinson, 2006). Student-athletes are challenged to try to balance and manage their time between the two identities. Trying to maintain this balance has prompted researchers to study the experiences of student-athletes and how they navigate higher education. This research shows that not all student-athletes are the same, as each have unique characteristics. These different characteristics allow researchers to better understand how student-athletes navigate their two roles. It does appear that there is one characteristic that is not usually considered: whether one is a scholarship or non-scholarship student-athlete.

Scholarship and Non-Scholarship Student-Athletes

With dreams and aspirations of playing collegiate sports, high school student-athletes may work towards earning an athletic scholarship. An athletic scholarship is a form of financial aid allowing students to compete as collegiate athletes at an accredited NCAA institution. High school student-athletes can be offered an athletic scholarship from only NCAA Division I and Division II institutions (Smith, 2000). These student-athletes are referred to as scholarship student-athletes. Obtaining an athletic scholarship is not the only way for high school student-athletes to play collegiate sports. Some student-athletes can choose to participate in an NCAA Division I or II collegiate sport despite not receiving an athletic scholarship. These are non-scholarship student-athletes. Unlike scholarship student-athletes, non-scholarship student-athletes join intercollegiate athletics differently by being invited by the coach or trying out for a team (Sports Engine, 2018). While these are two separate paths to playing collegiate sports, these paths allow for the opportunity to further classify student-athletes by their scholarship status.

Non-scholarship student-athletes are still well represented within the NCAA despite the lack of an athletic scholarship. In the NCAA, non-scholarship student-athletes make up 43% of the student-athlete population in Division I programs and 37% in Division II programs (NCAA, 2020). Despite being well represented within the NCAA, there is still little peer-reviewed research regarding this group in the context of student-athlete identity. The research conducted with Division I and II non-scholarship student-athletes primarily includes topics such as academic performance and motivation (Milton et al., 2012), motivation in sports (Medic et al., 2007; Kingston et al., 2006), and even graduation rates (Rubin & Rosser, 2014). Studies involving scholarship and non-scholarship student-athletes have mixed findings in regard to academic performance. For instance, Rubin and Rosser (2014) found that non-scholarship student-athletes have higher academic performance than do scholarship student-athletes, but they also found that scholarship student-athletes graduate at a quicker rate than do non-scholarship student-athletes. This finding potentially suggests that non-scholarship student-athletes may prioritize their academics over athletics, given their higher academic performance, despite graduating at slower rates. Contradicting findings from Milton et al. (2012), however, find that scholarship student-athletes have higher academic performance at Division II institutions than do non-scholarship student-athletes. While there are findings that include non-scholarship student-athletes, there is no clear understanding as to how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their roles as students and as athletes. A major contributor to this lack of research is the focus on the experiences of Division I and scholarship student-athletes.

The Focus on Division I and Scholarship Student-Athletes

The research conducted with student-athletes has primarily involved the experiences of Division I and scholarship student-athletes. This research has examined Division I and

scholarship student-athletes in the context of identity development (Anthony & Swank, 2018; Beamon, 2012; Brewer et al., 1993; Chen et al., 2010; Melendez, 2010; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018) while also examining the influence of athletics on academic performance (Bimper, 2014; Bimper et al., 2013; Killeya, 2001; Paule & Gilson, 2011; Snyder et al., 2011) and motivation (Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018) in higher education. This bulk of research is because of the environment of Division I institutions. These institutions emphasize the goal of being highly successful in athletics (Smith, 2000). The emphasis on athletics creates a pressure to succeed, for which student-athletes focus more on their athletic duties rather than their coursework. This dynamic has prompted researchers to explore how this institutional environment impacts student-athletes, specifically scholarship student-athletes, overall. With this major focus on Division I scholarship student-athletes in the literature, there is an overall generalization of the student-athlete population rooted mainly in their experiences. These experiences established the foundational understanding as to how student-athletes navigate their identity and how athletics influences their academic performance and motivation.

The Student-Athlete Identity

Student-athletes take on two major roles while in higher education. These roles include being a college student and athlete, which promotes a student-athlete identity (Murphy et al., 1996). It is the intention of the student-athlete to try and balance these two roles, but this is not always the case. Brewer et al. (1993) found that student-athletes foreclosed on their athlete identity. Foreclosure of identity refers to an early embracement of one identity and failing to explore other identities (Brewer et al., 1993; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996). Because these student-athletes foreclosed upon their athlete identity, Brewer et al. (1993) made the

determination that this could be due to the demands of intercollegiate sports. What is notable from this study is that the sample only included Division I student-athletes. Stemming from this study, researchers continued to explore this identity development, or foreclosure, from the context of Division I institutions. Scholars have consistently found that Division I student-athletes experience an identity foreclosure and highly value their athlete identity while not actively exploring any other identities in higher education (Beamon, 2012; Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Kimball, 2006; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996). Researchers continued to add more to this discussion by examining how this development occurs; however, this was still carried out from the perspective of Division I and possibly scholarship student-athletes.

This identity development or foreclosure can begin as early as pre-college. An early foreclosure can be examined when a student-athlete decides on which institution they want to attend. Researchers found that Division I student-athletes consider more athletics-specific factors when deciding on an institution; for example, student-athletes will consider coaching staff, ability to compete, athletic scholarships, athletic facilities, the level of competition between other teams, and even possible television exposure when deciding on an institution (Czekanski & Barnhill, 2015; Klenosky et al., 2001; Pauline et al., 2008). It does appear that there is more of an emphasis on athletics regarding which institution to attend, especially amongst Division I student-athletes seeking an athletic scholarship. The selection of an institution primarily based on these athletic factors may suggest that student-athletes are already foreclosing on their athlete identity even before attendance. However, there is a deeper context for this type of decision making that may relate to an individual's personal goals.

The types of goals a student-athlete may have can also influence identity development or early foreclosure. High school student-athletes may have the goal of receiving a Division I

athletic scholarship to help them get into a career as a professional athlete (Beamon, 2012; Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Lally & Kerr, 2013; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996; Sack, 1987; Weatherly & Chen, 2019). These types of goals take time to develop, and sometimes such a goal is not their decision. Beamon (2012) explains that some Division I student-athletes expressed that they were heavily encouraged to achieve athletically early on in their childhood so that they could earn a scholarship to a Division I institution and then later have a career as a professional athlete. These student-athletes even expressed that this was their only path for a successful future. High school student-athletes may practice for numerous hours just for the opportunity to receive an athletic scholarship (Camiré, 2014). This early dedication could initiate an early foreclosure while in high school (Beamon, 2012; Comeaux et al., 2011). By the time student-athletes enter higher education, they may already associate more with their athlete identity. This early foreclosure may continue as student-athletes become externally motivated to maintain their athletic scholarship (Griffith & Johnson, 2002). Facilitated by their goals of becoming a professional athlete and maintaining their athletic scholarship, student-athletes may enter higher education and continue with an early foreclosed identity.

There are other moments in a student-athlete's experience that contribute to a closer affiliation with the athlete identity. Such contributions can refer to the various external forces in college athletics, that is, administrators (Brewer et al., 1993; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996). Facilitated by the commercialization of Division I revenue sports, athletic administrations have stressed the necessity and importance of their sports teams to win (Simons et al., 1999; Smith, 2000). Feeling the pressure from their administrations, Division I coaches resort to certain practices to ensure that their athletes are performing well in both academics and athletics. One method to ensure this is by having student-athletes funnel into classes and majors that do not

conflict with practices (Foster & Huml, 2017; Heuser & Gray, 2009; Jolly, 2008; Paule & Gilson, 2011). While funneling can allow for easier scheduling, this method prevents student-athletes from exploring other academic areas or interests (Heuser & Gray, 2009; Paule & Gilson, 2011). Having less of an opportunity to explore other interests may subject student-athletes to stick with their athlete identity overall. Even though funneling can allow for easier scheduling, it promotes the notion that student-athletes have less autonomy when making academic decisions. Coaches funneling students into classes represents how much the sport can dictate student-athletes' lives and how they may come to value athletics more.

Division I coaches are not the only ones to take such extreme measures. Division I athletic administrations also contribute to this foreclosure of being an athlete. Athletic administrations provide in-house academic support and resources to help student-athletes balance their two roles (Hodes et al., 2015; Navarro, 2015; Paule & Gilson, 2011). These resources may include technology centers, educational programming, and even personal academic tutors (Nite, 2012; Paule & Gilson, 2011). Even though student-athletes have access to a variety of academic resources, this does not guarantee that they will have improved or high academic performance, especially compared to the general student population (Hodes et al., 2015; Purdy et al., 1982). These types of resources may also just be in place to allow student-athletes to focus more on their athletic responsibilities by receiving academic help whenever needed. By having the ability to receive academic help at any time, student-athletes can become more involved with their sport without having to worry about their academic responsibilities. With this deeper involvement in their sport, they may feel less obligated to prioritize their coursework and further identify as an athlete.

A student-athlete's teammates may also facilitate the foreclosure of their athlete identity. Division I student-athletes have been known to gravitate towards their teammates (Weatherly & Chen, 2019; Weiss & Robinson, 2013). This gravitation occurs because of how much time they spend together in their sport and the classes they may be funneled into (Burns et al., 2012; Foster & Huml, 2017; Schneider et al., 2010; Sack, 1987). Given the amount of time they spend together, student-athletes may be more inclined to associate with only their teammates (Weiss & Robinson, 2013). This overall gravitation to their teammates can be beneficial as they find an initial group of friends and having this group of friends can help with retention of the student-athlete. This gravitation can also lead to adverse effects. Weatherly and Chen (2019) find pressure from teammates can lead student-athletes to prioritize their sport more than their academic coursework. This prioritization and pressure from teammates deepen the student-athlete's involvement in the sport and further reinforce their foreclosed athlete identity. While teammates can positively impact student-athletes in navigating and staying in higher education, the pressure from their teammates can also lead to a continued foreclosed athlete identity.

There are other sources of influence that contribute to the foreclosed athlete identity outside of athletics. Such influences include the perceptions of others at an institution, that is, other students and faculty members, as they can impact how student-athletes view themselves. These perceptions can perpetuate the "dumb jock" stereotype, which suggests that all student-athletes are not intelligent and only care about their sport (Chen et al., 2010; Feltz et al., 2013; Wininger & White, 2015). Students who believe the stereotype to be true have low academic expectations of Division I student-athletes and even believe that faculty members share the same sentiment (Wininger & White, 2015). Comeaux (2011) found that faculty members held negative feelings towards Division I student-athletes in certain aspects, as they did not believe student-

athletes could get an A in their course, they thought student-athletes should not be recognized for their athletic talents, and they would not be willing to offer extended tutoring. These beliefs are detrimental to student-athletes as this leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Believing that they are "dumb jocks," student-athletes engage in poor academic habits and have low academic self-efficacy (Wininger & White, 2015). The dumb jock stereotype even impacts how student-athletes view other student-athletes. Wininger and White (2015) found that belief in the dumb jock stereotype led Division I student-athletes to have lower academic expectations of their teammates and other student-athletes. These negative perceptions could influence the foreclosed athlete identity amongst student-athletes. Believing in the dumb jock stereotype could lead student-athletes to believe they are weak academically and should primarily focus on athletics. This association may lead to more severe impacts for a student-athlete beyond just their own identity development.

The Impact on Academic Performance and Motivation

A major affiliation with sports can often have an inverse relationship with a student-athlete's academic performance and motivation. These negative impacts can begin as early as high school if the student-athlete already started to foreclose on their athlete identity. In this situation, a Division I coach may offer a scholarship to a high school student-athlete who has not received the educational support needed to transition into higher education (Comeaux, 2011; Snyder, 1996). Some student-athletes may experience extreme difficulties transitioning from high school to college because they may not be academically prepared going into their freshman year (Hodes et al., 2015; Parker et al., 2018). This lack of preparedness may be due in part to their school's lack of proper academic resources or to the student-athlete putting more time and effort into their sport. Regardless of their academic preparedness, student-athletes overall still

experience difficulties in their first year in higher education. Researchers have found that freshman student-athletes with a higher association with being an athlete tend to have lower academic performance (Comeaux & Harrision, 2011; Engstrom et al., 1995; Pascarella et al., 1995). Athletic administrations do provide academic support (e.g., academic centers or personal tutors) to help student-athletes adjust to the rigors of higher education (Aries et al., 2004; Comeaux et al., 2011; Dudley et al., 1997; Galotti & Mark, 1994), but the pressure from coaches to do well in their sport and keep their athletic scholarship causes student-athletes to focus more on athletics (Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Weatherly & Chen, 2019). In fact, the pressure of maintaining an athletic scholarship has often led scholarship student-athletes to experience an increase in extrinsic motivation regarding their sport (Kingston et al., 2006; Medic et al., 2007; Rubin & Rosser, 2014). Scholarship student-athletes even feel a lack of autonomy in their decisions because they signed an athletic scholarship (Kimball, 2006). All this is to say that these increased pressures lead student-athletes to focus more on their athletic endeavors and less on their coursework. This negative association between athletics and academics may continue to impact student-athletes beyond their first year.

The prioritization of athletics can negatively impact student-athletes. Evidence supports the notion that prioritization of athletics leads to poor academic performance and low academic motivation amongst Division I and scholarship student-athletes (Beron & Piquero, 2016; Bimper, 2014; Rubin & Rosser, 2014; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000; Simons et al., 1999). These findings suggest that the more time student-athletes spend with their sport, the less time and attention they devote to academic coursework. A significant contributor to this negative influence is their athletic schedule (Heuser & Gray, 2009; Paule & Gilson, 2011). While there is some structure in place, student-athletes may not have the time or energy for their coursework at

the end of the day (Heuser & Grey, 2009; Scott et al., 2008). Student-athletes report feeling fatigued and often must make difficult decisions regarding their coursework, such as to stop studying to rest for the next day of practice (Paule & Gilson, 2011). Some student-athletes suggest that an athletic schedule is potentially beneficial (Heuser & Gray, 2009; Scott et al., 2008). Student-athletes have reported that having a structure in place has allowed them to stay on task with their academic coursework (Heuser & Gray, 2009; Scott et al., 2008). Some student-athletes believed that they perform better academically while in season and that they would have lower academic performance if they did not have this type of schedule. Unfortunately, this structure is only beneficial by perception. Scott et al. (2008) found that student-athletes do not do better with this structure while their sport is in-season. While this schedule may lead to a perception of doing better academically, there has been evidence to suggest such a schedule is not as beneficial as perceived.

This strong affiliation, or foreclosure, with the athlete identity can significantly impact a student-athletes' academic performance and motivation. These student-athletes are more inclined to perform the bare minimum to remain eligible for their sport; the bare minimum is a 2.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA), as mandated by the NCAA (Milton et al., 2012). In association with this minimum academic motivation, Division I student-athletes can have lower academic self-worth, be more likely to engage in self-handicapping behaviors, and have lower GPAs overall (Beron & Piquero, 2016; Bimper, 2014; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000; Weatherly & Chen, 2019). Student-athletes with a close affiliation with the athlete identity are more likely to avoid behaviors that help them be academically successful and focus on behaviors that lead them to experience success in athletics (Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000). This situation is not always the case for student-athletes. Some are capable of being academically motivated and

achieve academically. There is evidence to suggest that academically focused student-athletes, who keep up with the demands of their coursework and have high academic self-worth, are more likely to be academically successful (Beron & Piquero, 2016; Bimper, 2014; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000; Weatherly & Chen, 2019). What leads to this academic success is a well-established student identity. This direct comparison shows how detrimental a prioritized athlete identity can be for student-athletes, often leading to academic failure.

Differences and Variations Amongst Student-Athletes

Not all student-athletes foreclose on their athlete identity. Miller and Kerr (2003) found that some student-athletes explore other identities and academic areas related to their professional interests. There are also student-athletes that can transition out of the foreclosed athlete identity and explore their identity as a student (Van Rheenen, 2012; Murphy et al., 1996). What appears to contribute to this transition could be related to student-athletes' academic or career goals. Not all student-athletes believe that they can become a professional athlete and pursue other interests while in higher education (Beamon, 2012). The student-athlete's career maturity, which refers to an individual exploring and planning for a future career, is an essential factor to consider in regard to their identity development (Bell et al., 2018; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996; Navarro, 2015; Weatherly & Chen, 2019). These findings suggest that the foreclosed athlete identity is temporary. A career outlook is not the only aspect related to this transition. Similar to how the athlete identity can be reinforced, the relationships a student-athlete establishes outside of athletics also matter. Associating with students who have the same educational and even career goals can help lead student-athletes to experience a shift in identity (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Lally & Kerr, 2013; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996). Establishing these types of connections is beneficial for their development as it allows them to

mold the identity that is best reflective of their interests. Overall, student-athletes are capable of either not foreclosing or moving away from the athlete identity in order to pursue other interests.

There are differences amongst student-athletes that extend beyond whether they foreclose on an athlete identity. This understanding comes to no surprise as the overall student-athlete population is diverse. These specific characteristics even attribute to the variation of the student-athlete identity. These differences can begin with the actual division type of an institution. Division I institutions especially play a major role in this variation, given that Division I institutions have more intense athletic factors that can contribute to the athlete identity foreclosure due to the commercialization and popularity of their revenue sports (Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Simons et al., 1999; Pauline et al., 2008, Smith, 2000). This understanding trickles down to the student-athlete's sport. Sport type refers to whether a sport generates or does not generate revenue (Comeaux, 2011; Smith, 2000; Paule & Gilson, 2011; Purdy et al., 1982; Simons et al., 1999; Weatherly & Chen, 2019; Van Rheenen, 2012). The sports that do generate revenue are associated with increased pressure for student-athletes to do extremely well, influencing them to focus more on athletics (Feltz et al., 2013; Weatherly & Chen, 2019). Differences in the student-athlete identity are further extended based on gender and even race. Regarding gender, men tend to associate with the athlete identity more than do women, most notably due to the lack of opportunities for professional female sports careers (Anthony & Swank, 2018; Beron & Piquero, 2016; Chen et al., 2010). Regarding race, researchers have highlighted how Black student-athletes attend more to athletics while white student-athletes tend to focus more on academics (Snyder, 1996). However, studies have indicated that race and ethnicity are not stand-alone factors as it relates to academic performance (Anthony & Swank,

2018). Regardless, previous research has alluded to differences amongst the student-athlete population.

The conversation regarding student-athletes extends beyond the characteristics of division type, sport type, gender, and race and ethnicity. Researchers have looked into areas such as family (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Gaston-Gayles, 2004), socioeconomic status (SES) (Gaston-Gayles, 2004), high school GPA (Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Harrison et al., 2013; Purdy et al., 1982; Scott et al., 2008), or even engagement with the institution outside of athletics (Bell et al., 2018; Gayles, 2009; Umbach et al., 2006; Wittmer et al., 1981). This research emphasizes that there are differences amongst the student-athlete population. These differences highlight that student-athletes should not be lumped together into a general assumption of how they navigate higher education. However, most of this understanding stems from the experiences of Division I and scholarship student-athletes despite the diversity amongst the student-athlete population.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers have explored in detail Division I scholarship student-athletes' experiences, indicating how college athletics impacts their identity development, academic performance, and even motivation. Division II non-scholarship student-athletes are hardly included in existing research, leaving open the question of how they perceive their identity, let alone how they may be pursuing their personal goals. The current study examines how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their identity in higher education and explores how they perceive and pursue success. I use the theory of self-authorship and the theory of motivational action conflicts as frameworks to help support various aspects of this study.

Self-Authorship

Self-authorship refers to when an individual takes on their values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states rather than being influenced by external sources (Baxter Magolda, 2008a; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; King & Baxter Magolda, 1996). The individual on this journey of self-authorship develops their own internal identity, an identity that reflects more of the values and beliefs of the individual instead of an external influencer (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; King & Baxter Magolda, 1996). In this context, the individual begins to derive meaning from situations and make decisions that closely reflect their internal identity. The journey towards self-authorship is complex, as the process occurs throughout one's lifespan.

During this journey towards self-authorship, individuals first perceive knowledge as certain, or they uncritically accept knowledge (Baxter Magolda, 2008a). They believe that other sources (e.g., teachers) provide the absolute truth and accept it in its current form. These sources are associated with the term "external formulas" (Baxter Magolda, 2008b, 2009; Hodge et al., 2009). External formulas refer to the individual relying on authority figures to provide them with the information that they may need. For example, younger students uncritically believe what their teacher says because they perceive them as the expert. At this phase, individuals perceive knowledge to be temporarily uncertain or certain because of their willingness to believe that this authority figure is correct (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Hodge et al., 2009). Individuals then behave congruently with this uncritical acceptance. This behavior is because the individual has a lack of an understanding of themselves and an inconsistent frame to navigate areas of their life. It is not often the case that someone relies on external formulas for the remainder of their lifespan as they experience an eventual shift towards independence.

This shift away from relying on external formulas and progressing to independence is known as the crossroads phase in self-authorship. In this phase, the individual starts to question the produced information from external formulas (Baxter Magolda, 2008b, 2009). Rather than uncritically accepting these forms of knowledge, individuals question the norm of the knowledge given to them. This phase occurs when an individual starts to consider their internal voice at the expense of partially ignoring an external formula's influence (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). A crossroads only emerges when an individual is challenged to incorporate their internal identity. These challenges can spark tension between one's internal voice and the external formula's influence, resulting in the individual critically assessing situations based on their developing belief system, identity, and even approach towards relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). There is still, however, some reliance on an authority figure's expectations despite this emerging internal voice. The individual is only starting to recognize an external formula's limitations and how these sources conflict with their values or beliefs during this crossroads phase.

As individuals start to recognize their internal belief system, identity, and view of relationships, they begin to enter the self-authorship phase. At this point the individual can define their own beliefs, values, identity, and relationships without being influenced by others (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). Individuals are more aware of how they may operate or think as they approach more complex situations. They can perceive knowledge as uncertain, but they are confident in their ability to make meaning of this knowledge and incorporate their sense of knowing. Individuals continuously redefine or reshape their understanding of themselves as they are given new pieces of information, like a form of cognitive dissonance (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; King & Baxter Magolda, 1996). To reach or achieve self-

authorship, individuals must focus on three dimensions closely associated with the concept. These are the epistemological, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions (Baxter Magolda, 2008a; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007).

The epistemological dimension of self-authorship is related to how the individual makes meaning of their various situations. Primarily, this dimension refers to how individuals make assumptions about the nature, limits, and certainty of knowledge to decide what to believe (i.e., critically assessing knowledge; Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). These individuals perceive knowledge as being uncertain and assess it based on the evidence provided. In this context, individuals actively construct their internal belief systems as they explore different situations. They will then craft a belief system that closely resembles their identity, constructing an internal foundation to make meaning from situations (Baxter Magolda, 2008a). This internal foundation is vital as it resembles the individual's identity.

The intrapersonal dimension of self-authorship reflects the individual's core identity regarding values and beliefs. This dimension refers to the complex identity construction required to integrate various characteristics to form a coherent internal foundation (Baxter Magolda, 2008a; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). Individuals who develop this self-authorship dimension can explore, reflect upon, and internally choose endearing values to construct their identities. Having this internal identity allows the individual to navigate various experiences and produce appropriate actions congruent with their identity (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Baxter Magolda, & King, 2007; Laughlin & Creamer, 2007). Such actions refer to how they make meaning of the current situation and decide what best represents themselves. It is

imperative that the individual trusts their internal foundation to promote this dimension of self-authorship.

The third dimension of self-authorship is the interpersonal dimension. The interpersonal dimension refers to the mature relationships an individual has with others (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). These relationships are more complex in that the individual must respect others and themselves. There is a sense of well-developed interdependence in that the individual can respect theirs and others' needs. This dimension suggests that the individual can understand someone else's different perspectives and can respect these perspectives, forming a genuinely mutual relationship (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). It is important to consider that those working on this dimension are evaluating and aligning their current relationships with their internal identity. Sometimes they may find that certain relationships do not necessarily align with their internal identity. This situation prompts them to reflect carefully on or even redefine their relationships with others to form more mutual, meaningful relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). These relationships build upon how the individual derives meaning from situations and compares it to their belief system (i.e., the other two dimensions).

Attaining self-authorship is a long-term development that requires the individual to attend to all three dimensions. For an individual to be self-authored, they must continuously refine or redefine all dimensions related to their internal voice. Even when an individual may be proficient in two dimensions, this does not lead to a self-authored identity (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b). This notion supports the individual's need to invest the necessary time and effort in all three dimensions to establish their self-authored identity. Developing a sense of

self-authorship is important as it leads an individual to display aspects of cognitive, identity, and relational maturity.

Researchers have examined self-authorship in the context of higher education (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2004, 2008; Hodge et al., 2009; Laughlin & Creamer, 2007). Higher education can be an appropriate environment for students to develop their self-authored identities. The context of higher education provides students with the opportunity to be challenged to shift away from relying on external formulas and progress towards self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004). While it is important to challenge students in this context, students also need to feel supported (Barber et al., 2013). When individuals are challenged and supported in certain academic areas (e.g., academic coursework), they are more likely to progress over time toward self-authorship (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2004, 2009; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; Hodge et al., 2009; King & Baxter Magolda, 1996). However, most students do not reach self-authorship while in college (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b). Students usually achieve self-authorship sometime after they graduate. Those who do achieve self-authorship while in college have overcome specific challenges (e.g., students who have experienced trauma; Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a; Hodge et al., 2009). While the context of higher education does not necessarily lead to the achievement of a self-authored identity, it still provides a good environment to help students progress towards this identity.

The current theoretical framework benefited the study by helping identify the study's target population. The study explores the experiences of non-scholarship student-athletes from Division II institutions; therefore, it was necessary to invite said student-athletes to participate in the study. To attain a deeper understanding of how Division I and II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their identities, perceive and pursue success, and pursue student success, I

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recruited former non-scholarship student-athletes. As the theoretical framework suggests, students do not typically achieve a self-authored identity while in higher education unless under certain circumstances (e.g., if they experience trauma; Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a; Hodge et al., 2009) Given that these individuals have graduated from higher education, they may have a more developed sense of self-authorship to reflect on their experiences.

Along with helping identify an ideal target population for the study, the theory of self-authorship further benefited the study for the interpretation of data. Self-authorship can facilitate a deeper understanding of an individual's identity development. A student's journey toward self-authorship includes following external formulas, entering a crossroads phase, and ultimately achieving self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008b, 2009). It is during these three phases that individuals work on aspects such as how they make meaning of things, their belief systems, and how they establish relationships with others (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; Hodge et al., 2009). Following these tenets of theory allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the participants' identity development by examining how they navigated their experiences and viewed their identity. This theoretical framework also helped in understanding how the participants perceived and pursued success. During a student's progression towards self-authorship, they make decisions related to their internal identity (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Baxter Magolda, & King, 2007; Laughlin & Creamer, 2007). I interpreted the participants' experiences to see how each decision related to their perception of success was connected to their internal identity. Utilizing this theoretical framework allowed me to better interpret how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their own identity and how they perceive and pursue success.

There are certain issues associated with the theory of self-authorship. The primary issue is how the theory was developed. The establishment of the theory was based on the experiences of only white individuals (Abes & Hernandez, 2016; Perez, 2019; Pizzolato et al., 2012). This theory has well-established theoretical concepts that may only apply to that specific population of students (in this case, white students). As Perez (2019) explains, most of the generated literature tends to not take into consideration the experiences and voices of minority and marginalized students. This aspect can have drastic impairments for not only analytical purposes but also for how administrators and scholars work with non-white students. The theory of self-authorship does not take into consideration how other racial and cultural aspects come into play regarding the development of someone's identity (Perez, 2019; Pizzolato et al., 2012). The establishment of self-authorship also investigates the development of an individual without taking into consideration the context of the environment the individual navigates. Those with identities outside of being a white male navigate oppressing systems in which there is a lack of freedom in their decision making (Abes & Hernandez, 2016). In navigating these difficult environments, marginalized students can achieve a self-authored identity while in college because of traumatic experiences (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a; Hodge et al., 2009). It is important to consider how such facets of racism and different cultural values come into play when students of color navigate their own identities. Therefore, it was imperative that I acknowledge how facets of race, ethnicity, and different cultural values came into play as it related to the participants' development towards self-authorship.

Theory of Motivational Action Conflicts

The theory of self-authorship provides excellent support in relation to the overall development and design of the current study with Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. I

also include the theory of motivational actional conflicts to further understand the experiences of non-scholarship student-athletes as they discuss the different types of goals they had while in higher education. The theory of motivational action conflicts addresses how students can have multiple types of goals. A student's goals can range from being academic related to being more personal (i.e., leisure goals; Fries et al., 2005; Grund et al., 2015; Hofer & Fries, 2016; Hofer et al., 2007; Schmid et al., 2005). Sometimes a student's goals may build off one another when it comes to achieving their goals, but this does not always occur. It is often the case that academic and leisure goals conflict with one another and prevent one of the goals from being achieved (Fries et al., 2005; Hofer et al., 2007; Hofer & Fries, 2016; Schmid et al., 2005). During an academic and leisure goal conflict, students weigh their goal-related activities to determine which may be the right choice. Even if the student is confident in their decision, they can still experience intruding thoughts that impact their experience when trying to perform the selected goal-related activity (Schmid et al., 2005). For example, if a student is conflicted between hanging out with their friends and studying, when they choose to study they will experience a desire to go and hang out with their friends. These intrusive thoughts are referred to as motivational interference or conflicts (Grund et al., 2015; Hofer et al., 2007; Hofer & Fries, 2016). Motivational interference refers to the motivational impacts that the unchosen activity has on the chosen activity. The motivational conflicts destabilize the entire experience of studying for the student.

Motivational interference represents the connection between the motivation to indulge in the leisure activity while performing an academic activity or vice versa (Grund et al., 2015; Hofer et al., 2007; Hofer & Fries, 2016). The main assumption from this construct is that the intrusive thoughts regarding the unselected option impacts the overall experience of the selected

option. Students can experience behavioral (wanting to do other things), cognitive (thinking of other things), and even affective (bad moods or no longer wanting to do a task) levels of interference (Schmid et al., 2005). These motivational interferences can negatively impact both academic learning and performance (Fries et al., 2005; Grund et al., 2015; Hofer et al., 2007; Hofer & Fries, 2016; Schmid et al., 2005). Students may experience superficial learning, reduced persistence, or even switching back and forth between leisure and academic activities when motivational interference occurs. If the interference persists, students can experience bad moods or distractions that de-value one type of goal and increase the value of the other goal (Grund et al., 2015; Hofer et al., 2007; Hofer & Fries, 2016). Experiencing such conflicts on a consistent basis also negatively impacts a student's well-being.

Motivational interference can impact an individual in both a positive and even negative manner given the context. The severity of the conflicts of course varies between students. How the student values a particular set of goals influences the impact the conflict (Fries et al., 2005; Schmid et al., 2005). For example, students who value achievement more are likely to opt for an academic activity while students who value well-being more may focus on the leisure activity (Hofer et al., 2007; Hofer & Fries, 2016; Fries et al., 2005; Schmid et al., 2005). These types of students can experience less motivational interference because they opted for an activity that was closely related to their values. If a student selected an activity outside of their values, then they would feel the effects of the motivational interference. The amount of self-control the student has also determines the impact of the conflict (Hofer et al., 2007). Those who demonstrate great self-control can focus on the selected task and ignore the intrusiveness of the unselected activity. This type of self-control is not something that happens immediately, but it is something that develops over time through routines and habitual behavior (Hofer et al., 2007; Hofer & Fries, 2016). There

are variables such as self-control and what students value that can determine the severity of a motivational conflict.

The theory of motivational action conflicts was beneficial for the current study and complimented the theory of self-authorship. The current study explores how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes perceive and pursue success in addition to how they may navigate their identities. While the theory of self-authorship allowed me to analyze how they navigated their identity towards self-authorship, I needed to further understand how participants, with their conflicting goals, navigated their experiences as student-athletes. Student-athletes consistently deal with both athletic and academic decisions that impact both their identity and goals. The theory of motivational action conflicts helped examine how participants navigated their decisions and any conflict related to their academic and athletic goals. Utilizing this theory under the current context was important as it helped to examine how the participants possibly struggled in their post-decision selection. This assessment was beneficial as it provided more insight into how these decisions were related to student-athletes' identity navigation and how they viewed and pursued success.

I used the theory of motivational action conflicts primarily for data interpretation. Like how I incorporated the theory of self-authorship into the interpretation portion of the analysis, I referenced the constructs of value orientations and motivational interference to examine the decisions of the participants related to their goals in higher education (Fries et al., 2005; Grund et al., 2015; Hofer et al., 2007; Schmid et al., 2005). These constructs helped with understanding why these goals were important as well as the student-athlete's relation to their identity. I also utilized this theoretical framework as the interpretations made with this theory supported my

interpretations made with the theory of self-authorship. Incorporating the theory of motivational action conflicts benefited the study as it supported during the analysis portion of the study.

Conclusion

The literature shows that there is plenty of research that details the development of student-athletes' identities and the influences of athletics on academic performance and motivation. This understanding, though, is primarily from the experiences of Division I scholarship student-athletes. Such research documents how student-athletes gravitate towards the athlete or student identity and how this in due course impacts their academic performance concerning their perception of success. There is little information about a sub-group amongst the student-athlete population, the non-scholarship student-athlete. More specifically, there is little information as to how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their identities and view success. What information there is focuses on the differences between non-scholarship and scholarship student-athletes. In addressing this gap, the current study utilizes the theoretical frameworks of self-authorship and motivational action conflicts to explore how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their identities and perceive and pursue success in higher education.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

There has been a great deal of research dedicated to understanding the student-athlete experience in higher education. Researchers have studied student-athletes in areas such as identity development (Anthony & Swank, 2018; Beamon, 2012; Brewer et al., 1993; Chen et al., 2010; Melendez, 2010; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018), academic performance (Bimper, 2014; Bimper et al., 2013; Killeya, 2001; Paule & Gilson, 2011; Snyder et al., 2011), and academic motivation (Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018) in the context of higher education. There is ambiguity regarding Division II non-scholarship student-athletes' experiences in higher education. The limited number of studies that include these student-athletes primarily focus on sport motivation and the influence of an athletic scholarship (Kingston et al., 2006; Medic et al., 2007; Milton et al., 2012; Rubin & Rosser, 2014). Because of this, this study explores the experiences of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes in how they navigate identity and success. In this chapter, I describe the research design, methods, ethical considerations of the study, and the overall timeline of the study.

Restatement of the Research Questions

Following this study's purpose, four research questions helped guide this study's design and data collection:

1. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their dual identities as students and athletes?

2. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes interact with their other identities?

3. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes define and pursue success?

4. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes try to achieve academic success?

Research Design

I utilized a qualitative, narrative methodology to explore Division II non-scholarship student-athletes' experiences. A narrative methodology is the study of experience through the efforts of storying (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; McAlpine, 2016). As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) have suggested, individuals live storied lives in which they live and re-live, as well as tell and re-tell, their experiences to convey their own way of knowing to others. Narrative inquiry is a collaborative methodology in which the researcher works closely with a participant to bring about meaning from these experiences over time, places, and in a series of social contexts (Clandinin, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kramp, 2004; McAlpine, 2016; Thomas, 2012). This collaboration is vital not only to understand said lived experiences but also to answer the questions of what happened, what does it mean, and who cares (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Researchers utilize this type of methodology to create and analyze participants' experiences, or narratives.

There are certain theoretical concepts grounded within the methodology. Narrative inquiry is rooted in Dewey's pragmatic view of experience in which experience is centered on two concepts: interaction and continuity (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Interaction refers to acknowledging that people are individuals but that they cannot be strictly understood as such, as they are always in relation (in a social context) with others (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Continuity suggests that experiences build upon one another. This concept suggests that an individual is placed on a continuum where their experiences of the past impact their present and future (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Experience is then considered to be continuous, fluid, and ever-changing in the

participant's life as it continues to be impacted by the social, cultural, and personal narratives that occur every day (Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). What allows this view of experience to be pragmatic is its ability to construct and establish an alternative understanding with an already established phenomenon.

The relationship established by the researcher and participant is pertinent as they construct an alternative, pragmatic way of knowing. Narrative research stresses an ontological, and even epistemological, commitment of the researcher throughout the whole process (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). This constructed reality acts as the first and fundamental reality we have of the participant's world. Being intertwined with the participant's reality, the researcher is then poised to recreate and restructure these experiences that may be understood by them and by others. This process can lead to a privileged epistemological understanding (Kim, 2016; Kramp, 2004). It is privileged in that the researcher is constructing an understanding with someone who has directly lived a particular experience. The researcher must trust the participant and relinquish authority to them to generate and consider alternative views of a socially constructed narrative (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Murhpy, 2009; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kim, 2016; Reissman, 2008; Kramp, 2004; McAlpine, 2016). This mode of inquiry also enables the researcher to connect the various lived stories of each participant into a more cohesive and organized manner that allow for multiple ways of understanding (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kim, 2016; Kramp, 2004; Reissman, 2008). With these ontological and epistemological commitments, it is important for the researcher to listen and describe the participants' experiences when following a narrative methodology.

This methodology can also provide the opportunity for participants to begin to understand who they are regarding their identity development (Clandinin, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin,

1990; Kramp, 2004; McAlpine, 2016; Thomas, 2012). As a participant shares their experiences, they become more aware of who they are and their identity (Adler et al., 2017; Bamberg, 2011; Smith & Sparkes, 2006; Watson, 2007). This awareness does not mean that a participant only had one specific identity throughout their life (Smith & Sparkes, 2006; Watson, 2007). An individual can have multiple, fragmented identities throughout their lifespan that relate to one another (Smith & Sparkes, 2006; Watson, 2007). These fragmented identities create coherence as to what the most salient and present identity was for the participant. Utilizing a narrative methodology can be incredibly useful for exploring a participant's identity as they navigate their experiences.

For the current study focusing on Division II non-scholarship student-athletes in areas of identity navigation and success, a narrative inquiry was appropriate. One of the reasons why was because a narrative methodology allows a researcher and participant to view experiences across the entire lifespan, that is, a beginning, middle, and end (McAlpine, 2016). This aspect was valuable for the current study as one of the major research questions concerns how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their identities in higher education. The methodology enabled the participants to reflect back on their entire collegiate experience and share all meaningful moments that contributed to their identity navigation while allowing their most pertinent identity to emerge during the study (Adler et al., 2017; Bamberg, 2011; Smith & Sparkes, 2006; Watson, 2007). The current methodology also provided the opportunity for participants to share what their goals were, how they pursued them, and why these goals were of value to them while in higher education. Having these conversations on success also provided further clarification about participants' identity navigation. Bamberg (2011) suggests that performing certain activities can help reveal an individual's identity or answer the question

"Who am I?" A narrative inquiry benefited the study by providing a connection between goals and identity navigation to understand the experiences of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes.

A narrative inquiry also provided the opportunity to explore Division II non-scholarship student-athlete experiences to establish an alternative, pragmatic way of knowing. Much of the peer-reviewed literature centers on the experiences of either Division I and/or scholarship student-athletes. This general focus has contributed little to the understanding of Division II and non-scholarship student-athlete experiences overall. To address this gap, a narrative design helped explore the unique experiences of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes and helped bring about an alternative way of knowing regarding student-athletes overall. Utilizing this methodology helped clarify how this group fits into the discussions regarding student-athletes. More specifically, this methodology provided a different way of viewing student-athletes in the context of identity navigation, defining success, and even pursuing success as a student-athlete. Given the lack of understanding of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes, the narrative design was important to help understand these lived experiences.

Theoretical Framework

Self-Authorship

For the current study, I incorporate the theory of self-authorship as a theoretical framework. This theory explores an individual's identity as it shifts away from relying on external sources towards having an independent way of thinking, a belief system, and forming meaningful relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). These tenets illustrate how individuals experience change as they progress towards a self-authored identity through different phases, that is, external formulas, crossroads, and self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008a,

2008b; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). The external formulas phase describes how an individual blindly relies on others for guidance or knowledge because they believe others are the experts. The individual later enters a crossroads phase in which they start to question said guidance or knowledge. An individual's internal identity begins to emerge and form their own sets of values and ideals that may not even mesh with the established norm. The last phase in the theory is when the individual achieves a self-authored identity. Knowledge can be perceived to be uncertain in this phase, but individuals are capable of deriving meaning based on their values and beliefs. There are also three dimensions (i.e., epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) that fluctuate through these phases towards self-authorship. The epistemological dimension refers to how the individual makes meaning of a situation. The intrapersonal dimension reflects the individual's core identity regarding their values and beliefs. Lastly, the interpersonal dimension refers to the mature relationships an individual makes with others. It is because of these tenets that this theory has served as an appropriate theoretical framework to help shape the current study with Division II non-scholarship student-athletes.

These theory components shaped the present study by influencing the participant recruitment and data interpretation. For participant recruitment, higher education institutions can provide an excellent context to develop a self-authored identity (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b). A self-authored identity, however, is not usually achieved while in college. Because of this, it was better suited to only recruit former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. Former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes were preferable as they can look back on all their experiences from college (i.e., from their first year to graduation). For the data interpretations, I used the phases of the self-authorship theory (i.e., external formulas, crossroads, and self-authored identity) to create a deeper understanding of the participant's

identity development. These phases allowed me to interpret the participants' stories and experiences in a cohesive manner. The use of the self-authorship theory allowed me to reinforce the design of this study by identifying an appropriate group of participants as well as helping structure my data interpretation.

Theory of Motivational Action Conflicts

I also incorporate the theory of motivational action conflicts into the study. This theory addresses how students have multiple types of goals, that is, academic and leisure goals. Students are often faced with different decisions in which they must select one goal, specific task, or activity over the other. Such decisions can generate motivational interference where intrusive thoughts of the unselected task hinder the performance or overall experience of the selected task (Fries et al., 2005; Hofer et al., 2007; Hofer & Fries, 2016; Schmid et al., 2005). Motivational interference has been known to lead to behavioral (doing other tasks instead), cognitive (thinking of other tasks instead of the main task), and affective (being in a bad mood or no longer wanting to do the task) types of experience (Schmid et al., 2005). Not all students experience motivational interference or these types of conflicts in a similar manner. This variation is attributed to what the student values more (Fries et al., 2005; Hofer et al., 2007; Schmid et al., 2005). For example, students who value academic achievement are more likely to select academic-related tasks and not experience intense intrusive thoughts of the leisure activity they could have selected (Fries et al., 2005; Grund et al., 2015; Hofer et al., 2007; Schmid et al., 2005). The concept of motivational interference in decision making as well as value orientations can be valuable as it relates to determining a student's motivation in tasks.

The theory of motivational action conflicts supports the research design as it relates to the data interpretation portion of the study. I use the components of value orientations and

motivational interference to examine how or why the participants would make decisions related to their goals over other conflicting goals (Fries et al., 2005; Grund et al., 2015; Hofer et al., 2007; Hofer & Fries, 2016; Schmid et al., 2005). Highlighting these key moments supported my interpretations made with the theory of self-authorship, as the theory helped provide further explanation of how the participants' views and goals shifted during the different phases towards a self-authored identity.

Positionality Statement

The design of a narrative study does hinge upon the interpretation of a researcher. The researcher is typically the primary instrument in a qualitative study (Babchuk & Badiee, 2010; Kim, 2016). This aspect emphasizes how vital a researcher's decisions are as this can influence the study's design. The importance of positionality is greatly stressed. It allows the researcher to reflect on their decisions and determine if the study has deviated from the major research questions (Ortlipp, 2008). Such choices may influence the type of framework, the data collection process, and even interpretations made about the collected data.

My positionality in this study is that I am a white former scholarship student-athlete man researching non-scholarship student-athletes. With my experience of being a scholarship student-athlete at a Division II institution, I remember prioritizing my sport due to the pressures of maintaining my scholarship and trying to meet my coaches' expectations. I remember telling others that I was an athlete at my institution, as if that was my only identity while in college. This aspect influenced how I interacted with others and how I processed different aspects of my life. For example, I only interacted with my teammates and only prioritized my athletic obligations. While I did take plenty of time to focus on my coursework, I did not spend nearly as much time interacting with other students in my program. I considered myself to be an athlete

first, a student second. As a white man, I recognize that my college experience may be different compared to those who may not identify as white or as a man. These differences are associated with myself not having to worry about being discriminated against, allowing me to focus on other areas of my college experience.

Following graduation, I continued my career in athletics as a graduate assistant coach while working on my master's degree in psychology. In this role I worked with all student-athletes on the team and helped them reach their personal athletic goals. I enjoyed being able to work with student-athletes, but I did not always associate with them outside of the sport. While I worked hard as a graduate assistant coach, I still heavily gravitated towards my graduate coursework, a different experience compared to my undergraduate career. I interreacted more with my graduate school cohort, and I identified more with being a graduate student. Like other scholarship student-athletes (Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996), I experienced this development where I first identified as just an athlete during my time as an undergraduate but later gravitated more towards my student identity as I entered graduate school. Upon entering my graduate program in educational psychology at Auburn University, I considered how I could work with student-athletes outside of athletics. I eventually explored the idea of working with student-athletes through a research context.

There is a convergence between my former athletic identities and research identity that influenced my overall research interests. As a former scholarship student-athlete, I am interested to hear the experiences of non-scholarship student-athletes and how they perceive their experiences in higher education without a scholarship obligation. Being a former graduate assistant coach, I am interested in working with non-scholarship student-athletes as I want to understand their experiences better and help them pursue their goals. As a researcher, I am

interested in exploring Division II non-scholarship student-athletes' experiences to understand how they navigate higher education. As a white man, I am interested to see how other identities may come into play that can influence a student-athletes collegiate experience. While these roles are inherently different, various aspects of these identities converge for the current study. Recognizing this convergence was vital as I designed all methodological aspects of this study.

Methods

Setting of the Research

The research setting for the current study was fully virtual. The online video conferencing app Zoom established the actual environment. Zoom is a secure, encrypted video conferencing software that allows users to video, voice, and text chat while also having the capability to record "face-to-face" conversations in a remote, digital environment (Zoom, 2020). I selected Zoom because it provided an excellent means to correspond with the participants of this study.

Sampling Approach

Like other researchers using a narrative methodology (Jupp & Slattery, 2008; Cooper & Davey, 2010), I utilized a snowball sampling approach to identify former Division II non-scholarship student-athlete participants. Snowball sampling was advantageous because the participants of this study were former student-athletes. Student-athletes can be difficult to interview because they are unlikely to participate or try to maintain their private lives (Beamon, 2012; Benson, 2000). While the participants are former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes, snowball sampling was still used given what is known about the student-athlete population. There was also the obstacle of not knowing many former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. I did, however, know collegiate coaches who had non-scholarship student-athletes on their teams in the past. I also posted a research flyer (see Appendix A) about the

study on various social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). Those who follow me saw the information about the study and chose to participate or passed it along to other potential participants.

Participants

The participants of this research study were six former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. To participate in the study, participants must have been a Division II student-athlete at some point in their collegiate career, taken undergraduate courses from the same Division II institution where they were an athlete, must not have had an athletic scholarship at some point in their collegiate career, and needed to be 19 years or older to participate. These criteria were crucial as it was important to solely focus on former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes to understand how they navigated their identity and success while in higher education. Refer to Table 1 for the profile of each participant.

Table 1

Participant Profile

Pseudonym	Sport	Institution(s) Attended	Scholarship Status	Years as a DII Student-Athlete	Gender	Race
Dennis	Track and field	Division II	Non-scholarship	2 years	Man	White
Eddie	Swimming, cross-country, and track and field	Division II	Non-scholarship, but later earned scholarship in last year	4 years	Man	White
John	Track and field	Division II	Non-scholarship, but later earned an athletic scholarship	4 years	Man	White
Kyle Kyrkendall	Football	Community College and Division II	Non-scholarship, but later earned an athletic scholarship	2 years	Man	White
Sarah	Cross-country and track and field	Division II	Non-scholarship	4 years	Woman	White
Stephen	Football	Division II	Non-scholarship	4 years	Man	White

For narrative studies, a sample between six and 12 participants is adequate, depending on the goal of the study (Beitin, 2012; Kim, 2016). Beitin (2012) suggests that while up to 12 participants may be needed for a narrative study, researchers notice data saturation (e.g., similarities in experiences), suggesting six is adequate.

Data Collection Materials

To help with data collection, I conducted individual interviews with each participant. A common data collection technique in narrative research is interviewing (Clandinin, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kim, 2016). Interviews are an effective method for data collection because of the ability to directly interact with the participant (Kim, 2016; Oltmann, 2016). This method allows the researcher to directly understand the area of interest through the detailed perspective of someone who has lived through the experiences. With this understanding, using interviews to collect data was advantageous for this narrative study.

I used a life story interview approach to encapsulate the holistic experience of the Division II non-scholarship student-athlete participants. A life story interview is a type of biographical narrative approach where the researcher studies a participant's life from a wholistic perspective and in great detail (Atkinson, 2007, 2012; Kim, 2016). This method gives participants authority during the interview by allowing participants to share any story about their life signifying the story's overall importance in the participant's life history (Atkinson, 2012). Data generated from life stories can also help one understand how an individual may evolve over time, as the stories cover multiple facets of the participant's life (Atkinson, 2007). This method also allows an opportunity for others to learn about a specific phenomenon and derive meaning from a participant's lived experience (Atkinson, 2007, 2012). Because of this aspect of the life story interview, I utilized this method in the current study. I wanted to allow the participants to discuss the most important or impactful stories about their higher education experience as a Division II non-scholarship student-athlete. For example, I asked questions such as "Can you tell me what it was like being a Division II non-scholarship student-athlete?" and "Can you tell about a time (at any point) where you felt challenged?" It was important to carefully listen to the voices

of the participants while using this approach. These interviews followed an unstructured protocol to allow the participants to freely share whichever stories felt most pertinent. Refer to Appendix B to view the interview protocols for all three interviews conducted with each participant.

Procedure

The data collection proceeded as follows. I first recruited participants by using a snowball sampling approach, distributing a flyer on social media, and reaching out to my former Division II collegiate coach contacts. Once I had contacted a participant and they agreed to join the study, we picked a day and time to meet via Zoom. I interviewed six Division II non-scholarship student-athletes, three times each. In total, there were 18 interviews conducted. Refer to Figure 1 for a full breakdown of the study's procedure.

Figure 1

Study Procedure

Schedule First interview	Before Interview • Send Zoom link • Write pre-interview memos	First Interview • Consent letter (See Appendix C) • Open-ended questions • Time = 60-90	After Interview • Transfer recroding • Write post-interview memos • Transcribe

After Interview • Transfer recordings • Write post-interview memos • Transcribe	Second Interview • Questions • Previous interview • Follow-up • 60-90 min	Before Interview • Send Zoom link • Write pre-interview memos	Schedule Second Interview

Schedule Third Interview	Before Interview • Send Zoom link • Wrtie pre-interview memos	Third Interview • Questions • Remaining follow-up questions	After Interview • Transfer recordings • Write post-interview memos • Transcribe

Figure 1. The flow of the overall procedure of the study.

Data Analysis

The point of this analysis was to develop a narrative based on my interpretation as well as allow others to form their own interpretations. The analysis consisted of a multi-step narrative analysis that incorporated preliminary analytic memos during transcription, multiple readings,

line-by-line analysis, constructing and reconstructing narratives, and using the two theoretical frameworks to interpret the generated data thoroughly.

The first step in this analysis required me to generate field texts, that is, transcribing each interview while also making preliminary analytic memos throughout. Refer to Figure 1 for when the transcriptions occurred in the procedure. I later re-read the transcripts while also engaging in a line-by-line analysis of open coding and a read-through with considerations of each theoretical framework. The theoretical frameworks helped during this process by utilizing the major theoretical tenets. These tenets provided clear definitions to identify certain experiences related to a participant's identity or success navigation. For example, I used the crossroads stage, from the theory of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009), as a code to identify moments in the participant's experiences where they began to shift more towards their preferred identity. Utilizing these different forms of coding resulted in refining the descriptions for each code. I then linked the codes to form categories which developed into rough themes. I met with each member of my committee to go over preliminary findings and share my initial thoughts on the direction of the findings to ensure that I was on the right path.

With a firm grasp of the participants' experiences, I constructed mini biographies of each of the participants. After writing the mini biographies, I further shortened the list of themes based on how consistent each were with the participants, using consistent language throughout. I then identified pieces of data that supported a converging narrative across each participant. I grappled with these themes and tried to find a chronological order, and I arranged the themes into a narrative arc that represented how each experience built upon one another. In this narrative arc, I provided a chronological order, or plot, of the participants' experiences as they navigated their identity development from high school, primarily through higher education, and life post-

higher education. I also included the theory of self-authorship and motivational action conflicts to support these narratives. Utilizing these two frameworks helped provide theoretical context to these narratives and the experiences of the former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes.

Researcher Handbook

For guidance throughout the study, I utilized a researcher handbook that included pre-interview memoing worksheets, the unstructured interview protocols, and post-interview memoing worksheets for all three interviews for all six participants. The following items in the handbook are listed below.

> *Pre-Interview Memoing:* These worksheets were created to help identify my positionality as well as acknowledge any initial assumptions I had before going into the interview. For interviews 2 and 3, I also included items to remind myself of what areas I would like to revisit as well as possible follow-up questions from the previous interview(s).

> *Unstructured Interview Protocol*: To construct a life story narrative that synthesizes the non-scholarship student-athletes' lived experiences, I relied on an unstructured, open-ended interview protocol for this study's data collection (Atkinson, 2007, 2012; Kim, 2016). The unstructured, open-ended interview protocol helped develop a holistic understanding of each participant's experience, allowing them to share stories that were important to their identity navigation and goal pursuit during their entire higher education experience (Atkinson, 2007, 2012). This method provided the opportunity to have a direct conversation with the participants to understand their experiences.

> *Post-Interview Memoing*: These worksheets were created to help write down my initial thoughts following each interview. I created specific items in each post-interview memoing worksheet to help frame my thinking following the interview as well as leading

into the next interview. For the first interview, the worksheet included items that asked

what my initial thoughts were, areas I would like to revisit, and possible follow-up

questions. The second post-interview worksheet consisted of the same items but also

included items regarding the overall structure of the narrative as well as potential themes

that could emerge. For the final post-interview worksheet, it consisted of items regarding

my initial thoughts following the interview, how the narrative has developed over the

course of the three interviews, and what themes comes to mind and how they may be

refined based on the latest interview.

Please refer to Appendix B for the researcher handbook contents.

Ethical Considerations

There are always certain ethical considerations that researchers must consider. One

ethical consideration is the actual relationship with the participant (Atkinson, 2007, 2012;

Clandinin, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Murphy, 2007; Clandinin & Caine,

2008; Kim, 2016). There is a heavy emphasis on the collaborative relationship between the

researcher and the participant, as this relationship is at the center of a narrative methodology

(Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Murphy, 2007; Clandinin & Caine,

2008). With consideration of this relationship, it is imperative for the researcher to be transparent

with the participants by sharing details of the study and not deceiving them in any way. This

transparency plays a key role in the entire process as this allows the participant to feel

comfortable and showcase their genuine self. Kim (2016) argues that to practice good ethical

research there should be a combination of exercising good ethical judgment, reflecting on ethical

decisions, and showing care toward the participant. To support the collaborative relationship, I

have been sure to be as transparent as possible with each participant. During the consent phase of

the interviews, I was sure to be as clear as possible with the participants so that they were aware of the purpose of this study. I also engaged in member checking with the participants so that they could have a final say on how they were represented in the study.

Maintaining confidentiality was another important ethical consideration. It was important that aspects of the participants' identities were not revealed to ensure that no one outside of this study could associate them with the findings. One measure was to provide all participants with a pseudonym. A pseudonym was given to each participant to keep their identity private. Either the participant selected their pseudonym or I chose it for them. All participants had a pseudonym to prevent those outside of the study from identifying them. I also removed other identifiable characteristics, such as the name of their institution. Although not always guaranteed, I took these measures to help prevent the participants from being identified.

The issue of how data were collected, transmitted, and stored after each interview could contribute to potential risks to confidentiality. Regarding data collection, I recorded all the interviews using the recording feature on Zoom, which offers a secure and encrypted online setting. This tool created a recorded file for my use only. I would then transfer the recorded file to an encrypted and secure server, that only I have access to, once the interview concluded. After storing the file on the server, I deleted the original recording. I only used the file recordings for transcription purposes. During transcription, all participants were given a pseudonym of their choosing or an assigned one. After transcribing the interviews, I deleted the recording file from the server. I implemented these measures to further prevent any confidentiality issues.

Timeline of the Study

The study consisted of multiple milestones. I first submitted a modified version of my research study proposal to Auburn University's Internal Review Board (IRB), following a

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successful proposal. After acceptance from the IRB, I began scheduling interviews with potential participants. Refer to Figure 1 for the breakdown of what occurred during data collection. Following data collection, I engaged in the data analysis portion. After conducting the study's data analysis portion, I synthesized all of the participants' testimonies to list any significant findings related to the primary research questions.

Conclusion

There is an overall lack of information regarding the Division II non-scholarship student-athlete experience. Much of the literature excludes how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their dual roles of being a student and an athlete as well as how these individuals envision and pursue success. Implementing a qualitative research design should help fill this literature gap. I utilized a narrative methodology to construct knowledge with the participants through the method of an unstructured, life story interview protocol. This design allowed me to work effectively with the participants and focus on areas considered to be important. I recruited participants through snowball sampling, social media, and former collegiate coach contacts. I also implemented a narrative analysis of these data to synthesize the participants' experiences. This method helped organize the data into themes that represented the participants' experiences in a structured, meaningful manner.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

I implemented a narrative methodology to explore how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their identity and perceive success while in higher education. A narrative methodology is a type of inquiry that researchers can use to explore a participant's experiences through the form of storying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Clandinin & Murphy, 2007; Kim, 2016; McAlpine, 2016; Thomas, 2012). Using this methodology allowed me to engage in an in-depth exploration to answer my research questions.

I interviewed six Division II non-scholarship student-athletes while following an unstructured, life story interview protocol. Each interview was between 60 to 90 minutes long. After each interview, I wrote my initial thoughts in my researcher handbook, acting as post-interview memoing. I then transcribed each recording, making sure to include analytic memos throughout the process. Following the sixth participants' interviews and transcriptions, I reached out to each participant to schedule the next round of interviews. I repeated this process until each participant had gone through three interviews. Once each interview was transcribed, participants' interviews were individually combined and read for another round of coding. I soon began to conceptualize the themes of each participant's narrative, noting which themes appeared to be consistent across all of the participants' interviews. I then constructed narratives for each participant, detailing their experiences from high school to post-college. Afterwards, I reflected on how each narrative was structured and which themes felt present. After this reflection, I crafted a converging narrative that encompassed each participant's experience, while also accounting for any diverging narratives. The theory of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008a,

2008b, 2009) and the theory of motivational action conflicts (Fries et al., 2005; Grund et al., 2015; Hofer & Fries, 2016; Hofer et al., 2007; Schmid et al., 2005) were also used for interpretation purposes, allowing for theoretical context in the final narrative. In the current chapter, I discuss each participant's experience in relation to each theme. Although I have never been a Division II non-scholarship student-athlete, I managed to gain access to first-hand experiences former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. This process allowed me to better understand and share these lived experiences.

Narrative Analysis

The following are the themes used to help understand the experiences of the Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. Arranged in a narrative arc, the themes included *academic and walk-on opportunities, becoming a student-athlete, feeling comfortable as a student-athlete, tensions in their sport, establishing a professional identity,* and *moving On.* As seen from the experiences of the participants, Division II non-scholarship student-athletes self-author a professional identity as they progress throughout higher education. Self-authoring this professional identity took time to develop as participants did not prioritize certain interests until later in college. Rather, participants entered higher education prioritizing their identity of being a student-athlete; this meant embracing their academic and athletic responsibilities and also whom they associated with. However, this identity did not remain consistent, as they described moments of tension with their sports that altered their perception of and relationship with their sport. This tension caused them to shift their priorities elsewhere, primarily their future professional identity. The narrative arc demonstrates how participants' priorities and interests changed over time as they began to establish their identities. These points in the narrative arc act as an umbrella for the participants' experiences, as each shared different moments that

influenced their development towards a self-authored professional identity. I also interweaved relevant literature to help support this narrative arc and to provide theoretical context within the participants' experiences. Utilizing these points, I delve into these stories to provide further context for each point in the overall narrative arc.

While the narrative arc provides a structured format for understanding the current findings, there are some tensions with this methodology as it pertains to the idea of identity. In particular, the current narrative arc suggests there are phases in which the participants progressed that are associated with their self-authorship. This arc, therefore, tells a story that there is a linear path, in terms of sequence, timing, and chronology, regarding the participant's identity navigation. The linearity associated with the arc aligns with the narrative methodology as this mode of inquiry suggests how experiences build upon one another in association to an individual's lifespan (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). With this in mind, this creates a methodological tension between the theory of self-authorship and this narrative arc. As the theory of self-authorship suggests, one's identity may fluctuate throughout their lifespan as they attend to what their values and beliefs may be (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b). While there are phases associated with the theory itself, individuals constantly move in and out of said phases during their development especially as it pertains to the different dimension components of the theory. The different dimensions (as in the epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) are constantly being refined and redefined as they may pertain to their internal identity or voice (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b). It was then important, on when constructing this narrative arc, to not only consider each participant's experiences within these different points in the arc but also the moments that suggest how they worked through their identities in self-authoring their professional identity.

Academic and Walk-on Opportunities

Participants expressed how they looked for an institution that met certain academic requirements, whether they be certain academic programs or financial aid in the form of academic scholarships. At the same time, they also mentioned how they decided on an institution because they had the opportunity to do college sports. These experiences were similar to those in the initial pilot study where former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes also expressed how they selected their institution for academic and athletic opportunities. It appears that having these two aspects was a necessity in making the decision to attend their institution, as participants described wanting to have the experience of being a student-athlete and continuing with their sport. With both academic and athletic considerations, participants wanted to attend an institution that offered these two types of opportunities.

Before they decided on an institution, it was important for some participants to find an institution that offered a certain academic program. The academic program was important for the participants because it was directly related to their professional career interests. Having the academic major was a major priority, but it also mattered if they could also participate in collegiate athletics. Dennis shared how being able to do college track and field enabled him to pick between two engineering schools. Of these two options, one school was a Division I school while the other was a Division II school. Dennis knew he wanted to go into engineering as an academic major, and he knew that both schools had good engineering programs. What made his decision easier was the opportunity to do college sports. He shared that one of the reasons he chose a Division II school over a Division I school was because there was a chance he could walk-on and do track & field. Dennis went on to explain, "I still felt like I wanted to do track, but then I knew I wasn't good enough for Division I track and field—like, my distances were pretty

decent but probably below average for Division I." He already knew that the Division II

institution "had a good engineering school," but it was the matter of being able to walk-on and

do college track and field that helped solidify his institution decision making.

Having certain academic interests even allowed some participants to narrow down their

choice to an institution that not only had their academic program but also would allow them to

walk-on to a sports team. Eddie, both a swimmer and runner, knew what academic program he

wanted to go into. Having this major in mind made it easier for him to identify schools at which

he could possibly be a student-athlete. Eddie explained:

> So I knew I wanted to be in athletic training and do something with sports medicine. So
> for my major there's actually a website that you can go and look up [schools]. Let's say I
> was interested in going to school in Texas. I can search every school in Texas that has a
> program. So I'd already know, like, "Hey, these are the schools that have what I want to
> learn." If I'm interested in the school, then I filled out that school's recruiting profile. So
> for some schools, they reached out to me through Be Recruited [an online website high
> school students can use to get recruited by institutions for sports], and I was like, "Hey,
> you have what I want," and other schools—it was like, "I really like this school; let's send
> my information to them and see what they say."

Eddie used this system to his advantage. He had a particular major in mind and sought out

specific schools that offered the major while also trying to be actively recruited by the institution

for either swimming or running. Considering both academic and athletic opportunities allowed

Eddie to narrow down his options to find an institution that offered both sets of opportunities.

Like Dennis and Eddie, John also considered the academic program and the opportunity

to walk-on to become a student-athlete when he selected his institution. When describing how he

selected his institution, John mentioned:

> So towards the end of my high school career, I was trying to—I was starting to veer off
> more into the engineering field, and I was trying to go towards that. So this Division II
> school was like a prime place for that. And honestly, I wasn't sure if I was going to be
> any good to actually get onto the track team there. But I figured, "Why not try?" and so I
> emailed [the] coach because I believe one of my coaches had a connection there. Also,

they've had multiple athletes from my [high] school go there. So I ended up emailing [the] coach. I told them my marks, different stuff like that, and they invited me up and said that they can pretty much just allow me to walk-on. Which I was okay with because I knew I was not the best. I knew I didn't have the greatest of achievements in track. So just allowing me to walk-on was awesome in of itself.

John looked into other institutions but noted that he "didn't feel good about these institutions." What came down to his decision to attend his Division II institution was that it offered the academic program he was most interested in and that it offered him an opportunity to do college track and field as well. The type of academic programming offered by an institution mattered for the participants. They wanted to attend an institution that they knew would help them get into a career field that best matched their interests. While having the opportunity to walk-on at an institution influenced their institution selection, it was important that a school offered a specific program that helped them reach their professional goals.

Not every participant, however, knew what they wanted to do in regard of a major, let alone a career. Some had not fully considered what type of academic major they wanted to declare even though they wanted to go into higher education. Instead, participants considered which institution provided more financial opportunities to attend. These financial opportunities were non-athletic scholarships (or academic scholarships). Participants mentioned how they each had some form of academic scholarship that enabled them to attend their institution. An academic scholarship could provide some comfort in knowing that their tuition would be partially or even fully covered. This aspect was of particular importance to the participants. This is exemplified by Kyle, who recalled having an offer to play football at a private college in Mississippi, but the tuition was incredibly high. While Kyle's parents were supportive, Kyle said, "'No, I'm not willing to put you or me in a financial situation.'" Being able to have the opportunity to have their tuition paid for mattered for participants. Having their tuition covered

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made the decision to attend their institution easier and enabled them to be able to walk-on to their team as well.

While academic and financial aspects played a key role in their institution selection, the opportunity to play sports also mattered during their decision-making. The opportunity to walk-on meant a great deal to the participants. Participants expressed a love for their sport, compelling them to pursue college athletics. Approaching their senior year, everyone wanted to continue their sport after high school. Some participants struggled with the idea that their sport was coming to an end. During his senior year of high school, Stephen recalled, "'Well you're running out of time.' When I was a freshman I was like, 'Well, I got three more years.' Then you get to the end wondering if someone is going to look at you or if that's gonna be it." Eddie also mentioned that he "just didn't want to not be an athlete still." This aspect of running out of time was vital in the participants' experiences as they looked for any possible way to extend the time that they had left with their sport. Other participants wanted to have the experience of being a student-athlete in college. Sarah mentioned, "I understood, like you know, [I] wasn't going to get any money. I wasn't going to get a scholarship. But I still wanted to be a part of the team. I wanted to run in college, and that was kind of really it." John also mentioned, "[I] just wanted to continue track in college and continue doing a sport." Similarly, Kyle said:

> It's just what I wanted to do. So that's what I wanted out of it. I got that opportunity and once I got it, you know, let's roll with it. I love playing sports, so it was an opportunity to play.

Being able to do sports mattered to the participants as they described an intrinsic motivation to keep playing their sport post-high school. Even though their institution selection focused on academic opportunities, having the opportunity to walk-on at an institution made the decision easier for the participants.

Division II non-scholarship student-athletes considered both academic and athletic aspects when deciding on an institution. These considerations implied having a fondness towards specific academic programs or even considering the opportunities to become a collegiate athlete. Participants emphasized that the academic opportunities played a key role in their decision despite their fondness for their sport. It is important to consider that these participants made their decision based on their interests alone. This decision also signified that the participants wanted to have the identity of being a student-athlete. Each participant shared how they wanted the experience of being a student-athlete while in college. Participants entered college with the default identity of being a student-athlete because they wanted this experience. Having this default identity of being a student-athlete did not necessarily represent their overall interests, or even their personal identity. Rather, they would focus on developing behaviors that best related to the identity of being a student-athlete. When they began their college careers, they would have a community of teammates and coaches that would help them navigate their first year and help them learn to be a student-athlete. This is similar to the concept of external formulas in the theory of self-authorship where individuals behave congruently with what authority figures deem as the truth (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Hodege et al., 2009). These types of behaviors are usually associated with the individual having a lack of understanding of themselves and not having a general idea of how to navigate aspects of their life. Fortunately for the participants, they had this identity and community to rely on to help them transition into their first year.

Becoming a Student-Athlete

The participants described certain behaviors that early on led to their development as student-athletes. As they entered higher education, they automatically had the title of being a

student-athlete, regardless of them being a walk-on or non-scholarship student-athlete. However, to become a student-athlete, participants shared how they had to learn to navigate this dual-role identity. Particularly, this is in reference to how they first learned to manage and balance these two roles. On top of learning to navigate these roles and their specific environments, it was also imperative for them to learn how to be both a student and an athlete. While these different aspects were major components to their development, it was not just these behaviors that reinforced their identities as student-athletes. Establishing relationships early on with teammates also helped cement the feeling of being a collegiate student-athlete. For the participants, part of their college experience meant they had to learn to become a student-athlete by balancing the two roles, learning how to be both a student and an athlete, and establishing early connections with their teammates.

Despite the overwhelming demands that participants experienced in their first year, they mentioned how determined they were to figure out a balance. Sarah emphasized this idea of balance between the two roles in which one cannot prosper in one role without doing well in the other. She shared, "You can't fail your classes and be a student-athlete. So you kind of have to figure out how to balance it." While this primarily referred to having and maintaining good grades, Sarah mentioned the importance of finding this balance early on in college. This balance is important, as a student-athlete needs to learn how to manage their responsibilities and dedicate equal attention to both roles (Mignano et al., 2006; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). Managing these interwoven athletic and academic aspects was difficult initially. This difficulty associated with balancing the two roles stemmed from figuring out the logistics of scheduling courses around practices and realizing how busy their day-to-day

was. Dennis recalled his freshman year and how much busier he became when his first semester of classes and practices began. He shared:

> You have to schedule your classes around your sport. So you have things [such] as 8:00 AM weights, so you couldn't have an 8:00AM class. But you could have like a 9:10 class [only] if you do your weights and then hustle to class, which isn't always ideal if you got a sweaty backside trying to sit in a class or have sweaty arms trying to take a test. And so working around things like that—you have morning weights and then you also had afternoon practice. So working your schedule around that.

It was through this new busy schedule that Dennis noticed how whatever free time he had before was no longer there. Dennis explained:

> In those times where I was at weights, I might have actually been doing a class. And then that time we go to practice I might have used that to study. But instead, I had to, and I wanted to, go to practice. So it became a lot busier, and so I wasn't able to do as many things in my free time as I was before.

Having this busier schedule consisting of classes and practices interwoven with one another also meant having to learn to shift roles throughout the day.

This idea of a busy schedule is something that resonated strongly with the participants. At times it felt like they were at the mercy of their sport in terms of this scheduling. Kyle, after transferring from his community college so he could play football, recalled feeling that "you kind of turn into [an] athlete first a lot of times." This feeling of being an athlete first came from their sport being overall more demanding. He explained:

> As soon as we got done with classes, they want us over there. It was more demanding whether it was practice, workouts, workouts then practice, or a meeting. It was always something. Like, it was more demanding than it was at my community college. So I had to figure out how to balance my time there a little better.

This demand from college sports was something that each participant experienced during their transition into higher education. A demanding sport forced participants to find different ways to balance their time.

Managing their time between classes and practices was no easy feat, as conflicts emerged consistently between their two roles. The conflicts in question, however, were minor role obligations that varied at different points in their second year. For example, some participants mentioned how being a student and being an athlete conflicted with their overall schedule. Sarah shared that occasionally she missed a class but that it was not a major concern for her. She said,

> I remember my coach telling us, "You know not to schedule classes for Fridays," or whatever. So I very rarely had a class on Friday unless it was just one of those Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes that you just can't avoid. So other than that, as far as school conflicting with athletics, it was missing the occasional class. Obviously at that point you pick the sport, but it's fine. I don't think I ever ended up with… a test. Actually, no, I did miss one test. I missed a physics test. But, I only remember that because I had to go into, like, a room by myself to take the test, and I remember that being super weird. But, other than that, I picked athletics. It wasn't necessarily an overall negative thing because I just took the test later, and it's not like I lost points or anything like that.

In this situation, Sarah needed to select her sport over her physics course because she had a commitment with her sport. However, it was not a difficult decision due to her obligation. These types of decisions did not just revolve around times when they had to miss classes. Sometimes these decisions included breaking away from studying in order to go to practice. Dennis recalled what it was like trying to study for a midterm or a final while also needing to practice:

> So I'm having to take breaks from school and studying to go to practice. I don't think we had a meet during midterms or finals. But, you know, taking that time away from studying to go to practice or anything like that—That'd make things difficult. I mean, sometimes it wasn't that bad if you're at a good stopping point. It'd be like, "Oh, I get to take a break to go to practice" or something like that. But it's just part of time management I guess.

As Dennis suggested, it was all related to time management. Time management, in this regard, was something that the participants felt okay in doing because it was associated with their role of being a student-athlete.

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Sometimes conflicts emerged as they planned for their next semester. These conflicts refer to the difficulty in figuring out which classes fit with their schedule and which classes they would have to put off to accommodate their practice schedule. John recalled scheduling conflicts, saying all of his required classes were in the middle of his practice times which "just made it a lot harder to consistently do things at times." Transitioning between these two roles added an extra layer for John, as he recalled how challenging at times it was to "change gears" in his day-to-day. He said, "It was definitely difficult to go between the two and try and change gears. Especially with going from [a] workout straight into a class and then straight back and do a workout." John felt that the situation would have been better if "[the team] literally just did everything in the afternoon or something like that, and just had all the classes in the morning." Overall, these conflicts made balancing the dual roles of a student-athlete difficult.

While difficult at times, these conflicts were not something that the participants continually stressed over. Given that they had obligations to meet, the participants did not have any issue picking an academic or athletic activity over another. Regarding the theory of motivational action conflicts (Fries et al., 2005; Hofer et al., 2007; Hofer & Fries, 2016; Schmid et al., 2005), individuals might not experience a negative feeling when selecting one activity over the other (in this case, school or sports activities). This lack of negative feelings is related to the value the individual places on the respective activity or area. Since these obligations are associated with being a student-athlete, the participants did not have any issues choosing one activity over the other, as they were trying to become a student-athlete. Nevertheless, some participants still acknowledged that balancing athletics and academics "is one of the bigger headaches of college."

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Learning to manage their dual responsibilities was not all that was needed to transition into being a collegiate student-athlete. It was also imperative that they learned how to be both a student and an athlete. In learning these two roles, they learned certain behaviors through their own efforts or by observing others. Motivated by good grades or personal goals in their sport, participants shared how they learned to navigate these roles early on to be successful. As students, participants relied on their own trial-and-error process in developing strategies that worked best for themselves as well as observing the academic behaviors of others. Meanwhile as athletes, the participants engaged in behaviors of accountability but more so in observing their teammates or following their coaches' orders to learn this new role. It is through these actions, however, that participants engaged in the process of developing a self-authored identity. Participants shared how they followed the cues of those around them to properly learn how to operate as a student and as an athlete, or student-athlete, much like in the theory of self-authorship where individuals follow external formulas (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). Participants perceived that following the behaviors of others, while not contributing to their own internal identity, was what was needed in order to become a student-athlete and be successful in this role. While only apparent in their student identity, there is this sense of agency in how they learned strategies on their own, as they assessed particular strategies that best fit their needs, indicating that even early on participants explored their own strengths and weaknesses that were possibly linked to their internal or future self-authored identity.

Because they were college student-athletes, it was important that the participants quickly learned how to navigate their academic courses. Participants shared how they recognized their college coursework as being "different" or "harder" in comparison to high school coursework. What helped the participants learn and achieve in high school was no longer as effective,

prompting them to explore other possibilities to achieve academically. Recognizing this difficulty, the participants shared how they needed to adapt to be able to make good grades. Adapting meant learning new methods to be successful in their coursework. For some participants, this needed to identify which behaviors helped them achieve good grades on their own. Sarah recalled trying different strategies early on in her college career because "it was just harder than high school." This aspect related to her figuring out her own time management:

> It took me a minute to figure out my footing and figure out that I've got to study from these times to these times, or I've got to do homework from these times to these times to be successful in school.

Sarah mentioned how time management was difficult for a particular class in her first semester:

> I really struggled with world history. That was the one class that just was the hardest thing for me. [It] was not necessarily like getting to class; it was just figuring out the time to, like, study. It was just I had a hard professor, and that was just—that was definitely my biggest struggle in time management.

Additionally, Sarah realized that certain behaviors also no longer worked for her. She explained, "It didn't work for me to sit in the back of classroom, pay attention, take notes, and that be it." She found it was more beneficial to sit in the front and be "100% focused on what was going on in class" or even went to her professors and "talk to them and figure out what was going to help in class." There was a great deal of adjustment for Sarah in her first year, but eventually, like the others, she found a way to adapt to the higher education landscape and find success in her courses.

Trying different things was an important concept for the participants as they learned to navigate these roles. Often, however, this consisted of a trial-and-error period when they learned which strategies worked for them and which did not. Kyle shared how he would "try different

things." Trying different things referred to a different assortment of strategies aimed at bettering

his studying:

> So I would try flashcards. I tried rewriting notes, and I tried just reading through notes. I just tried different things. And then I figured out certain things help and then they don't. I kind of knew myself. Like if something was hard and something didn't come naturally to me, I'd do the extra things. I would rewrite notes. I would make flashcards and then I would read through those notes. You know, just things like that. I just had to figure out what worked, and it just took a few trial runs and different ideas.

Being in a new and more rigorous academic setting, some participants, like Kyle, stressed that

they took their time and learned what benefited them more when it came to studying. These

strategies took time to develop, but this dedication was necessary as participants explored their

strengths and figured out what strategies best suited them in their courses.

Some participants also found it beneficial to mimic their friends' studying habits. These

participants used their friends as a reference as they developed strong behaviors that helped them

sit down and study when they needed to study. Stephen recalled how college "was very

frustrating at first." Having felt unprepared going into college, he needed to learn everything

associated with being a college student. What helped him during this transition was his friend

group. He mentioned:

> I had a lot of friends that helped me out and met people that would, you know, … help me [with,] like, a lot of encouragement. And, you know, you'd sit down and you see somebody else doing some work, and you're like, "Alright, I better do something too," while they're doing it.

Stephen began to learn that it would be a good use of his time to also start working on classwork

or even study because he observed his friends doing their schoolwork.

John also took cues from others around him to get support when it came to studying. He

experienced some issues in his first year which led him to turn to his friends in his fraternity to

help him stay consistent in his studying:

When I did study, I had to lock myself in a room or go be by myself. There were times where I was able to study with groups, but it had to be like we're doing the same thing. Towards the end of that [spring] semester, I started leaning on the fraternity for help with studying. Because they would have study groups and stuff like that. But they would just be like a bunch of guys sitting in a room. All listening to their own thing.

While they did not study the same topic, John found study groups to be a way for him to hold himself accountable so that he could focus on making good grades. In addition to these study groups, John also learned how to establish better academic behaviors by using a university resource known as academic coaching. Academic coaching helped at-risk students get back on track in terms of doing well in their courses:

I did some academic coaching towards the end of my first year, start of my second, to help try and get, like, a study plan. Get on some kind of a better track—which helped a lot, and I started making much better grades after my first year. I tried to use people around me, and yeah the academic coaching was probably one of the things that helped me the most, getting back on track with getting decent grades.

During this early point in their college experience, John and the others tried to learn from those around them to establish good academic behaviors to enable them to get good grades and succeed in the classroom.

Some of the participants also shared how they also learned new study strategies from their friends. As mentioned before, Sarah struggled initially to find her footing but eventually figured things out on her own. However, along with her own learning strategies, she also picked up strategies that she saw her friends use:

I did pick up a few new things that I saw from my other friends that were studying, like how they studied. And so I would try it out. I was never a note card, like a flash card, person. I can't remember what class it was in, but I want to say it was … an anatomy class, or something like that, where you just had to know so many … things. Like there's just so much to know. But I've never been a flash card person, and then I saw somebody else do it. And so I started implementing that in some of my classes … later on.

Eddied also recalled he picked up a strategy from someone else to help him with reading course material. He mentioned, "I always felt I learned better by writing than just reading. So a lot of my notes I either rewrote down in a second notebook or what I think was most important. I'd have this random scrap notebook of writing." While he knew that this was an effective strategy, this was not something he picked up on his own. He remembered "someone saying you learn more by writing it down," and he found out he was able to remember more information when he used this strategy. He explained how effective it was and how he easily remembered material "instead of just reading it, and then [be] like, 'What did I read?'" While participants did share how they learned how to study on their own, this was not the only thing that helped them initially. It was also the impact of learning from those around them that enabled them to learn effective strategies and get accustomed to various aspects of being a student.

Much like how they navigated their new student role, participants shared how they adjusted to their new college athlete role. This adjustment was important, as everyone noticed how more intense their practices were compared to high school. Eddie highlighted this difference when he shared what his swimming practices were like in the beginning:

> In high school my main practice was at night, 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM or 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM every night. Now practice went from 3:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon [in college]. But I didn't have, like, a double practice until the summer for club [high school]. Where here [in college], it was like, "Congrats, you have doubles [practices] every single day." And the biggest change for me was my club team didn't have access to a weight room, so we were lifting sandbags, kettlebells, pushups, sit ups, and medicine balls. And now I was thrown into a weight room with a squat rack and they said, "Go squat," and I'm kind of looking at it like, "It's not a medicine ball…." So that was a big transition for me in the weight room side of things because we didn't have access to one.

For a new college athlete, there was much to adjust to when navigating this role besides different practices. Similar to how participants learned to be a student, they learned to be an athlete by

observing others and learning how the team operated. Sarah mentioned how being injured her first year allowed her to learn from others how to compete as a collegiate runner. She shared:

> I was actually injured during my first cross-country season. I had messed my hamstring up somehow. Don't really know how. I actually redshirted my freshman cross-country season. But I still, like, went to all the meets, and like, got to still be a part of the team which was actually really cool, and I really enjoyed that.

While this injury was unfortunate, Sarah saw it as an opportunity to learn from others. She said,

> I don't know if not actually participating in cross-country helped the transition be easier because I got to watch other people, but I kind of got to figure out the lay of the land, how things work, and everything by observing [others] that first semester.

Having "a lot of people that are really good" on the team helped in this aspect as it enabled her to "see how things work, how things go, and everything" and figure out how her team operated. Stephen, who redshirted (did not compete) his freshman year, was also able to sit back and learn how things operated on his football team. He was not excited to redshirt his first year, but he still enjoyed the process of learning how to adjust to college football:

> Oh, it was really exciting because it's something new. And… of course, you don't want to redshirt, but I mean, it was just exciting transitioning into that… finding your place and being accepted. I was just in awe of playing in that huge stadium and you get to go practice and hang out every day. It's just the whole experience.

Having this opportunity to sit out for a year served as a good learning experience for Stephen, setting him up to be ready to play later on in his college career.

In addition to these observations, there was also a sense of accountability. This idea of accountability came in the form of going to practices and listening to coaches; it is similar to following an external formula, as participants described their early experiences in their sport as including trusting their coaches and willfully following their instructions (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). Dennis shared this idea of accountability and how it was necessary to

achieve his goal of breaking his high school record in the javelin in college. Primarily, he

described how he not only went to practice but worked hard during these practices. Dennis

described his work ethic:

> Don't slack off in weights and do your best to have a good day, even when you don't necessarily agree with what you're doing. Keep yourself accountable. Always do the right things or not eat the wrong things or do the wrong things. Always show up to practice. Give an effort.

Dennis also made sure to listen to his coaches even though they were not his event-specific

coach:

> At my school there wasn't a throwing coach, but the coaches there were relatively knowledgeable about throwing so they would give you tips and advice. You would do more structured workouts for throwers, which for the most part included just doing incline bench press, where everybody else was doing more, like, stuff for what runners would do.

Dennis established trust with his coaches and followed whatever they told him to do, as he felt

this enabled him to achieve his goal in the javelin. Like Dennis, other participants shared how

they listened to their coaches and followed their instructions closely. Participants wanted to

follow their coaches' orders and meet their expectations, as it allowed them to quickly figure out

what was needed to be successful.

Becoming a student-athlete did not just mean learning how to balance their

responsibilities and learning the two roles. The types of connections they made early on also

facilitated the establishment of this identity. Participants shared instances of navigating or

developing early relationships with their teammates. These relationships were important during

these early moments of college, as they enabled participants to make connections with others

who shared the same identity of being a student-athlete. Reflecting the interpersonal dimension

of the theory of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008a; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007), the

participants associated more with their teammates, as they may have felt these connections represented their student-athlete identity best at the time. From the beginning, the participants each shared a quality and interest with their teammates, and that quality and interest were being a student-athlete. The participants described these early friendships as generally easy to form. Sarah provided details about the initial strength of these friendships as she explained:

> So you kind of just naturally become friends with everybody that's on the team, and you do spend a lot of time together. Throughout the cross-country season, we spent a lot of time together, like, you know, bus rides, like weekends, like at meets, and stuff like that. And I would say it was a very inviting team. I would definitely say that it was very easy to get along with people.

Eddie also elaborated on his bond with his teammates saying that it was "like how a family feels," an aspect he noticed as early as his first recruitment visit. What helped Eddie quickly form and strengthen these bonds was being around his teammates often early on. He mentioned, "I think we got there before moving day for freshman, and we were already living on campus, so you got to at least meet the team and know everybody before the rest of the university moved in beside the sports." Having this constant exposure to one another enabled him to quickly form friendships with his teammates in the beginning.

While these relationships tended to just focus on the aspect that they were student-athletes, these relationships flourished because of the consistent time spent together as college athletes. Stephen explained his friendships with his teammates, "You just go through the same stuff. You go through, you know, all the workouts, early mornings, and everything. You just create a bond, so it's just easy to hang out with the guys." Going through these types of experiences strengthened their bonds with teammates, so much so that the participants said that their teammates did not care that they were a walk-on. Dennis recalled his teammates, explaining, "Nobody ever made me feel like an outsider." Even if the participants were classified

as being walk-on student-athletes, their teammates did not care, as they continued to experience the same rigors of college athletics together. Being a student-athlete benefited the participants, as it enabled them to find an initial group of friends that shared a clear interest and a group of friends to bond with during the rough transition into collegiate sports.

In the beginning of their college careers, the participants shared what they did to initially transition into higher education and become student-athletes. The participants described moments that helped with their transition and their understanding of their identity in terms of being a student-athlete that ranged from balancing their responsibilities, learning both roles, and even establishing friendships with their teammates. Like most transitions, the participants struggled at times to find their footing but often relied on the help of others to help them get established. Eventually, the participants learned to navigate higher education and settled into their identity of being a student-athlete.

Feeling Comfortable as a Student-Athlete

At some point, the participants found their stride and adjusted to this identity of being a college student-athlete. This of course took time to develop, as participants took lessons learned from the beginning and implemented this knowledge into their lives. In how they learned to become student-athletes, participants discussed being able to properly navigate and balance both the academic and athletic perspectives of their college experience. However, finally finding a balance between these two aspects was not the only thing that enabled participants to come into their own as student-athletes. While this balance was a contribution, participants shared how they settled in and became confident in their coursework and sport as they experienced some sense of success, whether in the form of getting good grades or beginning to accomplish personal goals. Settled into the student-athlete identity, participants followed familiar cues, or external formulas

(Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009), associated with the student-athlete identity rather than exploring other interests. The participants shared what it was like to start feeling comfortable as a student-athlete in higher education.

Part of this confidence associated with this adjustment of being a student-athlete was having to figure out how to stay on top of things during the semester. Sarah, who initially struggled to find her footing with school, shared how one aspect helped her stay on top of her responsibilities. She mentioned how she got more organized following her first year of college. Sarah said:

> I felt that I was a lot better at time management. I felt like I was kind of figuring out how to manage doing cross-country and doing school but also doing fun things as well. I did run cross-country that sophomore season. I think I was probably, like, more tired, because I obviously didn't run my first freshmen semester. But I thought it was good, like, I thought, overall I was definitely figure—figuring things out better.

What helped Sarah with her time management was the use of a planner. Sarah shared, "I had a very lovely planner that had everything listed out of exactly what I needed to do, and I became very organized, and even now I'm very detail oriented." She went on to explain how she would organize her day:

> If I knew it was going to be a busy day, I would plan out every hour of my day. I'd be like, "Okay, this is when I'm going to cross-country, this is when I have class, I'm going to do my math homework from like 10 to 11, and then I'm going to switch over to biology from 11-12" or whatever it may be.

This organization did not occur over night for Sarah, as she said she was not as organized her freshman year. She mentioned, "I definitely got more organized the more things I put on my plate. Just because I had to." Understanding this limitation early on prompted Sarah to force herself to better establish her time management skills so that she could continue to balance her time between school and sports equally.

Other participants also shared how they worked on their time management by shifting priorities during the in-season and off-season of their sport. Shifting these priorities enabled some to give their full attention to both their classes and sport as necessary. John highlighted this sense of balance, as he referred to the in-season and off-season as being different mindsets. John first mentioned these different mindsets in his first season of track and field:

> I feel like whenever I'm in-season, I'm "in-season." My mind is in it more. Whenever I go off-season is where I start to wander and find something else to do. But when I'm in season, I feel more competitive, I have a goal every week, or every other week. I have something to focus on. And it's right there in my face. Like, we're going to compete, whether I like it or not. Pretty much I'm going to this meet—I'm going to do this. So it's either get better or not. So that was kind of the mindset that was there at the time.

This mindset continued to persist following his first season, as he described how his mindset changed semester to semester:

> My academics got a lot better; my studying got a lot better. I still had the off-season in-season mindset, though. So I was doing what I needed to or what was expected of me from the team in the off-season. But I was not doing more. I wasn't focusing on it really in the off-season at all. I was focusing on school and social aspects. During the off-season and in-season, the same thing. That's pretty much all I'm focused on. I'll focus on school and track during in-season, and those are my two focuses during then.

Being able to switch between these two mindsets enabled John to prioritize his responsibilities better. While it seems that John prioritized one aspect over the other depending on when his sport was in-season, this was his method of being able to balance his time and be successful in school and track and field.

Aside from having certain mindsets or time management skills, other participants shared how they learned to prioritize their schoolwork first so that they could have plenty of time to focus on athletics. Acting as a form of time management, some participants preferred to complete whatever schoolwork they may have had just so that it would not interfere with practices or competitions. While conflicts between school and sports still occurred following

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their beginning of higher education, these participants took steps to ensure that these two aspects did not conflict as much. Eddie talked about his work ethic and how he was never one to slack off with his schoolwork early on. He shared:

> Yeah, so that free time for me came like, "Hey let's get this work done real quick and get it in." I wasn't the type of person to be up at midnight studying the day before a test or "This assignment is do at midnight—it's 11:55—let me finish typing this paragraph!" That wasn't me. I got it done. That may have been me in grad school, but that wasn't me in undergrad. I got it done and got it out of the way.

Eddie shared his motivation for wanting to get his schoolwork done as quickly as possible as he said, "[I wanted to] make sure I didn't waste time doing homework when I should have been practicing." Committed to this student-athlete role, Eddie made sure he took care of his schoolwork first, just so that he could focus during his swim practices. Kyle also shared wanting to finish up his schoolwork as quick as possible so that he could just think about football when it was time for football. Kyle prided himself as "an academic always." Regardless of his disposition to his schoolwork, he never let school interfere with his time with football. He shared what he would do prior to traveling to football games with his team:

> I mean, if I knew we were traveling that weekend… I'm trying to think. We flew twice with my school. So, you know, if there was a game where we did have to fly that was where we would get up and leave the day before. I would do what I had to do before we left because, like, once we get on that bus or once we got on the plane, I didn't want to have to carry a backpack. This was a football trip. I didn't want to do school on the football trip.

Both football and school were two important things for Kyle, but he knew he did not want them to conflict with one another. He mentioned, "It was just doing what I had to do when I needed to do it. That way I could balance it out. I needed to get this done for school so I could get this done for sports." Along with different mindsets and time management, some participants shared that they would often prioritize school so that they could focus on sports.

Along with finally figuring out how to balance school and sports efficiently, participants became comfortable and found their footing when it came to their academic coursework. Kyle discussed how confident he was in school, saying, "So like, school came fairly easy to me. I didn't worry about it. Like, I was confident, you know, in my school work." Even with this confidence, Kyle still recalled some courses being somewhat difficult. He explained:

> There was always a few assignments that I would worry about like everyone does. English was a class that I had to work harder in because I wasn't the best at English. That was probably my harder [subject], but other than that it wasn't like I worried too much about school.

Even with these difficult classes or assignments, he did not worry about the difficulty. All that Kyle worried about was getting his work done so that he could spend his time elsewhere, for example, in football or enjoying his weekend. Other participants also felt a similar comfort in their courses following their initial transition into college. Dennis, coming off a strong first year, mentioned, "I think I may have started becoming pretty comfortable and probably didn't take every opportunity to study—I can't remember. I did decent freshman and sophomore year in grades." Dennis recalled, however, his freshman and sophomore classes not quite being as difficult as his junior and senior classes:

> School was just kind of "keep doing my best in classes." I knew some of the harder engineering classes were coming, and I was kind of ready to get into them. But I think I was just kind of chugging along with academics.

Knowing what laid ahead, Dennis maintained his focus on doing well in his courses in preparation for the more difficult classes. The participants found their rhythm based on what they learned from their previous year. Having the confidence of knowing how to handle their classes allowed them to flourish in their coursework going forward.

Even though participants felt comfortable navigating their coursework, they still wanted to do well in their classes. Participants wanted to make good grades because they wanted to stay on top of their coursework. Sarah discussed how after she found her "groove" with school, she "really focused on school." She mentioned, "I was like, 'Okay, I got to buckle down and figure this out and make sure that I'm doing well in school.'" Kyle mentioned that "school is important—always has been" and discussed how determined he was to make A's every semester. He said, "I stayed on top of my grades at my school just because I had that same mindset. Like, if I'm going to do it then I'm going to do it. I don't want to settle for C's." However, he did not always make an A in his courses. Kyle shared a story about the first time he received a B in college:

> I didn't know how to feel when I got my first B in college. I called my mom, and I was like, "Mom, I'm sorry." She said, "Why? What's wrong?" I said, "I made a B." She started laughing—She's like, "It's okay," like, "You're fine!" And I was like, "I know, but I don't feel right." And you know we laughed about it, but I just always had that mindset like if I can get A, I want it.

Despite having done well in the previous year, some participants wanted to continue doing well for the extrinsic motivation to get good grades.

Other participants wanted to continue doing well in school because of certain extrinsic aspects. These extrinsic aspects ranged from keeping a scholarship or staying in an academic program. Stephen wanted to maintain his scholarship and mentioned that, going into his sophomore year, at "school I wanted a 3.0 GPA so I could keep my scholarship. It was an academic scholarship." Stephen shared that he was not worried about his coursework as much. He mentioned:

> I was pretty much undecided still, school-wise. I was just trying to get through my classes, just have my GPA. Really wasn't focused on that too much. Didn't really change

from freshman to sophomore year. Just trying to get by. You know, the least amount of effort I could put in.

Stephen explained his reason for putting in minimal effort, however, saying, "I just hated school. I didn't like it all. What motivated me wasn't that much when it came to school at that point." Stephen just wanted to enjoy the social and athletic aspects of his college career. Even though he "hated" school, he still wanted to do well enough to maintain his grades to keep his scholarship. However, there came a point where Stephen was frustrated with school. Frustrations with school grew to the point where he could no longer take it and made the conscious decision to quit school. He said:

> The first two years, I hated school so much. I was like, "no I'll quit and I'm gonna do work on the road." I was gonna do construction anyway, so might as well start making money earlier and get to it. I just hated school that much.

Stephen, however, did not drop out of school. He mentioned how he did not want to leave football or his friends. Sticking it out, Stephen made the decision to stay in college and continue his education. While there was little academic motivation and a desire to quit school, Stephen demonstrated how some participants were extrinsically motivated when it came to school.

Other participants were also extrinsically motivated when it came to their coursework. However, this motivation was associated with remaining in an academic program. In a similar fashion, Eddie tried to remain in his institution's honors program. Eddie recalled having issues his sophomore year with the honors program because of his "bad grades" from the previous year. He shared:

> I was on probation after my first semester for bad grades. You had to have a 3.5 or better to stay in, and I got a 3.3, 3.3, and a 3.3. So I wasn't having the 3.5, so they kept putting me on probation and my parents argued with me about trying to keep my honors program.

Eddie explained, "I wanted out of it, but my parents wanted me to stay with it, as long as possible. So I was just trying to make my parents a little happy since I went so far from them."

Eddie went on to have difficult semesters taking a large course load. Most notably, he shared:

> I was in 19 credits that [spring] semester and I would've been in 15 if I didn't take that extra class to be in honor society; so that was part of the issue. Part of that honors program was you have so many honors classes by your second year.

Even with a plan to stay in the honor's program, Eddie ran into an issue with one of his professors. Eddie took "honors bio" that semester and noted how his instructor tried to fail him before the final. He shared:

> She basically decided an hour before the final that homework was either 100% complete or not completed at all. So on a few homework assignments that I had 95's on, she dropped to zeros an hour before the final. I had a 100 or 95 on those assignments because I had screenshots of the original grades; I was able to get screenshots from the website we did the grades on before she deleted them. It would have bumped me up to a B+ instead of a C minus. And, like, we took that all the way up to the provost of the department, and they felt like she was correct, even though there was nothing in her syllabus that stated otherwise.

Eddie was motivated to stay in the honors program and get the grades he felt he deserved. However, his grade remained the same, forcing him out of the honors program. Despite this "failure," Eddie demonstrated how he did all that he could to still do well in his courses, as he was motivated by an extrinsic factor of staying in the honor's program.

One participant, however, wanted to do well in their sophomore year just so they could stay at their institution. John had a rough beginning to his college career, saying, "My freshman and beginning of my sophomore years were where my GPA plummeted." Having a low GPA motivated John to find a way to do better in school. John mentioned:

> It pretty much got to a point where it was if I don't sit down and do this, I won't be at my school. It's one or the other. So it was like an ultimatum. It was "you sit down and study and you do better at these classes" or "you go home and find a job or do something else."

He realized "it was pretty much just either buckle up or [do] nothing." Motivated to stay at his institution, John set out a plan to help him get back on track with his coursework. He mentioned, "I had to write a letter to the university saying what I was going to change and how I was going to do better to be able to keep going." At the time of writing this letter, John used academic coaching to help him establish "a study plan" while also "using people" around him to be successful. John emphasized the importance of wanting to do better, saying, "I didn't want to go back home. I didn't want to live with my dad. So I was trying to do almost everything I could to not do that." Even though the participants eventually felt comfortable navigating their courses, they still wanted to do well. Participants wanted to do well for different reasons, but this motivation to do well revolved around getting good grades, keeping scholarships or one's academic status, or, for one, staying at their institution.

The participants also settled into their sport. Settling in at this point referred to participants feeling comfortable knowing how to navigate their responsibilities of being an athlete. The experiences they had from their first year influenced their actions going forward in their sport, allowing them to get closer to achieving their personal athletic goals. Stephen redshirted his freshman year which gave him the ability to sit back and learn how things operated. He mentioned, "I was trying to, you know, just trying to wiggle my way in even more from last year. I got the system. I knew how everything works in there. I had been there a year; it wasn't something new." Having this prior experience motivated Stephen to increase his work ethic in hopes of getting the chance to play. He explained:

> Pretty much, they put me in literally anything on the scout team. They'd say, "I need somebody to do this," because someone was messing it up. And it didn't matter what position it was. If it was receiver and they needed a route to be run, and I'd also play, like, quarterback or running back. I'd just jump in there and do it. I feel like that's how that happened or how I got recognized.

With this mentality, Stephen proved his worth to his coaches and got to play in football games:

> I didn't get much play time, but I got in if we were up good. I think I got it in four or five games sophomore year and then just played special teams a game or two. But pretty much they put me in literally anything on the scout team.

While his first year meant having to redshirt and sit out from playing, Stephen took this opportunity to learn the different systems and ways to navigate college sports that enabled him to achieve his goal of being able to play.

Continuing from their first year, some shared that they experienced a new feeling of confidence, as they felt more comfortable in their roles. John shared how he felt more comfortable going into his sophomore season. Part of the reason he felt more confident was because he received an athletic scholarship for breaking the school record his freshman year. He explained, "I felt a little bit more confident because I had gained a scholarship." He went on to explain:

> It was rewarding, and it was nice to be recognized, or at least compensated, compensated in some way I guess. It was going from my freshman year—I felt like I didn't really belong too much because I was a walk-on. So I tried here and there, and then I was able to actually find some success, and I was able to get there. Then my sophomore year I finally felt like I was kind of getting back into it, since I was a scholarship athlete. It wasn't much, but it was enough.

Receiving this scholarship was quite meaningful to John, as he said he felt "a little validated" in going to his institution and walking-on. He said, "It helped me validate my decision to actually continue sports to try and get better at them because it gave me a way to help pay for school." John started to take things more seriously when it came to track and field after he discovered this newfound sense of confidence. John emphasized that he was "just trying to get better at that point" once he got his scholarship. However, John acted differently whenever he was in-season or off-season with his sport at this point. He mentioned:

So I was trying to get more involved with the team in the off-season. Like I said, I was doing everything that was expected of me in terms of workouts and all that kind of stuff, but I wasn't doing anymore.

However, as soon as his sport was in-season, John completely flipped his motivation for the sport. "My head started to just focus on really hammer in the in-season." Focusing on "hammer" meant a great deal to John, as it related to his personal goals with track and field. He went on to explain:

My main goal was to get my hammer record up so that I can hopefully win conference and then maybe even earn a provisionary spot to nationals. That was the goal. And that was pretty much the goal from sophomore to senior year.

John found a new sense of confidence and meaning behind doing college track. Experiencing success from his first year, he implemented similar measures to replicate that success going forward as he improved his new record.

Even though there was a newfound sense of confidence beaming from everyone, this did not mean things got easier. Rather, participants recalled that practices got more difficult. Dennis shared how he felt more comfortable following his first season, but he noticed that practices took on a new meaning of difficulty. He described being "much less green" as he went from being "the new kid on the block" to coming back in the fall having "been through the ringer." However, even though he knew what to expect, he returned in the fall to "a lot more of the hard workouts" and that his off-season consisted of "a lot more of just training and things like that." Despite these difficult workouts, Dennis still put forth the effort needed during practices, as he still wanted to break his personal best in the javelin. There were times when this was difficult, as Dennis did not always agree with his coaches' decisions when it came to practices or which events he should do. Dennis, however, pushed on and managed to beat his personal best from high school. He shared:

I had achieved my goal eventually of beating my own record or beating my own personal best in javelin, maybe not as much as I wanted, but I did beat it. So that's nice. Just like, I beat my own record—that was one of the main things I wanted to do. I wanted to prove to myself that I could beat my own record and I did.

It took some time to achieve his goal of getting better in the javelin, but Dennis was able to achieve this goal. Compounding what he learned from his first year and having gone through the "ringer," he was able to succeed in his sport.

With figuring out the rhythm to their sport, the participants also mentioned feeling more ambitious and wanting to do what they could to get better in their sport. Knowing how to navigate their sport meant that they knew what they needed to do to succeed. Participants, overall, simply felt more comfortable as collegiate athletes. They knew how to navigate their sports and they knew what they needed to do to succeed. Despite having a rhythm in both school and sports, the participants still experienced conflicts between the two while navigating their collegiate experiences. The majority of these conflicts were similar to that of their first year. However, as they progressed more into their college experience, they began to experience different, more serious forms of conflicts, primarily due to their sport.

Tensions in Sports

Participants prospered in terms of navigating their first couple of years of being a collegiate student-athlete. They found a rhythm in tackling their coursework and figuring out how college athletics works. This feeling did not last their entire college career, as participants began to experience tensions or conflicts. These conflicts emerged from a variety of different issues that each participant experienced during their college experience. The issues in question refer to how their sport interfered with their goals, motivation, or other interests. These conflicts are characterized in various forms of tension, primarily rooted in frustrations with coaches, interference with school, or even interference with their other interests in college. It is through

these emerging conflicts and tensions in their sport that participants first experienced a destabilization of their student-athlete identity. More specifically, the participants experienced a shift in their priorities. This shift was the beginning of a departure from athletics as the participants moved into a crossroads phase of their college experience. A crossroads phase is associated with a student self-authoring their identity, a process in which they begin to question what they know and begin to develop or model their own internal beliefs, morals, and identity based on only their interests (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). It was in these moments of tension that the participants no longer held this identity of being a student-athlete. They, however, did not completely disassociate from this identity, but it was the beginning of a reprioritization and exploration into other areas that better reflected their interests. The tensions marked the beginning of the participants' self-authorship of their internal, or professional, identity.

These tensions from sports stemmed from major feelings of frustration perpetuated by various athletic aspects. For some participants, there was an overall frustration with their team's coaches. Becoming frustrated with their coaches resulted from some participants not agreeing with their coaches' decisions or they felt like they were not given a chance when it came to playing their sport. Along with other compounding moments, these participants began to feel demotivated with their sport altogether. Dennis shared how he became frustrated with his coaches during the same year he accomplished his goal of beating his personal record in the javelin:

> I think by that time I'm starting to develop more shoulder issues, and I think I started to get increased frustrations with either myself or the coaching staff. Because I remember I got really mad. I think I may have been mad at myself for not having quite beat my record yet. I hadn't improved in javelin. And then I think the coaching staff had us doing really weird workouts that I didn't quite agree with. So that led to increase frustrations.

Dennis elaborated more on these frustrating workouts when he mentioned how he felt the

workouts were not relevant to his specific event in track and field:

> I remember at one point I got frustrated at our workouts. I didn't feel like I was getting the most I needed out of the workouts. Like the training program wasn't isolating what we needed to isolate, which nowadays come to find out, I wasn't wrong.

These frustrations continued to accumulate and even spill over into his track meets. Dennis

recalled the meet that was the breaking point for him and his relationship with track and field:

> I think it was the Ole Miss meet. For some reason I was very grumpy at the Ole Miss meet. There's something that happened, but I remember being very frustrated. I was overreacting, but I think coach had put me in all the events, and by the time javelin came around, I had been in the sun all day and I was just completely whopped. I had terrible throws. And coach just kind of came up, clapped, and left. And I think that's what frustrated me. And like I said, I was just having a bad day. I remember that being a bad meet for me. And that's when the idea [of quitting] started coming into my head.

With these accumulating frustrations, Dennis started to question how much longer he wanted to

continue doing track and field in college.

This feeling of frustration with coaches was not just expressed by Dennis. Other

participants shared instances when they felt negatively impacted by their coaches' decisions.

Stephen, who finally got to play in games during his sophomore year, recalled how his

relationship with his sport changed the following year:

> We had a new coach come in. Honestly, I played more during my sophomore year than any other year. It felt like he didn't look my way. I mean, I was undersized. I don't blame him. Because we had a bunch transferred from DI, and I wasn't the most talented, but it felt like the coach before him gave me a chance, but I felt like they didn't look my way. It is what it is. You know sophomore year it was like buckling down and going after it. [This year] I was kind of … like, "I'll go party and do all of that kind of stuff." I wasn't as focused as I was that freshman and sophomore year for sure.

Stephen felt like he lost his motivation to really try in football. He shared, "I was really let down,

but I mean, it is what it is. But I do regret, you know, instead of going after it, and say I'm just

gonna fight through it—I was kind of like, 'Ehhh that's it.'" He elaborated further on this,

saying, "I really think I lost that goal that year because I just shut down about it and tried to get

through it. And I still didn't want to quit. It almost seems like I almost gave up." While Stephen

did not want to quit, he began to show minimal effort when it came to his time with football.

John also felt less motivated because of the actions of his coach. He recalled during his

junior year that his team finally got a coach for the throwing events, that is, John's events. While

this coach was supposed to help John, he recalled thinking that this coach was "full of shit." John

elaborated on what he meant by sharing how he felt his coach was not helpful:

> If he had just taken care of the actual throwing practices, I think he would have been a lot
> better. But he was controlling the weightlifting, which was stepping on toes, and what we
> were already doing and learning it seemed like—Everything seemed convoluted. We
> would do certain exercises one week and then do something completely off the wall the
> next week and then come back to another conventional. The more I've learned about
> weightlifting and everything, I can see kind of what he was wanting to do. But I'm not
> sure. It was hard to have a coach that couldn't physically show you movements, if that
> makes sense. He was not in the best shape of his life. He looked like he was in OK shape,
> but he was an older dude. It seemed like he was kind of resting on his laurels of past
> achievements and wasn't trying to grow people. He was just trying to get another
> achievement for himself.

John did try to make it work for himself. He listened to his coach and tried to do all that he

suggested, but in the end, he did not see results:

> I developed a whole way of thinking about how we should be practicing. Maybe that was
> just wrong of me being kind of arrogant in my own ways, but we were doing things very
> differently. I just didn't see results whenever I did what he said. I've felt like I was
> actually getting worse in some of my marks. Maybe that was like a grand scheme of his
> plan later on, but it just felt like I was at even more of a standstill with him as a coach.

Like with the others, this negatively impacted John's motivation when it came to the sport, as "it

was hard to get motivated at times." He shared, "I never thought I wanted to quit again, but it just

felt like we needed something else." While John did not quit the team, these frustrations from the perceived lack of competence of his coach negatively impacted his drive in track and field.

This concept of frustration from coaches has been shown to elicit an incredible amount of conflict in the participants, as it impacted their motivation in sports at the time. The tension felt from these frustrations led participants not only to be less motivated but even to question their time in the sport. Kyle shared how these growing frustrations and tensions led him to consider quitting football sooner. Prior to this, Kyle received an athletic scholarship because of his hard work in the previous year. Feeling extra motivated, he dedicated his summer to getting ready for this next season of football. However, when fall camp for football arrived, Kyle felt that something was off. He said, "a little bit of time goes by through fall camp, and I kind of realized like something is not right, like I'm not getting looked at." Despite this feeling, Kyle told himself, "Don't let it get to you, just keep working." However, nothing changed for Kyle. Realizing his chances of playing at his current position of running back were minimal, he resorted to asking his coach to change his position:

> I said, "Coach, I realized that it's not really going to work out at running back. I just want to play if there's anywhere I can play on the field, like, please let me." So I get moved to receiver. Go in [one day]—they don't even have a number beside my name on the depth chart. I'm under freshmen, and I'm under everybody. I'm like, "Here we go. I've been here. I've done this." Like when they told me that they were moving me to receiver, they were like, we think you'd be a good fit—get you the ball out in space, and then whenever I go to that room, I'm at the bottom of the list.

Kyle felt dejected and hopeless during this time. He felt that no matter what he did, he was not going to reach his goal of being able to play and "was contemplating on just hanging it up":

> I honestly had been contemplating [quitting]. Like I had gotten so low after going through so much and then getting moved with some hope that I would get a better chance of getting on the field, to not even have a number by my name on the depth chart—it was kinda like, "Man, what are you doing? Is this worth busting your butt and being a practice dummy and staying beat up and staying sore from working out?"

Kyle asked himself the question "What is the point?" With a continuing frustration of not being considered or even playing in a game, Kyle began to question his role as an athlete.

Along with frustrations from coaches, some participants experienced conflicts with their sport as it interfered with school or other interests. For Eddie, he was given an ultimatum by the director of his athletic training program. He was told, "Quit the major or quit swimming":

> At the beginning of sophomore year, the head athletic trainer—my program director and my counselor—went up to me and said, "Hey, we've never had a swimmer do this and athletic training. You need to pick one. Which one are you going to do? Are you going to be a pro swimmer or you're going to be an athletic trainer?" We basically came up with a compromise, they gave me the year to get a B standard and get a scholarship, and if I didn't get to the B standard, I had to quit swimming at the end of the year.

Initially, this was a challenge for Eddie. On top of trying to achieve a B standard, he was also trying to stay in the honors college, as previously mentioned. His semesters became more challenging as he tried to equally balance a more challenging form of both school and sports:

> So it was like everything just kind of jumped on, and that [spring] semester was so bad. I would go swim with the masters' team for an hour in the morning, hop on my bike, bike to the weight room to be in the weight room on time with the team, go back to the pool and swim another hour, go through clinicals, go to class, and then again swim at like 8:00 at night. I would leave my dorm at like 4:30 in the morning with three bags on my shoulder. It was a challenge. I mean, I still got to eat lunch with everybody, and I still had morning practice with everybody. But you know, all of a sudden, being able to push yourself with your teammates wasn't there anymore.

Despite his best efforts, not only did he not make the B standard for swimming but also he received a low GPA that semester. Eddie "was mentally stressed out, physically exhausted, and physically sick." Realizing he could not continue to do both swimming and his major of athletic training, Eddie decided he was "going to leave swimming." Eddie wanted to be an athletic trainer, as this was the reason why he went into higher education. Eddie's tension with his sport proved to be too much, forcing him to pick one role over the other.

These tensions in sport also referred to conflicts with other interests along with school. Sarah shared that during her sophomore year, she joined a sorority. She then juggled three roles of being a student, an athlete, and a sorority sister. These three roles became "very time-consuming" for Sarah as she tried to balance each identity:

> I will say that that is where being an athlete became very, very difficult. I think I definitely struggled in that area, like managing my time doing school, but also because, I mean, I really wanted to graduate. I didn't want to mess up. And then also being in a sorority which I really, really loved, and then also trying to do a sport.

While Sarah tried to give equal time and attention to these three roles, she felt that sports received the least amount of attention. She said, "I don't know if 'worse' is the right word, but like, it suffered. Cross-country and track suffered more than anything else as the years went on." Sarah went on to explain how both of her sports suffered overall as she could not find time to fit them into her schedule with school and her sorority:

> I missed several practices because I had a class during that time, and at that point, you know … when you're in that … junior, senior year, there's usually only … one class offered—You don't have as many options. And I remember having … a middle-of-the-day class on some days, and that's kind of hard because then you have to go do practice on your own. And then that's usually the time, where like for me, I struggled … making time for practice. So sometimes I wouldn't end up practicing that day because I couldn't make it work for my schedule.

For Sarah, sports started to be less of a priority. It began to conflict with her schedule of classes as well as sorority activities. These moments of conflict were Sarah's tension with her sport, and these conflicts signified how Sarah started to move away from this identity of being a student-athlete as other interests emerged in addition to school.

While participants enjoyed their sport, there were mounting tensions emerging during their college experience. From frustrations with coaches to interference with other interests, participants almost experienced a breaking point with their sport. They expressed feeling

unmotivated towards their sport or even experiencing failure. It is from these tensions that the identity of being a student-athlete destabilized. The tensions from their sport marked the beginning of when the participants entered a crossroads in terms of their identity and began to explore other interests.

Establishing a Professional Identity

With these tensions in sports, the participants shared moments when they started to move away from the identity of being a student-athlete. Instead of focusing their time and energy on being a student-athlete, the participants engaged in behaviors that reflected their best interests. They entered a crossroads phase (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009) in which they explored or developed an internal system that best represented their personal interests or identity. In this case, however, this development towards a self-authored identity represented their efforts at establishing a professional identity. Elicited by the strain caused by their tensions in their sport, each participant prioritized more of their time to focus on nurturing their professional identity. During this period, participants shared moments of commitment and exploration towards this professional identity. Ways that they committed to this professional identity included figuring out their majors (which related to a professional career), spending more time on their coursework, and even associating more with those in their selected field.

As the participants experienced tensions in their sport, there began a shift in how they defined themselves. Instead of defining themselves just as a student-athlete, they started to consider their academic interests more and weighed their relationship with their sport. Some made the difficult decision to spend less time with their sport or just quit athletics as they became more interested in their academic coursework. Eddie recalled the ultimatum he was given in which he had to pick either swimming or his academic major. Eddie ultimately made the

decision to quit swimming so that he did not have to sacrifice the major he cared about. Knowing that the major and sport conflicted too much, Eddie had to think of what was important, and that was his major. Still, one of Eddie's goals was to be a four-year student-athlete. Despite quitting swimming, he found a way to continue pursuing this goal. He shared:

> When I was a freshman in the pre-professional phase, they had a senior running cross-country. So I knew cross-country was doable, but swimming wasn't. So I'd already decided that as basically—as an F-you to them [the athletic training department], I was going to walk-on to another sport.

Wasting no time, Eddie asked the university's head cross-country coach if he could walk-onto his team:

> I was like, "Oh, I'm not swimming anymore—maybe I should run." And so I got home at like midnight after the last swim meet, and I was signed up for an 8K [race] the next day at like 9:00 in the morning. I was just going to go out and have fun, and on the start line was the cross-country coach in front of me. So I decided to race him and went up to him afterward and said, "Hey, these are my times from high school—Pretty sure I'm about to quit the swim team. Can I walk-onto your team?"

Regardless of Eddie having picked up a new sport, it was still the matter that Eddie made a difficult decision between his major and swimming. However, by quitting swimming, it allowed him to join a sport that worked with his major, setting himself up for easier to manage semesters.

Making the decision to quit college sports was never an easy decision, but it was a necessary decision for some. Dennis also made the decision to quit his sport, but Dennis did not move on to any other sports outside of intramurals. At this point, he began to experience a snowball of issues stemming from his time in track and field. From issues with coaches and even injuries, Dennis contemplated his priorities in relation to his sport. Along with these mounting tensions, Dennis was becoming more concerned with his schoolwork. Dennis recalled, "Things are starting to ramp up in my engineering schoolwork. I'm starting to get into more engineering

classes, and I'm starting to learn more." Dennis wanted to prioritize his coursework, as he viewed engineering as "this is my future, this is my career." He then explained:

> I started to feel like track was getting in the way of my academic goals and my career goals. So I still loved track and I still really liked it, but I just felt like it was the right thing to do to quit track.

In consideration for his future, Dennis made the decision to quit track and field altogether. For him, it was a necessary choice, as it enabled him to dedicate more time to his schoolwork, allowing him to prepare himself better for his future as an engineer.

None of the other participants quit their sport early on, but some participants started to give less time to their sport. As mentioned before, Sarah described her time with sports junior year by saying that "cross country and track suffered more than anything else," mentioning also that she "missed several practices" because they conflicted with her schedule. Stephen also emphasized a lack of motivation for football, saying "It is what it is" after no longer being considered at practices or games. He then chose to focus his time on partying and his coursework. Participants expressed a different demeanor when it came to their time spent in sports. With these growing tensions, participants experienced a shift in what they deemed to be important, that is, focusing on school and becoming a professional. As these tensions grew, so did their interest in their academic major and coursework.

Even though the tensions that emerged impacted their motivation toward their sport, participants discussed their relationship with their sport and how it was still somewhat of a priority for them while in college. John, who was frustrated with his event coach at the time, described how he was still doing all that he could in the off-season to improve. He shared that he would "do some practices and do some kind of more stuff in the off-season," but he mentioned that he never found any type of consistency. This consistency was associated with how he was

trying to grapple with balancing his priorities as they pertained to school and sports. He

mentioned:

> I still felt like I was getting to the point where I felt like I was running out of time. But at
> the same time, I was like, "well no, it's going to happen…". But, I was trying to focus on
> school and it [track & field] wasn't the biggest priority I guess. Like I wanted to compete,
> I wanted to be good, and I liked being an athlete.

John expressed that he still wanted to be an athlete and how he still enjoyed these experiences

while in college. Despite feeling frustrated with his coach, John was still motivated towards his

athletic goals, even if sports were less of a priority in comparison to school. Similarly, Sarah also

expressed how she was still motivated to do well in cross country and track & field despite

wanting to prioritize her time in her sorority. Sarah the year after she joined the sorority was also

when she cared the most about her two sports. She said, "so by junior year, I knew more of what

to expect. So I definitely felt like I put in a little bit more effort. I wanted to make sure I could

improve and get better." Sarah indicated that she was still committed to her athletic

responsibilities, despite sports suffering later on in comparison to school and the sorority. Much

like John and Sarah, other participants also indicated that they still felt committed to their sports

even after these tensions with their sports emerged. These stories of continued commitment

reflect how the participants grappled with their internal identity as they redefined their

relationships with their sport and considered their establishment of a professional identity.

Along with these emerging tensions in sport, participants also made changes in terms of

whom they interacted with. For some participants, this meant altering their associated friend

groups. An altered friend group often meant disassociating from one group to prioritize another.

Sarah made the decision to shift away from her teammates to establish a new group of friends

through her sorority. She joined a sorority and explained, "I would say a lot of my friends that

were on the team were guys. I didn't have a lot of friends that were girls." Sarah went on to

mention that she was looking for a friend group that not only consisted of more girls but also "that weren't so focused on running or any [other] type of sport." John also started to disassociate from his initial friend group in his fraternity. He mentioned, "The fraternity I started getting really disillusioned with and wanting to get out of—that is right around junior year as well." John explained, "It was trying to navigate different relationships and trying to be around the people I wanted to be around." It was during this time that John got more involved with his new major of kinesiology and formed friendships with those in his classes and as he joined his institution's kinesiology club. Similarly, Dennis no longer associated with most of his teammates when he quit track and field. Dennis mentioned this transition as he said:

> I kept in touch with one friend. And I'll see other people on the team. I'll see them, and it's good to always catch up with them, but actively texting and calling and hanging out— I hadn't really done that [with] anybody else.

At this point, Dennis focused on becoming an engineer and dedicated more of his time to his major. In doing so, he made more friends in his engineering classes, describing them as "a lot of people that are going down the same road I was, minus the sports stuff" as well as "some really sharp people." As some participants developed a better understanding of themselves, this led them to redefine the early relationships they established at the beginning of their college career. This decision to change these relationships served as a way for the participants to actively work on and support their developing internal identity.

With these emergent tensions associated with their sport, participants also shared moments when they began to take steps in terms of developing a more professional identity. These steps meant, for some participants, committing to an academic major. Committing to an academic major also acted as a step towards focusing more on their academic responsibilities. Focusing on these academic responsibilities acted as an early step, as participants knew their

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future careers could be linked to their academic major. With this understanding, it was important for the participants to determine their interests and select a major that best represented said interests. Stephen, who was an undecided major up until his third year, was trying to figure out his major. He listened to others' thoughts, as they believed he would "probably like engineering." Stephen mentioned praying about this decision but ended up making this decision in a more unconventional manner. He recalled the moment he selected his major by sharing, "I was just hammered in New Orleans. I looked up and there was a business sign and then another business sign, and another one, and I was like, 'That's it—I'm going to major in business.'" Stephen did not just make this decision because of a sign, but he also made this decision because he found business to be interesting. He mentioned:

> Like real-life business really caught my eye, and it was exciting because that's what I wanted to do eventually. You know, have some side businesses and run them myself. That's my goal. It always interested me. I could listen to business stories all day and not get tired of them.

Even though Stephen selected a major in an atypical way, he selected a major based on his interests and what he wanted to do in the future.

Figuring out a major was difficult for some. Often what occurred prior to this decision was going back and forth between different majors because some did not know exactly what they wanted to do for a profession. Kyle shared how it took some time before he committed to a major in education. Originally, Kyle wanted to go into education so that he could coach football at a school. However, to have an education major, he needed to have a specialty. At first, he wanted to do math and shared, "I've always been good at math, and I feel like everybody needs a math teacher. So I'll try math." However, Kyle realized specializing in math was not for him, as one math class he took "was the hardest thing" he ever took in college. In addition to this math course, Kyle's education classes were also unpleasant. He realized, "this math stuff is not for me,

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and two, I don't think this teaching stuff [is] for me." Kyle then switched to a physical therapy major and began taking classes the following semester. After switching to physical therapy, Kyle felt like the major might not have been for him despite how much he enjoyed the classes. He mentioned:

> It was like I was missing something. I was missing the teaching part. Something was telling me coaching is where you need to go. Like I just kept feeling it, and I'm religious, so it was basically God just saying like, "That ain't where I'm trying to point you. Come back to this coaching field, come on."

Feeling that coaching was what he was meant to do, Kyle went back to an education major, but this time specialized in physical education because some of his physical therapy courses counted towards his major. He also made the point, "Who doesn't like PE?" While the decision took time, Kyle decided on a major that not only reflected his interests but also would help him progress to his ideal career.

Many of the participants explored their professional interests by looking into different majors. Exploring their professional interests was an important step in developing their professional identity. Some participants changed their majors to learn about different professional fields or just to learn more about what were their interests. John was one participant who changed their major multiple times. He said, "So I had jumped around a couple of times during my freshman and sophomore years, trying to figure out exactly what I wanted to do." John later explained this jumping around as "I was trying to find a niche that I enjoyed and was just trying to find something that I enjoyed doing every day without having to, like, force myself to do it all the time." John eventually "started taking a bunch of different types of classes" to learn about his options, going back and forth between different majors. Sarah also switched majors as she tried to figure out what she wanted to become. Sarah mentioned the first time she changed her major saying, "So I've gone into biology, because I always wanted to be a doctor. I

wanted to go to medical school, and that was kind of around the time when I realized that that was just not quite what I wanted." Sarah wanted to explore her options, as she felt, "Maybe there's something else for me." To determine what this "something else" was, Sarah discussed how she was always good at math and wanted to give it a try. She enjoyed the application part of math, but once she got to a theory-based course she said, "No, I don't think that's for me." Sarah decided to move back into her biology major, but she also picked up a math minor as she was close to meeting that program's requirements. While it can be difficult to determine what one wants to be so early in college, the participants made early efforts to pinpoint an area that best fit their possible professional identity.

Not every participant explored other majors. Rather than changing their major, some participants stuck with their major. Part of this decision to remain in their major reflected how sure they were about what they wanted to be once they graduated from college. Dennis always wanted to be an engineer and stuck with his major despite the courses becoming more difficult. However, Eddie faced a more difficult decision concerning his major. As previously mentioned, Eddie dealt with an ultimatum in which he had to decide between continuing to swim or changing his major from athletic training. He ultimately decided to quit swimming and explained that he thought about switching his major. Eddie said:

> For a little bit I did—with the ultimatum with swimming. But then I was just like, I never really saw myself being in the classroom teaching another exercise science sports medicine-type class. And I just couldn't see myself being the type of person who would want to sit in a lab and do research. And there weren't really many other options after that. I enjoyed the uncertain—I don't wanna say uncertainty of athletic training, but I enjoy that every day is different—you don't know what you're going to get.

Even though he loved swimming, he chose his major. Eddie wanted to be an athletic trainer since he was in high school, and it was a main reason why he selected his institution. While these

participants did not change their major or explore other areas, they felt confident with their major knowing that it led to their ideal career, laying the foundation of their professional identity.

Along with their commitments to majors because they related to their professional interests, classes became much more interesting. As the participants progressed towards their degree, they moved away from their introductory courses and started taking more major-specific classes that garnered their attention. Having an increased interest in their classes contributed to the shift away from the student-athlete persona to their professional identity. In this situation, participants expressed how much they enjoyed their classes. Sarah recalled:

> I actually feel like I remember feeling pretty good, like I was in a good place. I liked a lot of my classes, which was good. I mean, there's always classes that you just don't particularly enjoy. But I feel like I remember, for the most part, I actually kind of enjoyed school.

Being more in the biology-specific courses for her major, Sarah recalled enjoying the hands-on portions that came with these types of courses:

> I do remember some of my major classes. Like, I really loved labs. So while they took a lot of time, I really enjoyed doing them, and they didn't take a lot of time outside of the actual class. I mean you have to write a report, but it was relatively easy to accomplish, in my opinion.

This aspect was a noticeable difference for Sarah, as she recalled how she did not like her previous freshman courses. She mentioned how she struggled in a world history class, as "it wasn't something that [she] necessarily enjoyed." Sarah's experience represented how much the participants enjoyed their courses as they started to move more into their major-specific classes.

Eddie, like Sarah, also expressed how much more he enjoyed his courses. Going into the more athletic training-related courses, Eddie became more excited to go to class:

> So junior year, every single class I took but one was for my major. It was actually a lot of fun, really. I went to class and wanted to be in class and enjoyed learning something new every day. It was probably the heaviest-loaded year we had in terms of sports medicine

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classes, but you wanted to be there for that because that's what you were going to school for.

Eddie emphasized this enjoyment by comparing it to his previous introductory courses. He explained, "So it wasn't like, 'Ugh, I have to go sit in psychology' or 'I have to go sit in government.' It's 'I get to go sit in a class, and the doctor is going to lecture me today.'" Being in more major-specific classes spoke more to the participants than just taking classes they found interest in. Like Eddie, participants were interested in these courses because they were the classes they were in school for and that could help them realize their professional identity.

Along with finding their courses to be interesting, other participants recounted how it was much easier to pay attention to their classes because these classes piqued their interests. John recalled instantly noticing a difference in his attitude towards his courses. More importantly, he noticed how much he enjoyed his kinesiology classes compared to his previous engineering courses:

> Oh, it was miles apart. I was still interested in engineering. I liked the aspect of it. But … it was the mechanical part of it I didn't really like. I like working with machines, like, I would like to work with machines and learn about them, but it's not like my primary interest. The human body was more something that I was more interested in and figuring out how that worked. Because if I figured out how that worked, I can figure out how my body works, and I can figure it out and go from there.

Having these more interesting classes translated well for John, as he overall found it better in terms of holding his attention:

> It was just easier to study for. I didn't feel like I was forcing myself at times. I felt like I could just kind of open a book and I was interested in some of the stuff I was reading. Or I can apply it better because I'm doing sports right now. So it was more applicable to what I was doing. So it was—it just held my attention more.

John recognized how these classes, in addition to being easier to study for, could directly apply to real life. Having these experiences from courses enabled him to further reinforce his

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professional identity because he was able to focus his attention better and develop the skills and knowledge needed to become a professional in the field of kinesiology.

As participants progressed more towards their major, they were introduced to more difficult and major-specific classes, forcing them to dedicate more time to their coursework. Dennis recalled that his new engineering classes took "a lot more studying." Comparing to his previous courses, he said they, "required a lot more studying than pre-cal [pre-calculus] freshman year," and in general they just took much more time. Courses may have been getting more difficult, but it did not matter to participants, as they seemingly gravitated to these interests in relation to their coursework. Participants still wanted to be academically successful, but now it was for the sake of learning to help establish their professional identity, or a self-authored identity (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). To find this type of success, participants acted more resourceful when it came to their courses. The participants already knew several different academic strategies and behaviors to help them in their coursework, but now they implemented every strategy they possessed to maximize their achievement. Dennis remembered progressing more into his engineering courses and noticing a spike in difficulty. To do well, Dennis realized he needed to "work smarter, not harder." In the more major-related courses, Dennis wanted to "be more mindful" of his time, "stay focused and on task," and "find old tests to try to figure out what the format was going to be, or what things they [the professors] like to highlight." Other participants acted in a similar manner in which they tried to be more mindful of the types of strategies they needed to be successful in their classes. Eddie mentioned getting into his athletic training courses and how they included more hands-on learning opportunities. To prepare for these classes, he recalled:

> I actually had to sit and practice what I had to on somebody, or some of it was just
> reciting word for word out of a paragraph. So I would just kind of pace my room and talk

to myself sometimes and make sure I can recite word for word a page or two pages of stuff.

Being mindful of these different strategies was important, as "it really varies on what each class required." Being mindful of which type of strategies produced certain results also played a key role in their success.

Once the participants committed to a major, they began to develop their professional identity. Much of the work they made towards this identity occurred outside of the classroom. Participants started to get involved with more activities related to their professional identity. These activities included internships or volunteer opportunities. Dennis discussed the moment when he quit track and field so that he could pursue a career in engineering. This decision also revolved around his need for an internship, as he said, "I quit my sport to do my internship." Dennis explained the importance of getting an internship as a way of "getting that engineering experience" and said that the decision was "prioritizing what's best for my future." Eddie also started to spend more time in his field of athletic training through volunteer opportunities. He worked on his professional identity, saying, "By being in class every day and volunteering when I could outside of sports. Like I said, the volleyball, the flag football, and trying to get as much of experience as I can before I left." Some participants interacted with their professional identity by having discussions with actual professionals in their field. John recalled networking with "teachers and getting involved with research studies" and had discussions with other professionals to get a better idea of what he wanted to do in his kinesiology major. Kyle took a similar approach as he was able to network with the head football coach at his teaching internship. He said:

> I'd become good friends with the head coach kind of. He asked me, "You want to start helping with us? You know we're working out there in fourth block and then again in the spring, and well, you want to stay after school and help us?" And I said yeah.

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Regardless of the method, the participants interacted more with their professional identity outside of the classroom. Doing so was necessary, as they wanted to take initial steps towards becoming a professional before they graduated.

Moving On

Moving on was an important next step for many participants, as everyone completely phased out the sports side of their college experience to proceed towards graduation. Towards the end of senior year, some decided to forego their remaining eligibility in their sport to graduate. This decision was relatively easy, as everyone accomplished the goals they had when they first arrived at their institution. Regardless of the reason, there was a moment for each participant in which they made the decision to move on from their sport. Moving on from their sport gave each participant the opportunity to achieve their definition of success and finally be able to graduate. Each participant was also ready to move on from school in general and begin their professional careers or figure out the next steps towards further establishing their internal, or self-authored, identity.

As participants neared graduation, they viewed graduating as incredibly important and saw that moving on from sports was necessary. They continued to indulge in as many strategies and behaviors as necessary to be successful in their major classes. However, some of the participants also indicated that their definition of success did not stop at making grades. Participants shared that "graduation was success for me" or that "just graduat[ing]" or even "graduating on time" were associated with their definition of success. Graduation was a way to feel that they had truly finished their time in higher education. If participants were to graduate, it meant letting go of being an athlete. Sarah recalled her final year in which she just wanted to graduate. Sarah described her motivation as being "over the school part" and that she needed to

focus on her coursework if she "was ever going to be done with school." With this motivation in mind, Sarah felt conflicted as she tried to balance her time between being a student, athlete, and sorority sister. However, at this point in her college career, she realized that she did not see cross country or track and field as all that important. She shared, "I can't commit to this like one extra thing and I wanted to graduate and I wanted to do well in my classes," and she realized "it was just best to move on from the sports aspect." In consideration of graduation and wanting to enjoy her remaining time in the sorority, Sarah made the difficult decision to forego her remaining eligibility for her sport.

Graduating was an important concept for each participant. It was so important that participants would be willing to quit their sport if it meant they could graduate. Stephen, who was one of these participants, explained why he stopped playing football despite having an extra year of eligibility due to his redshirt freshman year. He said, "Well, I was graduating. And there was no way in hell I was going back to school if I was graduated." Of course, at this point, Stephen was still not being considered to play football in his final season, but this did not bother him. He said:

> I didn't care. I didn't really care if I played or not. I was just happy to be there and be a part of the whole thing. Not many people get to play college sports. A lot of people would kill to be in that position. I mean, I'm still frustrated a little bit, but I'm more ride it out and enjoy it. Enjoy this last little bit that I'll get. But then, after that, it's definitely over.

Along with just wanting to graduate, Stephen was done playing football and wanted to move on from both sports and school.

Along with wanting to be done with school, other participants shared how they wanted to move on, as they felt like they accomplished all of their goals. Kyle shared how he finally got to play in football games but quit not too much longer once that season ended. As mentioned, Kyle

felt frustrated with his sport because no matter what he did, he never played in a game. He shared

how he thought about quitting earlier, but he persisted as he figured out a way to play in a game.

Kyle recalled approaching one of the coaches and making a case for himself to play:

> I was sitting at Dollar General, and I see our DB [defensive backs] coach come out of
> Dollar General. And I just thought in my head, "I need to go talk to him. He runs special
> teams." I see him walk across the parking lot and I tell my buddy, "Hang on, I'll be right
> back." Ran across the parking lot as he's about to get in his car with groceries, and I said,
> "Coach," [and he's like] "Hey, what's up?" And I'm like, "Man, I got a question." [He's
> like,] "Okay, what's up?" And I said, "What do I have to do to be on your special teams,
> on your punt return?" He just kind of looked at me, and I said, "What do I have to do? I
> want to play. I've gotten to where I can travel. I just want to get on the field. I want to
> help. I want to play. This is my last year. I just needed a chance."

This decision to talk to his coach worked out for Kyle, as the coach put him on two different

kicking teams, which allowed Kyle to finally play in a game. Once that season came to an end,

Kyle knew that he was ready to be done with football:

> Once I finished that, it was one of those things where I've decided that it was my last
> season. By the end of it, I missed it, but at the same time I felt accomplished. I was okay
> with leaving the sport. Like, I was, like, all right. I made a scholarship. I made it to
> playing. I played all these games on special teams. Like, I got to play. I'm good. I'm tired,
> my body is tired. But I got to leave on a good note.

Along with feeling accomplished with his sport, Kyle also said, "I'm ready to graduate and I'm

ready to get out of here." The combination of finally achieving his goal in football and being

ready to graduate enabled Kyle to feel like he could move on from the sport. Moving on from the

sport prepared him to want to graduate and move on from higher education.

Some participants ran out of eligibility but felt it was time to move on from college

sports. Eddie recognized that there was not much of a career in professional sports after he

finished his last race in cross country. He realized "at that point I knew running-wise there was

no new level to progress to." Eddie explained, "So it's kind of that, like, okay, well, you're not

going anywhere training. Yeah, you can show up and go win local races, but you're not going to show up and win, like, national-level meets." After his final cross-country season, Eddie took the next steps in his final semester when transitioning into his post-college life. He recalled, "I was, like, 'Alright, I passed my boards. I am truly an athletic trainer. I have the certification. I'm getting the degree in two weeks—or two months.'" Being removed from sports allowed Eddie to finish his academic coursework and achieve his professional identity of being an athletic trainer. While Eddie enjoyed being a student-athlete, once his eligibility ran out, he knew it was time to move on from higher education and being a student-athlete. Participants knew that they needed to fully move on from sports so that they could graduate. This understanding stemmed from the notion that school needed to be prioritized in this situation. School took precedence in this final year as the participants navigated what was best for them and what they should do to graduate and move on from higher education.

Even though the participants made the decision to move on from sports, they each indicated how committed they still were to their sport. From staying on sports teams to still being highly motivated to accomplish their goals, participants indicated that they held onto that athlete portion of their college experience despite the prioritization of school and their professional identity development. For example, Eddie indicated that leading into his senior year he was not only determined to be a four-year student-athlete, but he also wanted to achieve his goal of going to the Division II national championship meet for cross country. Eddie mentioned how he was going to get to nationals "by any means necessary" and that he was not "going to rely on his team." He was determined to achieve this new goal, but it became difficult for Eddie during his senior year as cross country greatly conflicted with his remaining requirements for his athletic training program. Despite his best efforts, Eddie missed making the national qualifier to go to the

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national meet. While the participants, like Eddie, started to become well-established in their coursework and in their professional fields, they still had this commitment to their athlete responsibilities as they try to incorporate it into their internal identity. Part of what consists of developing this professional identity of theirs was having to work through these different interests and identities as they try to develop their own internal belief system of who they are. While the participants moved on from sports, they continued to define and refine who they were as they navigated these dual roles of being a student and an athlete.

As participants fully transitioned away from sports, they began to think more about their post-college lives. Everyone committed to a major that matched their interests and began establishing themselves within their respective fields. Some found extra volunteer opportunities in their major (e.g., internships, events, or research opportunities) that would enable them to get more hands-on experience in their field. Eddie said that he got more experience as an athletic trainer "by being in class every day and volunteering" before graduating. Getting involved in his field gave him a firmer understanding of what exactly he wanted to do in terms of a career after college. Dennis recalled his internship and said, "Yeah, probably whenever I was sitting up doing a lot of work and it was really boring. So I realized I need to do something that sparked my interest." Others even used these opportunities to network and quickly establish a professional career and identity for themselves. Kyle, during his teaching internship for his major, shared:

> So I got me a job doing my internship and then I started with football helping them at the high school. Then end of that semester, the head coach there asked me, just out of the blue one day, he said, "Hey, got anywhere you want to be?" Like talking about to work. [I said,] "No sir, ain't really thought about finding anything. If I did anything, I guess, I would just try to go back home. I don't know, somewhere around home." He said, "Well, if I can get it worked out here, do you want to stay?' [And I was like,] "Well, yeah, sure why not"—Right? I mean, I don't even have to go job searching.

By the end of their final year in higher education, participants readily moved on from school and sports. They wanted to establish their professional identities as they made decisions that they felt suited them best.

Moving on to the next chapter in life did not always involve what some of the participants studied in school. Some participants moved on to something that aligned more with their non-academic interests. Grappling with their inner identity, participants described why they veered off a professional path different from their academic major. Following graduation, Stephen went back into construction, something that he had been doing since he was in high school:

> It's pretty much all I've ever done. I'm very familiar with it. I've done it since I've been 16. I really got into it as a family business. It paid more than any other job. You know, when I was young, I got a lot of overtime and made good money for being still in high school and still in college, so.

For others, their other interests emerged while in college. Sarah, who has a passion for fashion and merchandising, ended up becoming a manager at a boutique. She mentioned how she got into this field:

> I just enjoyed it. Like I realized that was the most important thing to me was finding happiness or finding enjoyment, in whatever my future job was. And, at that time, I really liked working in retail. I liked talking to people. I liked being able to have that—giving customer service, I guess. And then… I don't know. I've always really been into clothes and fashion and everything. So that was kind of the moment I was like, "Well, why don't I just keep doing that?"

Similarly, John explored another career path outside of his major. John mentioned:

> So I started a job at a brewery here in town and I started getting really interested in the brewing process, how to make beer, the yeast involved. It's a complete left field from kinesiology, but it was interesting because it also had the biological side of it which I was interested in because of kinesiology—all that type of stuff.

Part of what encouraged John to pursue a path outside of his major was that he felt burned out from his courses. John mentioned, "I kind of got burned out a little bit towards the end of my

senior year. I found something that was also interesting, which is what i'm working in now. But I think I just needed a new perspective." Moving on from college was not always consistent across the participants as each described going back and forth between interests as they self-authored their professional identity. In the end, these participants moved on to areas that garnered their interest the most.

After college, each of the participants continued in their field and have done things to further establish their professional identity. Each participant graduated with their degrees and followed a professional path that they developed while in or outside of college. For most of the participants, they relied on further developing their professional identity by focusing on their career. Doing so enabled them to progress in their field by getting promoted or getting other important positions. Some participants made the decision to develop their professional identity by attending graduate school. Kyle discussed how after college he went on to coach at a high school near his alma mater. Getting into this career, Kyle thought of his future and how he wanted to be an athletic director for a high school. A way to help with this career aspiration was for Kyle to get his master's degree, as he said "it helps to have it in case you wanted to climb up." Kyle went on to complete a master's program in sports management, prepared for whenever a position as an athletic director becomes available. Even though their time in higher education concluded, the participants shared how they continued to developed their professional identities by simply staying in their field or even going off to graduate school.

As is the case with developing a self-authored identity (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009), some of the participants continued to develop and define who they are in terms of their identity. While college can provide an environment that enables students to develop their internal identity, plenty of students still continue to work on their identity well after graduation (Barber et

al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b). This situation happened for John. Sometime after graduating, John realized that he wanted to go back into the field of kinesiology. Working in the brewery, he said, "felt like I was going towards something new, but [at] the same time it was going away from all the work I had done for the past four years." Having this revelation, John said he was working on making his way back to his previous field by "working on certifications [and] trying to study better" while also surrounding himself in athletics as much as possible. He said he hopes he will "get more confidence in it" as he continues to reinvent his professional identity outside of his profession. John demonstrated that it is not always guaranteed that someone has achieved a self-authored identity in college or sometime after. Rather, a self-authored identity takes time and reflection to establish one's interests, values, and beliefs, representing how experiences build upon one another and lead to one's development.

Conclusion

The current study explored the experiences of former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes through a narrative inquiry centered around identity development and success. I investigated the matter by listening to the stories of each participant to first craft individual narratives. After crafting the narratives for each participant, I saw how there were overlapping themes across each as it related to their collegiate experiences; I then arranged these overlapping themes into a narrative arc. As indicated from the findings, participants decided to attend their Division II institution and walk-on because of academic opportunities and athletic opportunities. As they began their collegiate careers, they learned to become student-athletes by learning to balance and navigate the two roles while also establishing social circles with other student-athletes. The participants became well adapted to being student-athletes and navigating higher education from this perspective. Despite being adjusted as a student-athlete, they each

experienced major conflicts and tensions in relation to their sport; these tensions built upon each to the point where participants started to shift away from fully identifying as a student-athlete. With this shift in mind, participants began to explore other interests in relation to their academic pursuits that helped develop their own unique self-authored identity, or professional identity. School and sports do not last forever, as each participant took steps towards a career that aligned with their overall interests and continued to self-author an identity that best represents themselves. These findings shed light on how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes can navigate higher education as it relates to identity navigation and pursuing success.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Researchers have not included Division II non-scholarship student-athletes as much in the conversation about collegiate student-athletes. As past studies have primarily centered on the experiences of Division I scholarship student-athletes, little research includes both Division II and non-scholarship student-athletes, especially as it relates to identity development (Anthony & Swank, 2018; Beamon, 2012; Brewer et al., 1993; Chen et al., 2010; Melendez, 2010; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018), academic motivation (Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018), and academic performance (Bimper, 2014; Bimper et al., 2013; Killeya, 2001; Paule & Gilson, 2011; Snyder et al., 2011). Without the inclusion of these student-athletes, it could leave a skewed understanding of the population in how higher education officials may treat this population. To bridge the gap in the literature, I conducted a narrative study that explored how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigated their identity development in college, as well as how they perceived and pursued success in college. More specifically, this inquiry aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their dual identities as students and athletes?

2. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes interact with their other identities?

3. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes define and pursue success?

4. How do Division II non-scholarship student-athletes try to achieve academic success?

The narrative inquiry explored the participants' experiences, explored how their experiences build off one another, and organized said experiences in the form of a narrative arc (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). For the study, I interviewed six former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes three times each while utilizing an unstructured interview protocol. Utilizing these shared experiences, I crafted a narrative arc that started with *academic and walk-on opportunities, becoming a student-athlete, feeling comfortable as a student-athlete, tensions in sport,* and *establishing a professional identity* and ended with *moving on*. The themes were arranged in this manner to represent how the participants self-authored their identity while in higher education as they started off as student-athletes but then developed into an identity representative of their inner-self or their professional interests. However, it is also important to revisit that while the narrative arc represents how the participants self-author their professional identity in a linear fashion, the participants did not necessarily move in sequenced stages in relation to their identity. As it relates to the theory of self-authorship (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b), self-authoring an identity is not as simple as moving through stages. It requires the individual to work through their own beliefs to establish their internal, or self-authored identity. In the current chapter, I discuss how these findings are relevant, implications for practice, and possible directions for future research.

Navigating Higher Education as a Student and Athlete

Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate both academics and Division II collegiate sports, much like Division I scholarship student-athletes (Mignano et al., 2006; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). Each experience built upon one another, leading them closer to a final, or self-authored, identity. Such experiences began with them adjusting and finding a way to balance their time between school and sports to

establish themselves as student-athletes. However, in each experience, there came a turning point, or crossroads (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009), where conflicts in sports led to a shift away from this identification as a student-athlete. These turning points resulted in everyone fully embracing the student role, allowing them to progress towards a self-authored identity representative of their professional interests. Inferred from these experiences is that Division II non-scholarship student-athletes will navigate higher education in both roles but more as students than athletes. In this case, the participants shared stories about how important school was for them and what they did to ensure they could nurture their interests with this student component. While being an athlete was associated with their college experience, it played less of a role in their overall experience than their student role. This finding differs from the literature in which student-athletes foreclose on the athlete identity before and during most of their time in higher education (Beamon, 2012; Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Kimball, 2006; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996). These student-athletes mentioned in the literature put off their academic responsibilities and focus on their athletics, negatively impacting their academic performance (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Engstrom et al., 1995; Pascarella et al., 1995) and motivation (Beron & Piquero, 2016; Bimper, 2014; Killeya, 2001; Rubin & Rosser, 2014; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000; Simons et al., 1999). However, the opposite can be said about Division II non-scholarship student-athletes, as each described their education as a priority. This aspect of their education being a priority is supported by their intention before higher education, the lack of influence from an athletic scholarship, and their overall motivation to do well in their courses.

Division II non-scholarship student-athletes' intention regarding going into higher education is rooted in education or professional intentions. Notably, the participants acknowledged that they may not have been capable of having a professional career in their sport.

This realization pushed them to explore their other interests in an academic major. Many participants, such as Dennis, Eddie, John, and Sarah, already knew what they wanted to pursue before they even entered higher education and wanted to select an institution with an excellent academic program. This aspect is different from the decision-making of Division I scholarship student-athletes, as they are primarily looking for institutions that best suit their athletic desires and can help them achieve a professional career in athletics (Beamon, 2012; Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Kimball, 2006; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996). This aspect is an immediate distinction between what is known in the literature and from the current group of participants, as the participants entered higher education for educational reasons. Similarly, the Division II non-scholarship participants of my pilot study also indicated that they entered higher education mainly for academic reasons. To further support this, each participant mentioned that there was some athletic component to their decision. However, this component only referred to the opportunity to be able to do sports in college. While this did help in the selection, it was not a significant factor overall for most, supporting the idea that Division II non-scholarship student-athletes enter higher education to focus mainly on academics. With this intent centered on academics, it is clear why Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may navigate higher education primarily as a student.

Not having an athletic scholarship may also contribute to how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their experiences primarily as a student. As Kimball (2006) has suggested, scholarship student-athletes tend more to their sports responsibilities because of the scholarship they signed. This scholarship acts like a binding contract to which student-athletes may feel obligated to prioritize their sport, possibly leading to or reinforcing the foreclosed athlete identity. Similarly, Medic et al. (2007) found that scholarship student-athletes

are extrinsically motivated to try and keep their athletic scholarship. By having such motivation, they may be more preoccupied with fulfilling their athletic responsibilities to ensure they still have a scholarship. All this is to say that Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may not feel obligated to prioritize their time in their sport because of this lack of a scholarship. Not obligating an athletic scholarship somewhat allowed the participants to freely make decisions regarding their academic well-being, such as Dennis quitting the team for engineering or Sarah skipping practice to attend class. Even when some participants received an athletic scholarship, it did not necessarily matter to them. The scholarship was a bonus to their experience but not something that compelled them to dedicate more time to the sport. This is not to say that they did not care about their sport, but it refers more to their enjoyment of being able to do their sport overall. Like the results of Medic et al. (2007) and Kingston et al. (2006), the current study participants mentioned how they loved being able to do their sport while in college, as it was an opportunity to keep playing. If anything, the love for the sport mattered most to the participants, not the idea of a scholarship. Still, the findings suggest that Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may navigate their experiences more as students, as they may not feel obligated to prioritize their sport.

Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may also view education as being more important. The current study's participants entered higher education with primarily academic intentions, as each participant alluded to how their education or graduation was important. This aspect was evident in how each participant took their education seriously. From taking the initiative to learn specific academic strategies on their own, finishing schoolwork first before doing anything else, to even quitting a team or focusing less on sports so that they could focus on school, each participant emphasized the overall importance of not only accomplishing their

coursework but also doing well in their academic performance overall. Much of what influences this navigation is that they were or became highly academically motivated during college. They were initially motivated to do well in their courses for extrinsic purposes. However, as they progressed in their programs, especially when they experienced these tensions with their sport, they became more intrinsically motivated regarding their education. These reasons each had a similar theme, as they all related to their interests in becoming a professional in the field they enjoyed most. Previous literature supports this finding, as Rubin and Rosser (2014) found that non-scholarship student-athletes had higher academic performance, insinuating a prioritization of academics. However, the participants only talked a little about their actual academic performance, just how they wanted to do well in their courses, how interested they were in their courses, and how they wanted to learn as much as possible to help them in their careers. Overall, it does appear that Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their college experiences from a more student perspective, given their perception of school's importance.

Another interpretation of this value of education could stem from the actual institution type, that is, a Division II institution. While the participants did not explicitly mention institution type, Division I institutions are settings that prioritize athletics more, as emphasized by the commercialization of sports and pressure to win (Simons et al., 1999; Smith, 2000). Meanwhile, Division II institutions emphasize academics more than Division I (Weatherly & Chen, 2019). Providing a setting that prioritizes academics more can benefit non-scholarship student-athletes, given how they are already academically driven. With less of an athletically driven setting, Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may have more academic freedom and be able to freely explore different academic areas without having to worry about schedule conflicts greatly or being clustered into a major like is the case with Division I student-athletes (Foster & Huml,

2017; Heuser & Gray, 2009; Jolly, 2008; Paule & Gilson, 2011; Schneider et al., 2010). With more academic freedom and less pressure from sports, the participants could freely prioritize their academics as the most important. The participants did not mention that they felt restricted to certain majors to appease their sport; instead, they discussed how they explored different majors despite their sport's schedule and could actively pursue any major that piqued their interests. By attending a Division II institution, non-scholarship student-athletes can be in an environment that promotes their academic freedom and interests and allows their prioritization of school to flourish.

While it is clear how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate their experiences primarily as students, there is evidence to support the idea that they may also primarily navigate their experiences from an athlete's perspective. Like Division I and scholarship student-athletes (Brewer et al., 1993; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996), Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may prioritize their athletic endeavors as much as they do their academic responsibilities early on in their collegiate careers. However, the tensions from their sport led to a turning point where there was an increase in engagement with academics. This pattern is like when student-athletes experience an early foreclosure early on with their athlete identity but later transition to a student identity (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Lally & Kerr, 2013; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996). However, there were instances where some, Eddie and Kyle, held on to this athletic prioritization up until their final semester; this prioritization, however, may be due to their intentions prior to higher education. Eddie and Kyle had long-term athletic goals they were trying to accomplish throughout their time in higher education. Because of these goals, they navigated higher education from an athlete standpoint. However, Kyle and Eddie mentioned how their education was important to them. These goals

were driven by their intrinsic motivation with sports, much like how other non-scholarship student-athletes view their sport (Medic et al., 2007; Kingston et al., 2006). Despite these instances where participants navigated their experiences as athletes, Division II non-scholarship student-athletes predominantly navigate higher education from being a student rather than an athlete.

Interacting with Other Identities

Division II non-scholarship student-athletes have other identities outside of just being a student and an athlete. Much like how they navigate higher education as students and athletes, their different identities can emerge as they progress through their college experience. Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may initially feel reluctant to explore these different identities upon entering higher education. Often feeling more comfortable with their teammates, Division II non-scholarship student-athletes gravitate to their teammates as they learn to navigate higher education and develop their identity. This gravitation can be similar to the interpersonal component of the theory of self-authorship, where individuals will surround themselves with others who represent their perceived identity (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). As they progressed through their college career, the participants relied less on this identity of being a student-athlete and started to explore other interests as they self-authored their identities. These interests in question referred primarily to their overall professional interests and goals. These experiences can differ from Division I scholarship student-athletes who typically have a foreclosed identity and may not explore or interact with other identities (Beamon, 2012; Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Kimball, 2006; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996). Because Division II non-scholarship student-athletes do not prioritize athletics as much as academics, they can freely explore interests and other identities as they self-author their identity.

How Division II non-scholarship student-athletes interact with their other identities can be related to their professional identity. This professional identity mainly refers to the career that they would like to pursue. For instance, Dennis quit track and field to support his professional identity. With school and the desire to be an engineer being the top priority, Dennis wanted to ensure he was allocating his time effectively towards these goals. Following this, he decided to get an internship to begin gaining experience in engineering; knowing that it would be challenging to balance school and sports, Dennis chose to cut track and field, severing his athlete identity. Other participants were doing similar things, getting more involved in their major and seeking outside resources to determine what would best suit their professional needs. For instance, Kyle networked with high school coaches during his internship, and John also asked his athletic trainers and instructors about kinesiology. Eddie was taking the time to volunteer at different sporting events to practice his athletic training skills and further bolster his experience as an athletic trainer. Division II non-scholarship student-athletes interact more with their professional identity while in college. What could be contributing to this is that each participant knew that their professional athletic prospects beyond college were not promising, meaning they would have to find other career paths earlier in their college career. This finding is similar to what is already known about the student-athlete population in that some student-athletes realize they do not have the opportunity to have a professional athletic career, forcing them to find a different career (Bell et al., 2018; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996; Navarro, 2015; Weatherly & Chen, 2019). However, it does appear that Division II non-scholarship athletes recognize that such a career was not viable from the beginning. With this in mind, Division II non-scholarship student-athletes could want to interact with their professional identity more.

Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may also interact with their other social identities. These social identities referred to whom the participants interacted with based on their interests. Initially, participants only associated with their teammates, as they wanted to be a student-athlete and because they spent so much time with their teammates due to their sport. This constant exposure enabled them to form friendships with their teammates quickly. However, these relationships altered over time as each participant attended to other interests. Coinciding with the tensions with their sports, participants explored other relationships that stemmed from either their academic major or through other organizations. These new relationships resulted from meeting others that shared similar interests with the participants. This finding aligns with the interpersonal dimension of the theory of self-authorship in which individuals form mutual relationships with others that are closely aligned with their internal identity (Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). This finding also differs from previous studies where student-athletes do not explore other identities outside of being an athlete (Beamon, 2012; Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Kimball, 2006; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996). Such differences included how participants were able to explore other interests and identities. As Kimball (2006) suggests, those who have an athletic scholarship may have less autonomy in their decisions because of an obligation to their scholarship. With no athletic scholarship to obligate, Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may have more autonomy in exploring other interests and even social groups during their college experience.

In addition to their professional and other social identities, it is important to consider how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes interact with their gender identity. The student-athlete men mentioned experiences in which they greatly wanted to do well in their sport or have the opportunity to play. Having such a desire to do well in their sport may be consistent with

previous studies in which student-athlete men are more affiliated with or foreclosed on the athlete identity than women (Anthony & Swank, 2018; Beron & Piquero, 2016; Chen et al., 2010). This finding suggests that Division II non-scholarship student-athletes, who are men, may express their athlete identity more. Sarah did have personal athletic goals while in college, but these shared experiences centered on the idea of just getting better. These experiences are like previous findings where student-athlete women do not foreclose on the athlete identity as much as student-athlete men (Anthony & Swank, 2018; Beron & Piquero, 2016; Chen et al., 2010). While these findings are consistent with the literature, both Division II non-scholarship student-athlete men and women may focus more on their academic responsibilities. Melendez (2006) has found that student-athlete men tend to focus less on their academic responsibilities than student-athlete women. However, the men in the current study indicated how they prioritized their academic responsibilities to succeed. Much of the importance of education hinged on their professional goals outside of a professional sport. With the perceived lack of a professional career in sports, Division II non-scholarship student-athlete men may want to focus more on their academics. While it may not have been as evident in the participants' experiences, there are implications for how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may interact with their gender identity.

While these were the identities that appeared during our conversations about their experiences in college, it is also essential to discuss the identities that were not as present. Primarily, I am referring to racial or ethnic identity. In the theory of self-authorship, it is not common for a student to achieve a fully self-authored identity in college unless they have experienced trauma (Barber et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2008a, 2008b). Typically, those who experience trauma in higher education are students of color who may have experienced various

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forms of racism or oppression (Abes & Hernandez, 2016; Perez, 2019; Pizzolato et al., 2012). It is important to recognize that the participants did not discuss their racial or ethnic identity outside of what I could see from our Zoom meetings. It was not that they did not have difficult experiences in college, but they did not have to worry about moments of racism or discrimination while in higher education. This finding infers that they may not have been aware of their racial identity and not consciously acknowledged said identity. The participants may not have noticed that a white identity can often have privilege, as a result of which white individuals do not have to worry about discrimination or navigating fields of oppression (Abes & Hernandez, 2016). While the stories shared with me provide a solid foundation to understand how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes interact with their other identities, it was important to identify how their racial or ethnic identity plays a role in their navigation, especially as it pertains to the theory of self-authorship.

Defining and Pursuing Success

As it relates to defining and pursuing success, the participants indicated that there were multiple definitions for success. While most participants mentioned that success was related to how well they did in school, they also defined success as related to athletics (e.g., getting better in their sport). Not everyone specifically included athletics in their definition of success, as the participants primarily related success to academics. Participants still discussed their determination and motivation to accomplish their academic and athletic goals. While multiple definitions of success may exist, it is important to recognize how these former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes pursued these forms of success.

The participants of this study were academically motivated, as their definition of success primarily pertained to school. The participants defined success as doing well in school and being

able to graduate. With this academic motivation, they did all they could to succeed academically. At the beginning of their college experiences, the participants indicated they wanted to do well enough to either progress, keep scholarships, or stay in different academic programs. Their definition of academic success was surface level as they just wanted to maintain these aspects. They learned new study strategies and behaviors during this period and determined what worked best. Eventually, this idea of academic success changed as they began to learn for more intrinsic purposes. They wanted to learn for more intrinsic purposes stemmed from the participants' development towards a professional identity as the knowledge and skills they learned in their courses directly applied to that identity. The participants described using all of the strategies they had in order to continue their success and also to maximize their learning. They also took other measures to ensure they were academically successful. These measures included quitting their sport to maximize or even updating their major to a subject of interest. There was this sense of resourcefulness as participants did whatever they could to succeed academically in their field. The participants' definition of success differs from the literature on Division I and scholarship student-athletes. Specifically, student-athletes who focus more on their athletic pursuits tend to have lower academic motivation and performance (Beron & Piquero, 2016; Bimper, 2014; Killeya, 2001; Rubin & Rosser, 2014; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000; Simons et al., 1999). Instead, the participants of this study indicated how important their academic goals were and that they held higher precedence than their athletic responsibilities. It was evident how much the participants valued their academic goals, as each was willing to move on from their sport to ensure they achieved their academic goals. Therefore, the findings suggest that Division II non-scholarship student-athletes define success as doing well and graduating and that they view success in school as more important than sports.

Success was not just limited to their academic success. Doing well in their sport was also important to the participants, as they all indicated a personal athletic goal. The participants suggested that their reason for walking-on at their institution was an opportunity to continue playing their sport. Having this opportunity in mind, they focused on setting goals that included essentially getting better in the sport or being able to play, a purely personal goal of theirs; regarding accomplishing these goals, participants described how they would listen to their coaches, do their research, or even be their own salesman in order to play. To achieve these personal athletic goals, participants would do whatever it took to ensure they were successful in their athletic pursuits. Providing context to these personal athletic goals, the participants indicated that they were highly intrinsically motivated as it pertained to their athletic pursuits. This concept of intrinsic motivation can be further examined through the lens of the self-determination theory, a motivational theory commonly used in the area of sport and performance (Calvo et al., 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Pulido et al., 2018). Individuals who are intrinsically motivated regarding their sport do it for interest in their sport, enjoyment, or for the opportunity to continue to learn within their sport. Having this intrinsic motivation regarding a sport can influence an athlete's overall commitment and continuation of the sport (Calvo et al., 2010; Pulido et al., 2018). As it relates to their decision to walk-on and even continue athletics in college, the participants described moments in their college experiences that indicated their intrinsic motivation related to their sport, influencing their definition of athletic success.

As the participants accomplished their goals in athletics, they became less motivated regarding their sport. Following along with the self-determination theory, participants may have felt amotivated toward their sport once they accomplished their goals. Amotivation refers to when an individual is neither intrinsically or extrinsically motivated towards a particular activity

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and begins to question their involvement in an activity (Calvo et al., 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Pulido et al., 2018). This lack of motivation may relate to them feeling accomplished and no longer having the need or desire to continue in college athletics. Achieving their athletic goals may also relate to their understanding that there would be no athletic prospects post-college. The participants only wanted to walk-on because they enjoyed their sport and wanted to continue playing after high school. This understanding differs from previous research in which student-athletes consider doing well in athletics to be an indicator of success because it relates to their desire to be professional athletes (Beamon, 2012; Camiré, 2014; Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Medic et al., 2007; Weatherly & Chen, 2019). The participants' definition of athletic success primarily involved their intrinsic infatuation with their sport instead of focusing on making it their professional identity. Not having a desire for a professional career, or other external rewards, in their sport ultimately enabled the participants to enjoy their sport and just set goals related to improving or playing in their sport. Because of these experiences, Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may define athletic success as related to their intrinsic interests in playing or getting better in their sport instead of defining success as related to a professional career in sports.

With multiple definitions of success, academically or athletically related, there can be times when the pursuit of different goals may conflict with each other. These conflicts referred to the participants' course schedule and studying with their sports practices. At the beginning of their college career, the participants mentioned how they had to deal with these conflicts but could easily pick school over sports or vice versa. While inconvenient at times, they were comfortable making these types of decisions. As the theory of motivational action conflicts suggests, individuals may not experience this motivational interference when deciding on an

activity during a motivational action conflict (Hofer et al., 2007). This lack of motivational

interference usually results from how the individual values certain activities and self-control

(Hofer et al., 2007). The participants were used to the idea of balancing school and sports, so if

there were moments where the two would conflict, they could adjust as needed. However, this

eventually evolved to where the participants decided to fulfill their course obligations (e.g.,

skipping practice to attend class) whenever these conflicts occurred. Choosing academics over

athletics was relatively easy for the participants towards the end of their college careers. This

finding insinuates that Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may not have an issue

choosing academics if a conflict ever emerged with athletics. With school being of more value,

they may not experience any motivational interference (Fries et al., 2005; Hofer et al., 2007;

Hofer & Fries, 2016; Schmid et al., 2005) when selecting an academic activity over an athletic

activity. While they may have experienced conflict with their schedules, Division II non-

scholarship student-athletes can manage these conflicts because they are used to the student-

athlete balance.

Implications for Practice

The current study sheds light on the Division II non-scholarship student-athlete

population. More specifically, the findings indicated that Division II non-scholarship student-

athletes primarily navigate higher education as a student, have the freedom to explore other

identities and interests, and define success as doing well in school and sports. Thus, this study

has several implications that higher education officials could utilize to support this student-

athlete population. One major consideration that higher education officials can make is to

provide more professional development support and resources for non-scholarship student-

athletes. As Nite (2012) has mentioned, there is a lack of resources within Division II athletic

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administrations for student-athletes. As indicated by the participants' experiences, they would seek out resources independently. Such resources may include getting an internship, asking faculty members for advice, or even developing professional skills in areas outside of the classroom. Given this need for support in developing their professional identity, athletic administrations could develop workshops and other in-house resources to help non-scholarship student-athletes achieve their professional identity. As athletic administrations typically have academic resource centers for their student-athletes, developing in-house professional development workshops would be a viable option and an excellent investment.

The findings of this study could also help inform higher education officials at Division II institutions more about their student-athlete population. The current group of former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes indicated they were heavily academically motivated. Administrators could utilize this information to help combat the stigma associated with intercollegiate athletes, as in the "dumb jock" stereotype. The "dumb jock" stereotype can have several negative implications for student-athletes, as fellow students, student-athletes, and even faculty members may develop negative beliefs that all student-athletes only care about their sport and are unintelligent (Chen et al., 2010; Comeaux, 2011; Feltz et al., 2013; Wininger & White, 2015). These faulty assumptions lead student-athletes to practice poor academic behaviors, often leading them to practice poor academic behaviors. To help higher education administrators combat the "dumb jock" stereotype, athletic administrations could create training or workshops for student affairs officials or instructors. These workshops should incorporate information from other studies concerning the negative implications of the study but also utilize the findings of this study that show how non-scholarship student-athletes' academic motivation dispels the stereotype. Having this information would better equip administrators and instructors to not only

be aware of the stereotype but to be able to work more effectively with student-athletes. It could also be possible that these higher education members can pass on this information to others, especially students, to combat the stereotype further or reduce its effects at universities. This information could change the overall perception of the student-athlete population in higher education.

Along with reducing this negative stigma, higher education officials could use this information to understand the graduation rates of student-athletes better. Exkard (2010) suggests that student-athletes graduate slower than the general student population without including part-time students. To break this down further, Rubin and Rosser (2014) found that non-scholarship student-athletes graduated slower than scholarship student-athletes. With these slow graduation rates, there must be context as to why not only student-athletes may graduate at a slower rate but also why non-scholarship student-athletes graduate at a slower rate. The findings of this study could provide context to these graduation rates. Non-scholarship student-athletes may graduate slower because they want to do well in their academic coursework and may be more willing to take it slow to succeed. While most of the participants of this study graduated within close to four years, they did mention how doing well in their classes and being able to graduate were important to them. In addition to dedicating their time to their coursework, participants also shared how they engaged in other activities related to their major or professional identity. These behaviors may provide university officials with a clearer understanding of the graduation rates of this student-athlete population. More specifically, the findings of this study could inform higher education and athletic administrators to develop better academic support services that help facilitate the academic needs of non-scholarship student-athletes and student-athletes in general. Developing or improving supportive academic resources could help ensure that student-athletes

are still capable of graduating, even if it is at a slower rate. Still, the current study provided some context as to why non-scholarship student-athletes may graduate at a slower rate.

Limitations

A possible limitation could be the lack of diversity in the current group of participants. The current group of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes comprises primarily white men. While one former Division II non-scholarship student-athlete woman was involved in the study, the experiences of the student-athlete men may have overshadowed her experiences or even identities. This finding is similar to the theory of self-authorship, where the theory's development centered on the experiences of white students (Abes & Hernandez, 2016; Perez, 2019; Pizzolato et al., 2012). A theoretical foundation rooted in the experiences of white students makes it difficult or nearly impossible for students of color to relate to or navigate their experiences through such a theoretical framework. Scholars have made strides in adjusting this theoretical framework to include the voices of students of color (Abes & Hernandez, 2016; Perez, 2019; Pizzolato et al., 2012). While the current study provides a solid foundation for understanding the Division II non-scholarship student-athlete population, more work is needed. Such future work includes inviting those of different genders, races, and ethnicities to the conversation to share their experiences as non-scholarship student-athletes at a Division II institution. Expanding upon the diversity of the Division II non-scholarship student-athlete group would only strengthen our understanding of the population and further influence future research with the said population.

Along with the lack of a diverse group of participants, another possible limitation exists. This limitation is about my interviewing abilities. I utilized an unstructured interview protocol, typically used for a life story interview (Atkinson, 2007, 2012), to allow the participants to share

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meaningful stories about their college experience. This protocol led to several sporadic conversations with each participant. While these conversations helped me understand their experiences as Division II non-scholarship student-athletes, I could have overlooked certain areas of their lives in higher education. There may have also been times when I should have probed on one topic more versus another. While this is possible, I took certain measures to discuss the participants' experiences thoroughly. This measure refers to my researcher handbook. Following each interview, the handbook allowed me to write down any topics I needed to revisit for the next interview. With these notes in hand, I could remember to revisit these areas and discuss them with each participant. While my interviewing abilities may pose a limitation, the memos I wrote in my researcher handbook reminded me to revisit certain topics in the following interviews.

Recommendations for Future Research

Even with a new understanding of the Division II non-scholarship student-athlete population, there is still potential for future research. I have thought of a few areas regarding the direction of future research. As mentioned before, I had made my interpretations primarily based on the experiences of white student-athlete men. With little diversity in the current study, future research should focus on developing studies that include more non-scholarship student-athletes of different genders, races, and ethnicities. The population of collegiate student-athletes is not just solely white student-athlete men, but it also consists of numerous individuals who reflect social differences based on, for example, gender (Anthony & Swank, 2018; Beron & Piquero, 2016; Chen et al., 2010; Le Crom et al., 2009; Melendez, 2006; Migano et al., 2006; Pauline et al., 2008; Simmons et al., 1999), race (Anthony & Swank, 2018; Beamon & Bell, 2006; Bimper, 2014; Bimper et al., 2013; Melendez, 2006; Rankin et al., 2016; Simons et al., 1999; Snyder,

1996), and so much more. Future research must include a more diverse sample of student-athletes to achieve a more in-depth understanding of Division II and non-scholarship student-athletes. Like the current study, future research could implement a qualitative methodology centered on a narrative inquiry to explore identity development, perception of success, and pursuit of success. A qualitative methodology would be helpful for future research because of its explorative nature (Babchuck & Badiee, 2010; McAlpine, 2016; Thomas, 2012). It can allow the researcher and participant to collaborate to explore further how non-scholarship student-athletes of different genders, races, and ethnicities may engage with their experiences to develop their reality. For future research, it is imperative to include a more diverse group of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes.

Along with having a more diverse group of individuals, future research should consider working with current Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. As previously mentioned, the Division II non-scholarship student-athletes discussed in this study no longer compete in intercollegiate athletics, as they have been for many years. Future research should investigate the experiences of currently active Division II non-scholarship student-athletes. With these individuals being current student-athletes, their experiences and memories may be fresher, allowing for a more accurate interpretation of their experiences concerning identity development and success. Future research could include senior non-scholarship student-athletes, as they would have been in higher education longer, allowing ample time to have had experiences that may have influenced their identity development. Another possible direction for this line of research could be a longitudinal qualitative study where one follows a non-scholarship student-athlete from freshman to senior year. While it may take longer, it can provide a more accurate and real-time understanding of their development and their actions to pursue success.

Future research could also investigate the different types of scholarships offered to student-athletes outside of just athletic scholarships. I found that most participants had an academic scholarship in the current study. I would be curious to see how the dynamics of maintaining an academic scholarship come into play with intercollegiate athletics for non-scholarship student-athletes. Medic et al. (2007) have noted that non-scholarship student-athletes, when receiving an athletic scholarship, become more extrinsically motivated when it comes to playing their sport. However, when a participant received an athletic scholarship, they did not care too much and were more focused on being able to do their sport. Participants did not go into the full depth of how the dynamics of sports and maintaining their academic scholarship played out in their college experience. Future research should therefore look into the motivation of a non-scholarship student-athlete who has an academic scholarship while walking-on for a sport. Conducting such research could further enhance our understanding of this population regarding why they may choose to walk-on despite already having some form of financial aid.

Future research with Division II non-scholarship student-athletes could include a more quantitative approach. While the current methodology provided a relatively in-depth understanding of how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigated their identity, I would be curious to see the differences between their identity development and that of scholarship student-athletes. As mentioned in the literature, scholarship student-athletes tend to experience an early foreclosure of identity in college (Brewer et al., 1993; Miller & Kerr, 2003; Murphy et al., 1996). However, the current study suggests that non-scholarship student-athletes do not experience this early foreclosure. A quantitative study would further examine the differences between scholarship and non-scholarship student-athletes. Researchers could use the athlete identity measurement scale (AIMS; Brewer et al., 1993), a questionnaire designed to

measure a student-athlete's athletic identity and the exclusivity of the athlete role. Such a study could further highlight the differences and motivations behind these student-athlete groups and expand our general understanding of the population.

Another possible area for future research may also investigate using different theoretical frameworks that are commonly used with motivation in sport and performance. The participants suggested how their athletic goals were motivated by their intrinsic interest in their sport. The theory of self-authorship and theory of motivational action conflicts helped explore these findings in relation to identity and success, but further context is needed to further explore or understand the intrinsic nature behind the participants' definition of athletic success. Future research could look to explore the motivation behind Division II non-scholarship student-athletes' reasons for walking-on and commitment to athletics while in college. The self-determination theory could act as a strong possible theoretical framework as it addresses the different types of motivation, including intrinsic motivation, in regard to human behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Future research should not just be limited to this one motivational theory, but researchers should look to include other motivational theories commonly used in the field of Kinesiology around sport and performance to further understand the athletic experiences of Division II non-scholarship student-athletes.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to examine the experiences of former Division II non-scholarship student-athletes as they navigated their identity, perceived success, and pursued success while in higher education. I utilized a narrative methodology that included an unstructured interview protocol, allowing participants to share all meaningful experiences relevant to their identity navigation and ideation of success. Using a narrative analysis and the

theoretical frameworks of self-authorship and motivational action conflicts, I was able to interpret these experiences. This study revealed that Division II non-scholarship student-athletes primarily navigated higher education from the perspective of being a student-athlete but later shifted away more towards being a student. They may interact with their other various identities throughout their college experience as they learn to grow and develop their own self-interests. Division II non-scholarship student-athletes may also define their idea of success as doing well in school and being able to graduate. This definition was important to them, as they were determined to reach their professional goals and establish their professional identity. While their focus was primarily on school, this group of student-athletes described experiences that emphasized their love for the sport and how they also viewed success from an athletic perspective. The current findings have multiple implications for higher education officials in terms of developing professional development resources, improving academic resources, and even possible collaboration between athletic departments and on-campus resources to better aid non-scholarship student-athletes.

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Zoom (August, 2020). One platform to connect. Zoom. https://zoom.us/

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

For an Auburn University research study, titled "An Inquiry to Lived Experiences of Division II Walk-On Student-Athletes," exploring Division II non-scholarship student-athletes identity development and pursuit of success

Who can participate?

Must meet the following criteria:
- Former Division II student-athlete
- Taken classes at an undergraduate Division II institution
- At any point were a student-athlete without an athletic scholarship
- Must be 19 years or older

All genders, ethnicities, races, and sports are allowed to participate
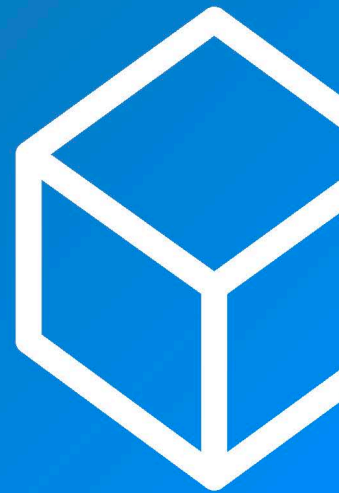
Interested or want more information?

Contact Wilson Lester (wsl0008@auburn.edu)

What participation entails: Completion of three one-on-one interviews through Zoom. Each interview will be between 60-90 minutes.

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this Document for use from __04/05/2022__ to __--------------__
Protocol # __22-062 EX 2202__

Appendix B

<u>Walking-On: A Narrative Inquiry of Division II Non-Scholarship Student Athletes' Identity Development and Pursuit of Success</u>

Researcher Handbook

Wilson Lester

Interview #1: Pre-Interview Memoing

COMPLETE THIS BEFORE INTERVIEW

What is your positionality?
- **Who are you?**
- **How might you describe your role in the current study?**
- **How do your experiences fit or relate to the current context of the study?**

What are your thoughts going into this interview?

<u>**Interview #1: Unstructured Interview Protocol Questions**</u>

Sample/Example Questions of to Think About During the Interview

Start off with basic introductions
State name and who you are
*ask interviewee to introduce themselves (ask things such as their pseudonym, academic classification, sport, position, and if they if they are a walk-on student athlete) *
Once participant has selected their pseudonym, ask them to change their screen name to that pseudonym

Begin by stating the general purpose: "The purpose of this interview is to give you the chance to describe your experiences being a non-scholarship (or walk-on) student-athlete related to your identity development and the types of goals you may have had."

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. Can you tell me about your high school experiences?
3. Can you tell me about your college experience?
    a. For example, how did you decide on your institution?
    b. Can you tell me about Freshman Year?
    c. Can you tell me about Sophomore Year?
    d. Can you tell me about Junior Year?
    e. Can you tell me about Senior Year?
4. Can you tell me what it was like being a Division II non-scholarship student-athlete?
5. What else were you interested in during college?
6. What types of goals did you have in college?
7. Can you tell me what you have been up to since you graduated from college?

Conclude by thanking the participant
Once the interview is over: stop the recording, transfer the recording to the encrypted and secure server, and delete the recording.

<u>**Interview #1: Post-Interview Memoing**</u>

COMPLETE FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEW

What are your initial thoughts following this interview?

What are some areas that you want to revisit in the next interview?

What questions do you have going forward?

<ins>Interview #2: Pre-Interview Memoing</ins>

COMPLETE BEFORE INTERVIEW

What is your positionality?
- **Who are you?**
- **How might you describe your role in the current study?**
- **How do your experiences fit or relate to the current context of the study?**

What are your thoughts going into this interview?

What areas/questions do you want to revisit in this interview?

<u>**Interview #2: Unstructured Interview Protocol**</u>

Sample/Example Questions of to Think About During the Interview

Start off with basic introductions
State name and who you are
*ask interviewee to introduce themselves (ask things such as their pseudonym, academic classification, sport, position, and if they if they are a walk-on student athlete) *
Once participant has selected their pseudonym, ask them to change their screen name to that pseudonym

Begin by stating the general purpose: "The purpose of this interview is to further discuss the experiences you had mentioned during the previous interview regarding you being a Division II non-scholarship student-athlete"

<u>**College Experiences**</u>
1. Last time we spoke you had mentioned _____ during your freshman year, can you tell me more about this?
   a. What else can you tell me about this experience?
   b. How did you see yourself during this year?
2. You had mentioned _____ during your sophomore year, can you tell me more about this?
   a. What else can you tell me about this?
   b. How did you see yourself during this year?
3. You had mentioned _____ during your junior year, can you tell me more about this?
   a. What else can you tell me about this?
   b. How did you see yourself during this year?
4. You had mentioned_____ during your senior year, can you tell me more about this?
   a. What else can you tell me about this?
   b. How did you see yourself during this year?
5. Can you tell about a time (at any point) where you felt challenged?

<u>**Student-Athlete Experience**</u>
1. Can you tell me more about being a non-scholarship student-athlete at a Division II institution?
   a. For example:
      i. Can you tell me about a time where school and athletics conflicted?
         1. What were you valuing more at that time?
         2. How did you balance school and sports?
            a. Can you tell me about a time where the balance was difficult?
            b. Can you tell me about a time where you had to make a difficult decision between school and athletics?
2. Can you tell me a little bit about why you continued to do your sport despite having an athletic scholarship?

Goals and Success:

1. What types of goals did you have while in college?
   a. Over time, what did your goals look like during your time in college?
      1. Why did you want to pursuit these goals?
      2. How were you trying to achieve these goals?

Other follow up Questions from Interview #1 Post-Interview Memoing

Conclude by thanking the participant

Once the interview is over: stop the recording, transfer the recording to the encrypted and secure server, and delete the recording.

Interview #2: Post-Interview Memoing

COMPLETE FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEW

What are your initial thoughts following this interview?

What are some areas that you want to revisit in the next interview?

How are you beginning to think about the structure of this narrative?

What themes are you beginning to construct?

What follow up questions do you have?

COMPLETE BEFORE INTERVIEW

What is your positionality?
- **Who are you?**
- **How might you describe your role in the current study?**
- **How do your experiences fit or relate to the current context of the study?**

What are your thoughts going into this interview?

What areas/final questions do you want to revisit in this interview?

<u>**Interview #3: Unstructured Interview Protocol**</u>

Sample/Example Questions of to Think About During the Interview

Start off with basic introductions
State name and who you are
*ask interviewee to introduce themselves (ask things such as their pseudonyms, academic classification, sport, position, and if they if they are a walk-on student athlete) *
Once participant has selected their pseudonym, ask them to change their screen name to that pseudonym

Begin by stating the general purpose: "The purpose of this interview is to have one last chance to discuss any experiences you may have had that we haven't touched on as it relates to your experiences in identity development or your ideation and pursuit of success."

<u>**Higher Education**</u>
1. Last time you had mentioned _____ can you tell me more about that?
    a. Can you tell me anything else about freshman year?
    b. Can you tell me anything else about sophomore year?
    c. Can you tell me anything else about junior year?
    d. Can you tell me anything else about senior year?

<u>**Student-Athlete**</u>
1. Last time you had mentioned_____ can you tell me more about that?
    a. Can you tell me anything else about your experience as a Division II non-scholarship student-athlete in college?
    b. Can you tell me anything else about balancing academics and athletics?
        1. Can you tell me about any other times where you had to make a difficult decision between school and athletics?

<u>**Goals and Success**</u>
1. Last time you had mentioned_____ can you tell me more about?
    a. Was there any other goals that you had in college?

Is there anything else you would like to talk about that we haven't already?

Other follow up questions from interview #2 post-interview memoing

Conclude by thanking the participant
ask what would be a good time for a follow up or time to contact about clarification

==*Once the interview is over: stop the recording, transfer the recording to the encrypted and secure server, and delete the recording.*==

COMPLETE IMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEW

What are your initial thoughts following this interview?

How has this narrative developed over the past three interviews?

What themes come to mind and how are they refined based off this interview?

Appendix C

AUBURN UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Foundations,
Leadership, and Technology

INFORMATION LETTER
For a Research Study entitled
"An Inquiry to the Lived Experiences of Division II Walk-On Student-Athletes"

You are invited to participate in a research study to help examine how Division II non-scholarship student-athletes navigate identity development, perceive success, and pursue success. You will be asked a series of questions in relation to these topics. The study is being conducted by Wilson Lester, under the direction of Dr. Kamden Strunk. You are invited to participate because you are a former student-athlete, you have taken undergraduate courses at a Division II institution, you at any point were a student-athlete without an athletic scholarship, and are age 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will participate in an interview via Zoom regarding your experiences of being a former Division II non-scholarship student-athlete as it pertains to identity development, i.e., the process in how you viewed yourself and established your identity during college, and success, i.e., the types of goals you may have had as well as what you did in order to achieve those goals. The interview will be conducted over Zoom, recorded, and transcribed. There will be three interviews total with each interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. The interviews will occur in the next 1 to 2 months. Your total time commitment will be between 180 and 270 minutes.

Are there any risks or discomforts? The risk associated with participating in this research study is related to confidentiality. To minimize these risks, we will remove identifying information while transcribing each interview, which will occur after each interview, and use pseudonyms in place of the identifying information. The recording of the interviews will be immediately destroyed after transcription is completed. Prior to transcription, the interview recording will be stored on an encrypted and secured server. The interviews will be conducted via Zoom videoconference technology, which allows for secure, encrypted communication by distance.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? There are no known direct benefits to you from participating in this study. The project may lead to an improved understanding to identity development and pursuit of success amongst Division II non-scholarship student-athletes.

Will you receive compensation for participating? There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Are there any costs? There are no known or anticipated costs related to participation in this study.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study, as in before, during, or after any of the interviews. Your participation is completely voluntary. If

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Protocol # __22-062 EX 2202__

you choose to withdraw before the completion of all three interviews, your data will become part of the research data or it can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University.

Any data obtained in connection with this research study will remain confidential. We will protect your identity and privacy by removing and replacing identifying information with pseudonyms. Additionally, all recorded interviews will be moved from the Zoom cloud server and transferred to a secure, encrypted storage server with BOX. Once the recordings have been fully transcribed and anonymized, the recordings will be deleted. The information that will be collected through your participation may be used to better understand the experiences of being a Division II non-scholarship student-athlete as it relates to identity development amongst student-athletes as well as how they envision and pursue success.

If you have questions about this research study, *please ask them now* or contact Wilson Lester (wsl0008@auburn.edu) or Dr. Kamden Strunk (kks0013@auburn.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone at (334) 844-5966 or by email at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

___Wilson S. Lester_____
Print Name

___Kamden K. Strunk_____
Print Name

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