STUDENT ATHLETE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF COACHES

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Abstract

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Intercollegiate athletics has been a complex component of American higher education throughout its history, especially as the collegiate athletic enterprise has expanded exponentially in recent decades (Clotfelter, 2011). These debates have produced mixed results for the impact that intercollegiate athletics has on its participants (Comeaux, 2019). Studies have found that intercollegiate sport participation has a negative effect on both student development (Watson & Kissinger, 2007) and also that participation yields long term benefits (Shakib, Veliz, Dunbar, & Sabo, 2011). This case study looks at the role of coaches as mentors (DuBois and Karcher, 2014) in one men's college basketball program and their impact on identity development (Erikson, 1959/1980), identity status (Marcia, 1966), and identity foreclosure (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996) of student athletes. Participants from three groups (student athletes, coaches, and administrators) were asked about the impact that coaches have on the development of student athletes in one program. Seven themes emerged which are identified and analyzed in this paper: (1) the importance of establishing trust in relationships between students and coaches/staff, (2) playing time as a critical piece to the coach/student relationship and student athlete experience, (3) reliance on departmental resources for identity development, (4) the impact of team culture on individual mindset, (5) lack of awareness of identity development/identity foreclosure as a part of the student athlete experience, (6) the impact of time demands on coaches and students when prioritizing personal development, and (7) individual responsibility in one's own identity development.

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APPROVAL OF THE CAPSTONE

This capstone, ("Student Athlete Development and the Role of Coaches"), has been approved by

the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education and Human Development in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Intercollegiate athletics has been a complex component of American higher education throughout its history. Issues such as funding, student success, commercialization, ethical standards, and athletic time commitments are among many topics that are hotly debated, especially as the collegiate athletic enterprise has expanded exponentially in recent decades (Clotfelter, 2011). These debates have produced mixed results for the impact that intercollegiate athletics has on its participants (Comeaux, 2019). Studies have found that intercollegiate sport participation has a negative effect on both student development and academic experiences (Watson & Kissinger, 2007) and also that participation yields long term benefits where many individuals find more success than their non-participant peers after graduation (Shakib, Veliz, Dunbar, & Sabo, 2011).

Student Athlete Identity Development

One certainty within the debate is that athletic participation is an added stressor on the lives of student athletes, whose daily schedules are typically dictated by their university athletic requirements (Burden, Tremayne, & Marsh, 2004; Sanderson & Siegfried, 2015; Wendling, Kellison, & Sagas, 2018). Many students who participate in intercollegiate athletics distance themselves from their educational process because of the large importance placed on athletic success (Whipple, 2009). The athletic commitments of this group often undermine the academic experiences that are fundamental to their collegiate lives. Because of this focus, many student athletes experience limited identity development compared to their peers (Brewer, Linder, & Petitpas, 1999).

Of the myriad theories and research on personal development during the college experience, identity formation is a fundamental component wherein individuals develop a sense

of self. During their collegiate experience individuals develop essential psychosocial identifiers

such as gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, etc. (Renn & Reason, 2013). The pivotal

phases of Erik Erikson's Identity Development Theory posit that individuals must navigate crises

periods where they transition from childhood to adulthood. During this time, individuals identify

a sense of their own ability to contribute to society and a robust sense of self that is consistent

with their external presentation to others (Erikson, 1959/1980). Erikson's work has been applied

in higher education as the foundation for much of college student development theory; and also

social, racial, and ethnic identity development theories. Highly regarded theories taught in many

higher education programs and used widely among student affairs organizations are grounded in

Erikson's psychosocial identity development theory; these include Chickering and Reisser's

(1993) theory of college student identity development; Phinney's (1990) review of ethnic

identity development; Ladson-Billings's (1998) discussion of critical race theory; Cross's (1971)

dialogue of racial identity development; Ferdman and Gallegos's (2001) theory of racial identity

development in Latinos; Yosso's (2005) model of community cultural wealth within critical race

theory; and Bilodeau and Renn's (2005) analysis of LGBT identity development theories – to

name a few.

Limitations in identity development can lead to identity foreclosure, which happens when

individuals prematurely make a commitment to an occupation or ideology (Marcia, 1966).

Foreclosure occurs when an individual experiences a lack of exploration and remains committed

to the values outlined by authority figures in their lives. This blind acceptance leads individuals,

specifically adolescents and young adults, to follow developmental paths set forth by family and

societal expectations rather than an individual exploration of experiences and interests (Renn &

Reason, 2013). Examples of the challenge of foreclosure in studies of college students include

course advising conversations (Mason & Briggs, 2017) and career exploration (Berrios-Allison, 2005), among others.

Specific studies on college student athletes have shown identity foreclosure occurs more often compared to their non-athlete peers (Beamon, 2012). These students identify personal success primarily within their sport, which limits their educational and career development (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Nasco & Webb, 2006). This foreclosure is a direct response to the individual commitment to athletic success, limiting many student athletes from pursuing developmental opportunities outside of their sport and instead prioritizing their self-identification as an athlete. This sport-specific identifier is often so strong that the term "athletic identity" has come to describe individuals who strongly recognize their athlete role cognitively, behaviorally, and as they find their place within society (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Whipple, 2009; Xisto, 2019). Athletic identity and identity foreclosure are particularly strong in elite athletes because of the enhanced level of social reinforcement and their sense of self that is based upon their athletic performance. "Thus their self-identity is composed solely of 'athlete' and social identity is defined by other's view of them as athletes" (Beamon, 2012, p. 196).

Another important component of identity that must be included as a part of the conversation about identity development is the impact of racial identity. Minority student athletes, specifically Black males, participate in revenue sports at a higher level than other racial groups (Harper, Williams, & Blackman, 2013). Because of that higher level of participation, there is an experience that is unique to the Black student athlete (Parham, 1993), specifically at historically white universities (Singer, 2019) where they are already an underrepresented population (Harper, 2009). An understanding of racial identity development of student athletes will be thoroughly examined in the literature review, including studies that assess the academic

success of minority student athletes (Bimper, 2014) and graduation success rates of African American student athletes in revenue sports (Cooper & Cooper, 2015).

Marcia (1980) defines identity achievement as the successful transition through the exploration period, culminating with commitment to one's determined personal values and goals. This is the opposite of foreclosure because it ensures that an individual establishes goals and values *after* a stout exploratory phase, allowing individuals' exposure to various values, perspectives, and experiences. Though the establishment of this identity appears to be permanent, the exploration process is a foundation for continual evaluation and examination (Renn & Reason, 2013). We can therefore apply this definition of successful identity achievement to student athletes who are able to maintain their athletic identity while also experiencing the exploration phase outlined by Marcia (1966).

Identity foreclosure often provides a foundation for athletic success because individuals can devote extreme focus to their given craft (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). However, the theories, research, and logic provided show that Marcia's (1966) concept of identity achievement through exploration provides one useful scholarly approach for a more wholesome psychosocial identity developmental process during the formative years of college. Therefore, positive identity achievement as a college student athlete is credited where an individual embraces his or her athletic identity while limiting identity foreclosure through exploration. This combination will allow individuals to commit to their best course of personal development, which can include the importance of athletics in their life.

Role of Coaches

Many factors influence the college experience of student athletes, such as athletic success, team harmony, personal relationships, academic pursuits, faculty interactions, athletic

injury, and social experiences, to name a few. One group that could have the greatest impact on student athlete experiences, development, and satisfaction, are coaches.

Relationships between students, families, and coaches begin before college admission and significantly affect the college decision process (Seifried, 2009). These relationships remain substantial throughout the tenure of a student athlete, where the coach has authority over student schedules, playing time, scholarship allotment, team culture, etc. (Cosh & Tully, 2015). It is under this authority that student athletes can feel the impact of the coach, specifically within individual enjoyment and effort (Chan, Lonsdale, & Fung, 2012).

Part of the complexity of the relationship between coaches and student athletes are the psychological contracts agreed upon between the two parties that include both relational and transactional expectations (Barnhill, Otto, & Phillips, 2018). These expectations influence student athlete performance, development, and satisfaction. This places a responsibility on coaches to provide for the needs of students at individual levels (Kim, Kim, & Won, 2018). There is not one method or process that ensures athletic success or individual development and happiness. It is up to each coach to create his or her own team culture and environment. The power coaches wield over the student athlete experience rests within the responsibility of establishing team values and culture.

Identity development through exploration is one of many areas where coaches can support individual growth. Coaches have the authority to invest time in programming to support this exploration. As mentors, they also can validate identity exploration by expanding their conversations and relationship connectivity, therefore nurturing the person as a whole rather than focusing solely on athletic performance (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). From an organizational lens, coaches have influence over the team culture and are able to establish and reinforce values

that can affect student development by supporting multiple foci instead of only sport-specific outcomes (Chelladurai, 2009).

Current Context of College Athletics

Though the purpose of this paper is to understand the influence coaches have on identity development of student athletes, it is important to provide some context of the changing landscape of college athletics as an introduction to the environment of this study. The student athlete experience, and therefore the role of their coaches, have changed drastically in the last three decades (Clotfelter, 2011). There are three important focal points of this changing landscape that are especially significant and readers should be mindful of when understanding the current student athlete experience: the influence of big money, the changing policies and processes of student athlete transfers, and the evolution of amateurism model within the emergence of the Name, Image, and Likeness era.

Perhaps the most significant change that has affected college athletics as a whole has been the growth in both revenue generation and spending in college athletics. At its core, the college athletic enterprise was established as an extracurricular activity for fully enrolled students. As popularity and intensity of competition increased, so did the value of the athletics on college campuses, and therefore the influence of money. While this influence has existed throughout the history of college athletics, the growth of budgets and spending has grown exponentially in the last three decades. The NCAA men's basketball tournament alone generated $845.9 million in 2012 (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012) and over $1 billion in revenue from ticket sales, advertising, media rights fees, and corporate sponsorships in 2017 (Dambra, 2019). The NCAA has been signing decades long billion-dollar contracts with television companies for the rights to broadcast its March Madness tournament with exponential growth over time. The

NCAA's first billion-dollar deal happened in 1991 at $1 billion, increasing to $6 billion in 1999, and continuing to $11 billion in 2010 (Nocera & Strauss, 2016). While these dollar amounts are staggering, the profits do benefit all Division I institutions and fund championships in other sports (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012).

Historically, decisions about athletics on college campuses were made by college presidents and administrators, often with institutional and student priorities at the forefront. Many decisions are now made primarily at the conference level which include institutions aligning with each other for financial gain from television revenue rather than geographical location or institutional values (Nocera & Strauss, 2016). The seismic shifts due to conference realignment are obvious results of financial necessity in order for institutions to remain competitive. Though not the focal point of this paper, college football has been the driving force behind much realignment. Conference realignment, and the subsequent cash flow included, has created a growing gap between schools in different conferences. As of 2011 the top six conferences controlled 83% of the $174.1 million from the college football Bowl Championship Series. This funding disparity contributed to the differences in operations and student experiences available to schools in smaller conferences (Nocera & Strauss, 2016).

There are both positive and negative results of spending at this level. Universities are providing more opportunities for female student athletes, which equal the experiences of male student athletes. Support programs for student athletes are also more developed. Athletic departments have grown in size and scope, providing holistic support for student athletes athletically and developmentally. Strength & conditioning and nutrition (Nocera & Strauss, 2016); mental health, student support and personal development (Beamon, 2012); and sports medicine programs are now standard practices within college athletic departments (Clotfelter,

2011). Athletic facilities often rival those of professional sports organizations, specifically at the Power 5 level where budgets are the highest.

The influence of money has also brought a change in focus, putting more pressure on departments, coaches, and students to be successful athletically. Coaches in revenue sports are regularly the highest paid employees at the university and often in the entire state, with many salaries being higher than coaches in professional sports (Nocera & Strauss, 2016). The astronomical salaries have put coaches in a position where they need to deliver victories ahead of any other priorities, including student development, in order to justify the amount of money involved. This pressure can be felt in a similar way by athletic directors. As stated earlier, the financial gap between Power 5 conference schools and the mid-major schools has created a different level of student experience and support. This disparity has widened over recent decades and continues to grow. "Programs at the top end (of college athletics) spend more than five times what those at the bottom do" (Clotfelter, 2011, p. 109). The competitive balance between the haves and have-nots has never been greater. While athletics at its core has always been based on competition, the win at all costs mindset is even more intense with significant financial influence.

A second point of significance in explaining the current landscape of college athletics involves changes to the NCAA policies and processes of how students are able to navigate transferring schools. In 2018 the NCAA created a public database called the transfer portal. This is a formal listing of current enrolled student athletes who are actively pursuing admission to a different school. Its intention was to streamline the student athlete transfer process and require athletic compliance offices to assist in vetting the procedures by which coaches recruit transfers and students evaluate their options (Johnson, 2019). Adjacent to the creation of the public

transfer portal is a recent rule change. In 2021 the NCAA began to allow student athletes to become immediately eligible to compete at another university, after gaining admission and meeting academic eligibility standards (Golembeski, 2022). Prior to 2021 student athletes in baseball, football, (men's and women's) basketball, and men's ice hockey were required to spend one full year in academic residence prior to becoming eligible (Dambra, 2019). This made the decision to transfer a much more serious one, knowing that a student would have to spend a full year sitting out to gain eligibility.

The combination of these two changes is a noteworthy moment in the recent of the NCAA and has marked a shift in the times. It has in essence, created a system of free agency where students are able to move from school to school, albeit while meeting admission and academic eligibility standards. Coaches and administrators are able to evaluate potential roster additions in real time. The impact of these changes has yet to be fully understood and will likely result in nuanced changes over time as data and trends can be evaluated. Early indications show that student athlete transfers have increased, with more than 1,700 men's basketball students entering the NCAA Transfer Portal in 2021 compared to only 571 ten years prior (Golembeski, 2022). It is easy to recognize how these changes take an emphasis off of student development and negatively impact team cohesion. Student athletes have gained more power over their own experiences with the ability to change environments with greater freedom, however there is a cost to the continuity of their collegiate experiences and personal development.

One final, yet just as significant, change that has impacted the current landscape of college athletics is the evolution of the amateur model of college athletics and the introduction of the Name, Image, and Likeness era. The original purpose of the NCAA upon its founding in 1906 was to govern college football. However, over time it began to create policies and

structures to fit athletics into higher education. At the heart of all policies and the student athlete

experience was the idealistic notion of amateurism. To ensure that college athletes were all

playing on an equal field, student athletes were not allowed to receive any financial

compensation for their participation. In 1956 the NCAA had approved awarding athletic

scholarships which included the basic needs of students – tuition, room, and board (Nocera &

Strauss, 2016).

The NCAA amateurism model survived, mostly unchanged, through all of the

exponential financial growth that has already been noted. Critics argued that student athletes

deserved a portion of the generated revenue, however the NCAA successfully defended itself

against multiple lawsuits and maintained the status quo (Nocera & Strauss, 2016). As the

groundswell continued to gain support, the NCAA eventually changed policies to allow student

athletes to monetize their name, image, and likeness (NIL) without risk of eligibility issues.

Student athletes are now able to endorse products and receive compensation for public

appearances, and pursue business ventures (Dellinger, 2021).

This change is not without challenge as there are very few guidelines for both universities

and students to navigate. All parties involved now need to be prepared to understand contracts,

salaries, and tax codes, not to mention balancing time between professional responsibilities and

the already demanding lifestyle requirements of a student athlete enrolled at a university. What is

even more challenging is that there are few, if any, consistent legal guidelines for businesses,

donors, coaches, and athletes to follow. State to state, different rules and regulations impact how

all of these groups interact (Dellinger, 2021).

The uncharted waters of the current landscape of college athletics are important to

understand while digesting the data of this study. At no point in the history of college athletics

have student athletes ever had more power over their own experience. However, at the same time this group has also never needed more guidance. It is important to consider these points when thinking about how coaches interact with students. The coach continues to hold a position of authority, however that role is evolving in real time amidst the changing environment. Are student athletes looking for the same type of interaction and how do these relationships impact their personal development? There are many unknowns in the current age of college athletics, all of which are impacting the status quo.

Statement of Problem and Research Questions

To what degree do coaches shape the psychosocial development of college student athletes? This is an important question when much of the literature cited in this paper demonstrates that college students are going through developmental processes while competing as student athletes. The coach's role is especially critical when analyzing identity development, knowing that the identity of these students is impacted by their strong personal affiliation with athletic participation (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). This is especially true for men's basketball student athletes, given the research on student athletes who participate in revenue sports (Beamon, 2012). Some challenges that result from an unbalanced identity include struggling with career transitions (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990), dealing with injuries (Deutsch, 1985), and prioritizing an athletic identity based on external rewards and encouragement (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993).

Many factors influence the identity development of college students and it is difficult to assign responsibility to one activity, group, or person. The literature presented earlier in this paper, and later in chapter two, suggests that coaches have an immense amount of influence over the college student experience of their athletes. A body of research analyzing either the positive

or the negative influence of coaches on student identity development does not exist within identity development literature or more specifically the athletic identity development literature. Exploratory research can provide insight into the lived experiences of student athletes, knowing that coaches have the ability to impact so many aspects of the student experience. Research is needed on the factors that may increase the development of multi-faceted identities and decrease identity foreclosure among student athletes, whose participation within the athletic environment is of the highest importance. More understanding is needed of positive approaches as well. A case study methodology is applied here, with particular emphasis on the voices and perspectives of those most directly involved in the identity development of student athletes: coaches, administrators, and the student athletes themselves.

The specific questions that this paper hopes to answer are:

1. In what ways do coaches see themselves as influencing identity development of their student athletes?

2. In what ways do student athletes see their coaches as influencing their identity development?

3. How do coaches invest time to support the exploration of multiple identities, therefore preventing identity foreclosure?

4. What are some key factors that both coaches and student athletes identify as contributing to identity development?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to determine how students, coaches, and administrators in one exemplary Division I/Power 5 men's basketball program feel that coach engagement, mindset, behavior, and team culture impact student identity development by balancing the

importance of athletic identity and non-athletic identity exploration. This study is a qualitative

case study of a Division I men's basketball team at a Power 5 institution. This institution was

selected due to its high standards in the metrics of both athletic success and academic excellence.

It is regularly the Top 25 nationally of the Director's Cup (NACDA, 2023), including a recent

conference championship in men's basketball and participation in the NCAA tournament, while

also being ranked in the Top 20 of national universities (U.S. News & World Report, 2019).

This study was able to provide insight into the influence of coaches on student identity

development by analyzing both coaches and students. The findings of this work delivered a

baseline understanding, to which additional research can be compared, among different types of

institutions, level of athletic competition, individual student group identifiers, and differing sport

participation.

The central issue of this analysis is to understand the impact that coaches have on the

identity development, and subsequent potential identity foreclosure, that can occur within their

student population. This study used an emerging design framework, hoping to learn from this

case to identify if it is an exemplar program by outlining traits, characteristics, and habits that are

a part of the student experience.

Significance of Study

This study makes significant contributions through identifying the degree to which

coaches are aware of, and taking steps to address, the problem of identity foreclosure in Division

I/Power 5 men's basketball players. As stated earlier, there are many people, organizations, and

experiences that shape the developmental process of student identity and it would be impossible

to isolate one area of singular responsibility. However, by analyzing how basketball coaches

navigate this process with their students, a new understanding of baseline expectations can arise

within this one sport. The developmental influence of coaches is connected directly to mentoring

relationships and mentoring literature. Future research and programming by athletic departments,

student affairs units, and most importantly individual teams can be built upon the knowledge

gained with this study. Research has been done on the conflict between the various roles that

students and coaches face within college athletics (Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Wendling, Kellison,

& Sagas, 2018). This study helps provide clarity of the impact that coaches can have

developmentally and assist with prioritizing identity exploration, therefore limiting identity

foreclosure, while also providing insight into areas of future professional development for

coaches.

Organization of Paper

In the remaining chapters of this paper relevant literature will be reviewed, methods for

this qualitative study are be outlined, results are presented and interpreted, and there is a

discussion of the findings, implications, and possible directions for future research on this topic.

In chapter two, the literature review connects the study to past research on athletic identity

development and the influential power that coaches have as mentors. This information is then

connected to the larger discussion of identity development, specifically college student identity

development literature and the student athlete experiences within revenue-generating collegiate

sports. Along with identity development literature, mentoring literature is reviewed to provide a

theoretical foundation highlighting one influential role that coaches hold. Chapter three outlines

the methodology, including research design, participant samples, data collection processes, and

coding/organization of interview results. In chapter four results of the data and its analysis are

reported and broken down into themes. This is, followed by a discussion and implications for

future research in chapter five.

Definition of Terms

Athletic identity. The amount of identity an individual considers him/herself as an athlete (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993).

Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS). Ten question Likert scale to measure individual athletic identity (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993).

Division I. The highest level of intercollegiate athletes with member institutions that meet minimum funding levels of financial aid for both men's and women's sports. Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) schools are those which participate in the college bowl system. Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) are schools which participate in football but are not eligible to play in bowl games (Vermillion & Spears, 2012).

Identity development. The process by which individuals identify a sense of their own ability to contribute to society and a robust sense of self that is consistent with the external presentation to others (Erikson, 1959/1980).

Power 5 Conference. Athletic participation by member universities in the five most lucrative and influential conferences in Division I: Atlantic Coast, Big 12, Big Ten, Pac-12, Southeastern. (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2015).

Revenue Sports. The term used to describe participation in Division I Men's Basketball and Football, due to the profitability of television and ticket revenue (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2015).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter both seminal and recent theories will be expanded upon and data which explain psychosocial identity development, identity development within college students, and specifically identity development within college student athletes will be outlined. This information will be cross-referenced with relevant research concerning the influence, power, and impact that coaches and mentors have on the young adults within their care. The intersection of these two focal points will show a gap in present understanding of the influence that coaches have on the identity development, specifically preventing identity foreclosure, which many college student athletes experience because of their participation in college athletics.

This review begins with a broad description of psychosocial identity development. The theoretical model that is foundational for this research is Erikson's (1959/1980) Identity Development Theory. James Marcia (1966) expanded upon this foundation to describe the successful navigation through Erikson's stages to achieve a developed identity. This process relates to young adults and college-aged students, specifically outlining the phenomenon of identity foreclosure. One final step is included, which outlines the development of an athletic identity within the larger understanding of and individuals' psychosocial identity development (Brewer, Van Raalte, Linder, 1993).

The second portion of this review will shift its focus to understand the influence that coaches and mentors have on individual development. Literature shows that this influence can affect student enjoyment and effort (Chan, Lonsdale, & Fung, 2012), cultivation of the whole person rather than only as an athlete (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003), and establishing a team culture and values that support multiple emphases rather than only athletic endeavors

(Chelladurai, 2009). To close this review, mentoring research by DuBois and Karcher (2014) will be used as an overarching framework to understand the role of coaches.

Identity Development of College Students and Student Athlete Identity

Erik Erikson's (1959/1980) Identity Development Theory is the framework with which this paper will analyze psychosocial identity development. Erikson established eight different stages that individuals progress through as they develop. Each of these stages includes a specific identity crisis that an individual navigates in order to advance. Erikson's theory begins in the first year of life and continues throughout adulthood. Erikson's eight stages are outlined below (Renn & Reason, 2013):

Erikson's Developmental Stages

Stage	Time of Life	Crisis & Resolution
One: Basic Trust vs. Mistrust	First year	Infants learn to trust and adapt to caregivers.
Two: Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt	Early childhood	Encouragement fosters autonomy and confidence.
Three: Initiative vs. Guilt	Preschool	Imagination and imitation help child understand between fantasy and actions.
Four: Industry vs. Inferiority	School age	Children interact with adults and learn various skills that are valued.
Five: Identity vs. Identity Confusion/Diffusion	Adolescence	Transition from childhood to adulthood, resolution happens as a permanent sense of self is established.
Six: Intimacy vs. Isolation	Young adulthood	Successful resolution leads to intimate relationships and friendships.
Seven: Generativity vs. Stagnation	Midlife	Healthy resolution happens with satisfaction of purpose.
Eight: Integrity vs. Despair	Late adulthood	Crisis happens with the reality of diminishing physical and mental ability.

The cornerstone of Erikson's identity model and the emphasis for discussion in this paper is Stage Five: Identity vs. Identity Confusion/Diffusion. This is the stage where adolescents and young adults form their vocational identity through the consolidation of their social roles

(Erikson, 1959/1980). Vocational identity refers to the integration and recognition of one's

aptitudes and opportunities into a consistent sense of how he or she fits into the vocational world

(Holland, 1985). An adolescent's vocational identity is achieved through the same cognitive

process as ego identity – exploration, observation, reflection, commitment. "It is the inner capital

accrued from all those experiences of each successive stage, when meaningful identification led

to a successful alignment of the individual's *basic drives* with his *endowment* and his

opportunities" (Erikson, 1959/1980, p. 94). This explains why this stage is so fundamental to an

adolescent's identity development.

The time period of this stage is labeled as adolescence, which is a broad description that

occurs between childhood and adulthood, including college-aged individuals. The timing of this

developmental period has made it a primary area of research for college student identity

development theory (Renn & Reason, 2013). The experiences within this crisis period encourage

individuals to bond together, using societal norms as evaluators and opportunities for external

validation. This is especially true for minority students, given the bonding experiences within a

campus climate (Hurtado, 1992) and struggles to find curriculum supportive of their interests and

backgrounds (Martinez Aleman, 2003). This often leads to an evaluation of familiar values and

norms from childhood, which could lead to rebellion as individuals explore their own sense of

self-identity and establish their own values. Successful resolution of this crisis period occurs as

an individual establishes his or her own sense of self, specifically within the contexts of social

status, personal/intimate relationships, and vocational aspirations (Erikson, 1959/1980).

James Marcia (1966) built upon Erikson's (1959/1980) theory to describe in detail the

processes that an individual experiences within each stage. He specifically focused on Stage

Five, describing the exploration process that an individual goes through to successfully resolve

the crisis period. Marcia (1980) suggested that this developmental stage consisted of adolescents questioning the values and goals of their upbringing and environment. Marcia explains that an individual's crisis period would occur if he or she was open minded to exploring alternative options to the norms presented by their societal authorities. If an individual accepted the preset expectations and norms, he or she did not experience a crisis period. Similar to Marcia's definition of exploration as a crisis period, his definition of commitment refers to the choices that individuals make related to the goals and values within the exploration process (Renn & Reason, 2013).

Marcia's (1966) theory identifies four ego identity statuses. The first is Foreclosure (Commitment without Exploration). An individual with a foreclosed identity status is someone who has not explored any values and goals beyond those prescribed by the authorities in his or her life. These prescribed expectations could include professional aspirations, relationship goals, educational pursuits, and family expectations, to name a few. The commitment to these expectations limits the possibilities of identity development and is common among many college-aged students (Marcia, 1994).

The second status level is Diffusion (No Commitment, No Exploration). Diffused individuals do not actively challenge the status quo, similar to those individuals with a foreclosed identity. However, they are also not committed to any particular set of values and expectations. Instead, their lack of commitment makes them liable to follow many trends and fads, often at the risk of being manipulated by people and environments. These individuals often have trouble making decisions and building lasting relationships (Marcia, 1994).

The third status level is Moratorium (Exploration without Commitment). These individuals are comfortable challenging the norms, values, and expectations of their environment

and authority figures. However, their lack of commitment after that exploration halts the permanence of their identity development. This stage is often a preparation for successful identity achievement, once an individual is able to commit to the value system built through the exploration process. They often are resisting the familiar norms while experiencing and testing different values, goals, and paths before making a commitment (Marcia, 1994).

The final status level is Identity Achievement (Exploration followed by Commitment). Marcia (1980) suggests that this is the healthiest stage, following the crisis period of exploration and moratorium of non-commitment. After having examined the norms and expectations of their upbringing and environment, individuals have explored various values and outlined their best course of action for the future. This process allows an individual to commit to an identity including direction in one's personal, professional, and social pursuits. It is important to note that the commitment included in this status does not mean future change cannot occur. Rather, individuals take a mature approach to reexamining their identity and decisions, which can lead to further commitments later (Marcia, 1994).

As outlined above, both Erikson (1959/1980) and Marcia (1980) thoroughly examined how individuals develop their own sense of identity, built upon an examination of their environmental and personal values. Both emphasized the adolescent age as the most critical time in the lifespan of identity development. This time period coincides with the college experience and has led to many theories and much data about the transition to adulthood and the role that the collegiate environment plays in an individual's development.

Identity development theory specific to the student athlete experience is built upon the foundation of a broader understanding of psychosocial identity. This foundation assumes many similarities with more general identity development; however, the student athlete experience

includes unique components that allow for a further level of analysis on its own terms. Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) are some of the leading voices in understanding the unique components of athletic identity and describe athletic identity as "the degree to which an individual identifies with the athletic role" (p. 237). Their work outlines how strongly individuals identify with their athletic experience, perhaps more than anything else in their lives.

Many times student athletes' identity is stronger toward their athletic role than that of a student, considering the requirement for participation in college athletics is not that of a novice athlete, but rather that of a skilled expert (Coakley, 2009). Their athletic participation has taken significant amounts of time and required much success, prior to their arrival at college, in order to advance to the level of college athletics. Years of adulation and reinforcement from society (friends, family, and community members) has forged this identity. The fortification of this identity from so many areas of their lives promotes a continuation of their commitment to athletics and their identification as an athlete (Beamon, 2012).

Research has also shown that athletic identity fluctuates based on myriad factors. Researchers found a negative correlation between athletic identity and student identity, suggesting that as an individual's athletic identity increases their student identity decreases (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). Though it has been found that athletic identity does not differ between size of athletic program in Division I and Division III student athletes (Richards & Aries, 1999), athletic identity has been found stronger in male student athletes than female students (Sturm, Feltz, & Gilson, 2011). Data also show that athletic identity differs over time, where identity levels are higher for older students compared to those in their first year (Adler & Adler, 1991).

One common attribute of a strong athletic identity is identity foreclosure (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). Athletic identity foreclosure occurs when an over-emphasis is put on the role of athletics, accompanied by a lack of exposure to non-athletic alternatives. This often occurs in the form of premature commitment to an identity due to the external social pressures from peers, family, etc. (Beamon, 2012). This commitment includes the significant amount of time and energy that an individual puts toward success and development in his or her sport, providing fewer opportunities for growth in other areas. A sport once played for enjoyment, similar to other exploratory activities, is now a pathway to professional pursuits (Parker, 1994). The limited time and energy to devote to identity exploration often leads athletes to prioritize their athletic identity based on external rewards and encouragement (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993) rather than a more thorough exploration of interests and values.

Strong athletic identity and identity foreclosure provide both benefits and risks to individuals. Some positive attributes include developing a salient sense of self (McPherson, 1980), a positive impact on athletic performance (Danish, 1983), and higher levels of physical fitness (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). Some negative attributes consist of difficulties with sport career transitions, including termination of an athletic career (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990), emotional difficulties when dealing with injuries (Deutsch, 1985), physical harm from excessive athletic training (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993), and negative interactions such as experiencing microaggressions while interacting with academic professionals (Comeaux, 2012).

The Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), designed by Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993), quantifies an individual's athletic identity. It consists of ten questions that are evaluated on a Likert scale and tested for validity and reliability by examining the results of both

student athletes and non-student athletes. Results show that the AIMS scale is an accurate tool

for assessing athletic identity. It has been used in research projects evaluating the intersection of

athletic identity and student GPA (Bimper, 2014), the selection of academic majors (Foster &

Huml, 2017), career exploration (Bell et al., 2018), racial identity (Harrison et al., 2011),

professional sport expectations (Kennedy & Dimick, 1987), and identity foreclosure (Murphy,

Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996), among other topics.

It is important in any discussion of psychosocial identity development to acknowledge

race as an essential factor, especially when understanding the identity development process of

college student athletes. Many significant factors contribute to an individual's identity

development such as gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, political values, etc. However,

race and ethnicity are commonly accepted as core components of overall psychosocial identity

and development (Evans et al., 2010). Because race and ethnic identities are fundamental to an

individual's identity, they cannot be separated from other areas of self-identification.

Race and ethnicity are understood as socially constructed meanings that individual

groups place on physical features, ancestry, and culture (Renn & Reason, 2013). Because of

these social constructions, there are theories outlining the developmental patterns that individuals

of varying backgrounds experience. Renn and Reason (2013) identified recurring developmental

patterns that they applied to various racial identity developments. The pattern includes a

"trajectory from a lack of awareness of race through an event or period of dissonance, to

immersion in one's own race, to an integration of racial identity" (p. 151).

Understanding and valuing the unique experiences of each individual from any racial

background is critical to fully appreciating an individual's identity. Focusing on the identity

development of African American college students is particularly important to this discussion,

given the strong representation within the student athlete population. Black males are commonly over-represented in college athletics, specifically in Division I football and men's basketball (Harper, Williams, & Blackman, 2013). William Cross (1971) presented a model for Black identity development which has established itself as a seminal theory in racial identity development. It consists of six sectors across the lifespan of an individual whose understanding of self and society evolve over time. The first sector begins in infancy before an individual is aware of racial identity and eventually moves through the remaining five sectors at his or her own pace, ending with a multidimensional meaning-making system.

One noteworthy parallel for this study with Cross's (1971) theory occurs in Sector Three: Adolescence. Cross' original theory was updated in 2001 in collaboration with Peony Fhagen-Smith. This updated model directly implements the identity status of Marcia's (1980) theory when understanding the adolescent time period of Black identity development. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) use Marcia's framework to describe the crisis period where Black youth enter adolescence with a foreclosed racial identity, meaning they are committed to their racial identity without pursuing exploration. As stated in the earlier discussion of Marcia's theory, the developmental growth that occurs during the adolescent time period is integrated within college student identity development.

Understanding the intersection of psychosocial identity development and racial identity development provides layers to the experiences of minority college students, especially student athletes. The combination of these layers creates a uniqueness to the existence of the Black student athlete (Parham, 1993) compared to his or her peers with other racial identities (Harper, 2006). This specifically includes their own perception of academic success at the college level (Carter-Francique, Hart, & Steward, 2013). Future research could be dedicated to the experiences

unique to Black student athletes as an identity model. It has been found that African American males' cultural identities and masculinity are strongly associated with athletic participation (Smith, 2007). This research suggests that African American males were more likely to see themselves as athletes only (Harrison et al., 2011), which leads to a higher level of identity foreclosure compared to other racial groups. Beamon (2012) states, "African-American males are socialized intensely into sports by family, peers, media, and community; and there tends to be an overemphasis on sports among African-Americans in general" (p. 196).

This higher level of identity foreclosure among minority student athletes has shown to have a negative impact on overall college experiences (Beamon, 2008). Studies have also found challenges for these students with academic success and career aspirations, noting that minority student athletes have lower GPAs compared to their white peers (Bimper, 2014) and the graduation success rates of African-American student athletes in Division I football and men's basketball are lower than their white counterparts (Cooper & Cooper, 2015). Black student athletes have also been found to have a more limited outlook on academic opportunities (Bimper, Harrison, & Clark, 2012) and career aspirations (Xisto, 2019), focusing more on a profession as an athlete compared to their white peers. Research has also been done on the role of social support within the experience of this student group (Carter-Fracique, Hart, & Cheeks, 2015) and the value of external identifiers within the world of academia (Freeman & Douglas, 2019).

Along with the impact on individual identity, race is also a complex environmental component of historically white colleges and universities benefitting financially from a large percentage of minority student athletes (Singer, 2019) and the perceptions that minority students face within these environments (Sato, Eckert, & Turner, 2018). Comeaux (2012) found that Black male student athletes experience "some of the most detrimental and deep-rooted

stereotypes by other members of the campus community," (p. 190). These findings are consistent

with other analyses of the perceptions felt by minority student athletes (Singer, 2005). A valuable

exercise for researchers to consider, which would increase understanding of the student

experience, would be to compare the experiences of Black student athletes at predominantly

white institutions with those at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU). Studies have

been done analyzing the motivations, experiences, and academic achievement of Black student

athletes at HBCU institutions (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012; Hodge, Bennett, & Collins, 2013).

Comparing experiences based on these two environments is another opportunity to add depth to

this conversation, as HBCU institutions have been found to create positive environments for

student athletes' holistic development (Charlton, 2011).

While the acknowledgement of race is important within a conversation about the identity

development of all college students, especially student athletes, it is limited if the understanding

of intersectionality of multiple identities is not discussed. Intersectionality was introduced by

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and describes how oppressions are linked and cannot be solved

alone, such that different identities come together to shape one's experiences. Intersectionality

illuminates how systems of oppression converge, highlighting the blind spots that come with a

singular analysis (Duran & Jones, 2019). It offers a method to understand how "both privilege

and marginality shape and inform each other in individual's identity meaning makings and in the

context of their environments," (Jones and Stewart, 2016, p.25).

Since its introduction, the understanding of intersectionality has evolved. Harris and

Patton (2019) describe its evolution as an approach that, "allows for a focus on how inter-reliant

sociohistorical systems influence interdependent identity-specific experiences," (p.348). They

continue, "It has taken intersectionality over thirty years to reach a level of familiarity within

higher education research," (p.365). The importance of this acknowledgement and evolution has impacted research on college student identity development.

There has been much debate critiquing the proper implementation of intersectional analyses into research methods. Harris and Patton (2019) discuss how intersectionality can be misused by researchers when its complexity is not embraced fully. It can guide transformational research within higher education, but can also be diminished if used without sufficient depth. It has been suggested that continuous education on intersectionality is critical for both current and future scholars (Luft & Ward, 2009).

Using the lens of intersectionality with student athlete identity development allows researchers a more complex understanding on an individual and social level. This complexity was not available solely using foundational identity theorists of the past. Researchers can understand the relationship that student athletes experience through their understanding of race, gender, sexual orientation, and any other psychosocial identifier, within the experience of being a student athlete on a college campus. Analyzing issues of identity without acknowledging the unique experience of the student athlete creates an incomplete view of this student experience.

Influence of Coaches as Mentors on Individual Development

As introduced in chapter one, coaches have a significant influence on the experience of student athletes. There is very little published research, and even less using qualitative or mixed-methods research, to better define and understand these relationships. In an attempt to do so, mentoring research will be used as the basis for a conceptual framework in which to understand the coach/student athlete relationship. It is reasonable to make a parallel between coaches and mentors, given the authority and influence built into the role. Many formal and informal aspects of mentoring relationships are found in the interactions between coaches and student athletes.

Such traits outlined by DuBois and Karcher (2014) include the mentor as a non-parental adult, a relationship that is sustained over time, the relationship includes an emotional connection where the mentor offers guidance and support, activities are geared toward an ongoing pattern of support, and that relationships can be included within the structure of a developmental program.

Coaches are a unique type of mentor given the dynamics involved within this coach/student athlete relationship. There are few, if any, mentoring relationships where the mentor's professional successes are impacted so significantly by a mentee's performance. This is the case with coaches and student athletes. The stakes could not be higher for either individual. However, unlike many mentoring relationships in higher education, the coach is mentoring the student athlete on three dimensions: academic success, personal success, and athletic success. The success of the mentor does not depend equally on the success of the student in each of these domains. Prior research (Clotfelter, 2011) has shown, for example, that coaches receive far greater financial rewards in contracts for competitive success, than for the academic success of their student athletes, though both are often contractually rewarded. One goal of this research will be to better understand the impact of the rewards system for coaches on their performance mentors in each of the student athletes' roles.

DuBois and Karcher (2014) outline numerous types of mentoring relationships and environments, analyzing the impact through a multitude of lenses. They explain that mentoring is a part of the human DNA and has been advantageous for both biological relatives and non-related group members throughout history, dating back to ancient hunter-gatherer societies. In modern times, supportive relationships between non-parental adults and youth provide important developmental opportunities (Scales, 2003). There have been especially high levels of interest and additional support for mentoring initiatives over the last few decades (DuBois et al., 2011).

"Adaptive and positive development occurs in and with the support of significant relationships" (Noam, Malti, & Karcher, 2014, p. 99). Though this quote is referring to the result of mentoring relationships, it could easily be describing the impact that positive relationships with coaches can have on their athletes. Noam, Malti, and Karcher (2014) suggest that understanding the theoretical background of mentoring from a developmental perspective requires a focus on the 1:1 relationship that occurs between mentors and mentees, which also relates to coaches and athletes. They also use an understanding of Erikson's (1959/1980) theory of identity development in building their developmental perspective on mentoring, focusing specifically on the formative adolescent stage outlined earlier in this paper.

Noam, Malti, and Karcher (2014) present four theoretical models to understand the developmental impact of mentoring. Attachment theory looks at the strength of connections between mentors and mentees. It provides an outline for how to build trust based on the background of personal experiences of both individuals and stresses that past relationships predict the success of mentoring connections, especially for individuals with a troubled attachment history (Noam & Hermann, 2002). Functionalist theory suggests that mentors will be successful when trained to involve developmental tasks associated with the formative adolescence period in Erikson's (1959/1980) identity development theory. These activities will help the mentee establish his or her sense of industry within the mentoring relationship.

Social-cognitive theories help mentees understand how their thoughts and actions evolve and affect others over time. The understanding that comes with these cognitive processes exists in the mentoring relationship, including incorporating an understanding of the environment into the developmental relationship. Selman (1980) created a social-cognitive model where youth move from acting out their thoughts through understanding a shared perspective. Creating a

mentoring relationship within this context allows the mentee to progress through these stages with guidance and advanced understanding. Finally, a clover model (Karcher, 2008) utilizes four different interactive approaches, allowing mentors multiple ways to connect with their mentees through action (activity), assertion (developing one's own perspective), belonging (building a connection/relationship), and reflection (thoughtful understanding). Each of these four models can describe the interactions of coaches as mentors.

Many mentoring opportunities occur within structured environments of non-profit institutions, after school programs, religious groups, community organizations, and as it relates to this work – athletic competition. Mekinda and Hirsch (2014) outlined the effects of these types of programs, the results of which are parallel to the coach/student mentoring opportunities found within athletics. Research shows that the quality of the staff who serve as mentors is the most significant factor in predicting the success of a program (Rhodes, 2004). The bond between the mentor and mentee contains many factors including age, gender, ethnic background, and socio-economic background (Mekinda & Hirsch, 2014). Shared interests between the mentor and mentee also serve as connection points to build depth within the relationship. Over time, the culture of the organization includes the recruitment, training, and retention of staff members who fit the mentoring role (Grossman & Bulle, 2006). All of these aspects of a structured mentoring program describe the environment of a collegiate athletic team.

There is a body of research intended to understand the impact of mentors on academically at-risk students. This research is typically focused on the learning outcomes and academic achievement of the mentees. These metrics would not be applicable to athletics in exactly the same way; however, there are similarities. A large percentage of student athletes are at risk academically (Beamon, 2012) and all are required to meet academic eligibility standards in order

to compete athletically in college. Though the level of intervention may vary based on individual values, this connection between academic requirements and athletic eligibility requires coaches to interact with student athletes in a similar way to mentors who work with at-risk students (Larose & Tarabulsy, 2014).

While the primary intention of coaching is victory in the athletic realm, guiding individuals away from negative developmental behaviors or experiences can often be an auxiliary result of the coaching experience. Many times athletics is a positive outlet or activity for individuals whose other extracurricular activities could be developmentally negative or personally harmful. Therefore, a coach can serve as a conduit to personal development through avoiding negative environments or experiences, similar to a mentor. Research on mentoring has found positive impacts in prevention sciences, which is the elimination of the cause of a dysfunction or changing the processes associated with it (Coie et al., 1993). Coaches can fill the role mentors play on prevention strategies for negative behavior.

The dearth of literature about the power, influence, and impact that coaches have on their athletes has required using the mentoring lens to better understand the dynamics within these relationships. There are a few studies that look at this topic, but not enough to have a widespread understanding. Kim, Kim, and Won (2018) studied servant leadership in the coach-athlete relationship. "Servant leadership involves sharing power, respecting bottom-up inputs, and committing to excellent development achievement" (p. 891). It includes the characteristics of emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping others grow, putting others first, and behaving ethically. Kim, Kim, and Won surveyed 347 Division I student athletes in football and men's basketball, asking questions about servant leadership, coach-athlete relationship quality, trust in their coach, ethical development, and

confidence in their team outcome. The results show the positive influence of servant leadership behaviors and promotes an improved understanding in relationship quality. Servant leaders were found to have a positive impact on athlete motivation and performance enhancement because they put personal growth ahead of their own goals and increased the student athlete's ethical development.

Another related study focuses on transformational leadership within the coach athlete relationship. Gorgulu (2019) studied the impact that transformational leadership had on the effort put forth by athletes. Transformational leaders foster development by responding to individual needs through empowering people and aligning objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, and the group (Bass, 1985). In this study, 78 men's and women's college basketball players were surveyed using three assessment tools. The transformational leadership inventory assessed the coach's use of transformational leadership, the coach-athlete relationship questionnaire analyzed the athlete's perspective on the coach-athlete relationship, and the leader-inspired extra effort scale explored the athlete's self-perceptions of their own effort. Results showed that "transformational leadership was positively associated with leader-inspired extra effort and this relationship was partially mediated by closeness in college basketball players" (Gorgulu, 2019, p. 161). These outcomes of supportive and trusting coach-athlete relationships show the positive impact of such relationships. The trust within these relationships can correlate to personal development, suggesting that students are more comfortable pursuing developmental experiences within a trusting coach-athlete relationship.

Particular to the coach-athlete dynamic are the psychological contracts often included within the relationship, based on the expectations of both students and coaches. This is one of the unique layers of the coach/student athlete relationship. As stated earlier, it is rare to have a

mentoring relationship where so much professional evaluation is at stake. Unlike other

mentor/mentee relationships, the coach/student athlete relationship is developmental while also

being scrutinized based on competitive outcomes. This complexity impacts the psychological

contracts that are woven into the fabric of the coach/student athlete relationship. Barnhill and

Otto (2018) carried out a qualitative case study of 15 Division I student athletes. The purpose of

their study was "to explore expectations student-athletes develop for their experience at their

chosen university. These expectations may develop into psychological contract terms if student

athletes believe they are part of their exchange agreement with the school" (p.13). Barnhill and

Otto's interviews found that student athletes' understanding of psychological contracts with their

coaches influence their expectations of athletic, academic, and social experiences while at the

university. Results showed that student athletes built expectations, based on psychological

contracts, in eight different thematic areas: athletic development, academic development, athletic

role content (role on team), academic structure, policy fairness, social experience, life balance,

and performance rewards. Deeper analysis showed that coaches, family, friends, and

teachers/professors were all contributors to the expectations of student athletes.

Rezania and Gurney (2016) also performed a study to understand how psychological

contracts between coaches and students influence satisfaction. They surveyed 183 college

athletes in Canadian universities, examining the satisfaction of student athletes based on

coaching practices and the psychological contracts formed within those relationships. Student

athletes were asked questions concerning compensation (rewards for effort, ranging from

scholarship funding to playing time), sharing information (transparency between coach and

player), and assurance of position on the team (requirements for continuing participation).

Results found that those students "whose psychological contracts have been fulfilled are most

likely to be satisfied, motivated, and willing to do more than is required" (p. 25). Furthermore, student athlete self-perception in the three areas of focus (commitments to compensation, sharing information, and assurance of an individual's position on the team) are more important than the coach's behaviors concerning training and development (Rezania, 2016).

To summarize, psychosocial identity development, identity development of college students, and specifically identity development of college student athletes are the factors upon which this study is grounded. This view is based on the seminal identity development theory of Erikson (1959/1980) and advanced by Marcia (1966). Their work was specialized to adapt to the student athlete experience by Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993). The identity development research was combined with pertinent research concerning the influence, power, and impact that coaches and mentors have on young adults, specifically during the collegiate experience. DuBois and Karcher (2014) outlined many facets of the mentoring relationships that relate to coaches and athletes, describing the impact on individual development. Barnhill and Otto (2018) described how the unique power dynamic associated with the coach/student athlete relationship is highlighted by the psychological contracts formed between both parties. The combination of identity development and the influence of coaches brings this literature review to a limited understanding of whether or not both coaches and student athletes recognize the developmental opportunities at hand. This is the foundation that the current study is built upon and hopes to begin to understand.

Chapter 3: Methods

In this chapter the methods used in this qualitative case study are presented. The methodology was chosen to pursue the following research questions:

1. In what ways do coaches see themselves as influencing identity development of their student athletes?

2. In what ways do student athletes see their coaches as influencing their identity development?

3. How do coaches invest time to support the exploration of multiple identities, therefore preventing identity foreclosure?

4. What are some key factors that both coaches and student athletes identify as contributing to identity development?

The case study format is used when a "researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). The case study method provides a unique opportunity to analyze an issue with great depth and integrity because this method is context dependent, not intended to be generalizable. Rather, the strength of a case study is the detail, complexity, and chronicling of multiple sources to obtain multiple perspectives (Rossman & Rallis, 2016). One very distinct component of the case study method is the role of the researcher. This method places the researcher, and his or her perspectives and biases, inside the evaluation process. It requires the researcher to identify how their biases, values, and personal background will shape interpretations (Creswell, 2014). It is critical that the researcher identify his or her role within the project to provide readers with a clear perspective to dissect the information presented (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008).

Given the lack of original research on the developmental impact of coaches on identity, this study was designed to describe the structure, traits, and processes within what is believed to be an exemplar program. In order to do so, the analysis of this particular program is a positive contribution to future research and a baseline to evaluate other similar groups. This study collected data from interviewing three different groups of participants within the same setting: student athletes, coaches, and administrators. This study proved to be specifically unique due to the analysis of the three groups listed. It is not only rare to have access to this group of participants, but also to collect data and analyze the experiences and perspectives of all three groups collectively. Along with interviews, a document analysis took place to further the triangulation of data. This effort to obtain multiple sources of data increases the credibility and rigor within a qualitative design (Creswell, 2014).

Study Design Overview

Qualitative data was gathered from interviews with participants designed to better understand the role coaches have on identity development. The protocol was formed based on themes from identity development and mentoring relationship literature. These themes established the initial data coding intended to match the research questions. The interviews were administered by one researcher, following a semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended questions. Participants were allowed to diverge from the questions to allow for the exploration of additional themes. Interviews were both recorded and transcribed to assist in the analysis. After each interview the data was examined and coded, using open coding techniques, to ensure that emergent themes are identified. Any emerging themes were then be used in remaining interviews. Data was collected until the saturation of themes was achieved. Data saturation in this case study was achieved when familiar answers, themes, and descriptors arose consistently

among multiple participants. Due to the public health environment at the time of data collection, all interviews took place over video chat, a distinct difference that needs to be noted as a component of the study. This was a familiar format for all participants, as it is a common method of communication throughout higher education and college athletics.

Data Collection

Interview Sites. As noted above, the state of public health impacted the procedures of this study, forcing modification to the data collection process. Rather than conducting the semi-structured interviews in person, all interviews took place over video chat. The recordings of those interviews were transcribed and coded as described earlier. The participants have all been familiar with this use of technology, as it is readily practiced by students, coaches, and staff members at the university in this study. Though there is no replacement for in-person interviews to establish rapport as a part of the qualitative process, the familiarity of the participants with this format proved to be a helpful aspect of data collection.

Coding. The participant consent and interview protocols included identify codes that were used to organize the data collection and analysis. These codes were created based on themes identified in the literature review and an initial review of university document analysis. The coding of interview data was completed using an open coding technique, designed to allow emerging codes to surface that were unidentified originally. These evolving themes were utilized throughout subsequent interviews, an advantage of the qualitative case study method being implemented (Creswell, 2014). The following a priori codes have been developed for analyzing the interview data: student support, relationships, coach influence, identity development, and team culture.

Artifact Analysis. Along with interviewing participants, the researcher also collected and analyzed artifacts from the NCAA, university, athletic department, and individual program. These artifacts included public data such as mission statements, advertised programs, and statistics including APR, graduation rates, and student athlete transfer data. It also included any internal documents and data that the participants are able to provide. The analysis of this data, in combination with participant interviews, provided a richer understanding of the team culture and national context.

Participants

Coaches. One of the set of questions this study examined was the perceptions of coaches of their own role in the personal development of their student athletes. This required the coaching staff to be interviewed to gain the various perspectives. There were five full-time individuals that make up the coaching staff at the time of data collection. These positions include the head coach, assistant coaches, and administrative coaches (who support the program, but are not allowed to interact with the student athletes on the floor). The range of experiences as student athletes and staff members provided a breadth to the data collected, with an age and experience range varying in decades providing a contrast between seasoned veterans and young professionals. All of these individuals were invited to participate in the interview protocol. Personal and professional contacts were used to request participation and set up the interview process. Two of the coaches followed upon the request to participate. They have been given the pseudonyms Coach Jones and Coach Leonard. One is the head coach and another is on the coaching staff.

Student Athletes. Another set of questions this study examined was the perception of student athletes of the impact their coaches have on their own personal development. This

required a group of student athletes to be interviewed to understand their experiences and perspectives. The team roster at the time of data collection included 13 scholarship student athletes, ranging from students in their first year of college to graduate students in their fifth year. All students were given the opportunity to participate with four following upon the request. Students who agreed to participate represent multiple years in school, athletic positions, races, initial admits and transfers. Student participants also represented both domestic and international students. Another important student identifier is the student's professional prospects as an athlete, as this has been shown to be a contributing factor to athletic identity development (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). These professional aspirations likely influenced students' perceptions of their coaches and developmental experiences. Four students followed upon the interview request and have been given the pseudonyms Malik, Chase, Davonte, and Blake.

Administrators. In an attempt to triangulate the data collected from coaches and student athletes, it was beneficial to interview additional staff members that interact with both groups. Their perspectives and observations were valuable insights into the experiences of the student athletes and impact of the coaching staff. Three full-time administrative staff members participated in the interview protocol. These individuals are support staff members of the program who work directly with the students and coaches on a daily basis in varying areas of the athletic department. The have been given the pseudonyms Megan, Michael, and Jeff.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm used in this study was a combination of an emergent design and descriptive interpretivism. This study is considered an emergent design, because the data and analysis hope to show this case is an exemplar. Without prior research to use as a comparison, this initial attempt at understanding the phenomena could have proven to take the analysis in

multiple directions. There are context data of both academic and athletic success metrics that suggests this program can be looked to as an exemplar, however until after data is collected and analyzed, the design can continue to evolve. Descriptive interpretivism attempts to understand the social world as it is perceived from the view of an individual's experiences. It also takes into account that these experiences do not need to remain constant, but there is a possibility of incremental improvement. Its goal is not to predict, but rather to generate a portrayal of the participants' world views (Rossman & Rallis, 2016). In collecting this data, any emerging themes that were identified had the opportunity to impact later interviews and codes, confirming the emergent quality of this design.

The nature of the research in this study is descriptive, hoping to generate further understanding of the experience of both students and coaches. The study is intended to introduce a baseline understanding of the interactive phenomenon between the two groups. This information will add to the relatively limited amount of prior research in this area, which can be built upon with further research. It is also hoped that this inquiry will lead to developmental programming to assist coaches and others in supporting the personal development of student athletes. Future studies can use this descriptive research to create more generalizable studies to examine this topic with greater detail and scrutiny.

Role of Researcher

As stated earlier, qualitative research requires the acknowledgement of the unique relationship between the researcher and the data. Qualitative research is different from quantitative or mixed methods studies because the interpretation of the results is filtered through the lens of the researcher, with individual biases and experiences impacting the evaluation. The results are intentionally not generalizable, rather they are intended to inform the reader to let him

or her come to individual conclusions. This act of reflexivity is accomplished by explaining the personal history of the researcher and acknowledging the impact on the study's participants and data (Rossman & Rallis, 2016).

The personal experiences of this researcher are especially relevant to the construction of this study. My perceptions of higher education and college athletics have been shaped by my personal and professional experiences. Along with being a doctoral student, I am a full-time professional in college athletics. I work with this type of student population, though not these participants directly. I have varied experiences working within college athletics on both basketball coaching staffs and in academic support roles. I also have experiences working with students in a Dean's office, residence life, and as an instructor. Though I never competed athletically at the collegiate level, my own athletic identity has significantly impacted my professional pursuits in combining student development with the athletic environment.

I bring with me a positive outlook on the experiences of student athletes and the role that athletics has in the university setting. This has definitely provided an opportunity for biases in data analysis, skewed toward the importance of student athlete development and the role that coaches can have on student growth. I am purposefully drawing on an array of individual perspectives in this research and I did my best to think critically while coding interview results to report with as little bias as possible; however my perspective needs to be noted by the reader.

Interview Protocol

As noted earlier, the nature of the interview process in this study has been impacted by the public health crisis that is limiting individual interactions. All interviews were scheduled through university representatives and took place over video chat. All participants were required to complete a consent form prior to the interview.

The interviews did not take place unless the completed forms were submitted prior to the interview. Collection of informed consent was done confidentially online through Qualtrics, ensuring the information was password protected and available only to the researcher. The data collected was numerically labeled to ensure that names of participants were not associated with their answers. Any participants who did not complete the pre-interview consent would be reached out to individually by the researcher, through the university representative assisting with the interview scheduling. If participants did not agree to participate, the research needed to be re-evaluated and a case study on a different group of individuals will be considered.

The interviews were split into two stages: 1) Introduction/Informed Consent, 2) Semi-structured interview questions. The stages, language, and questions are outlined in Appendix A, B, and C. It is important to identify there were no procedural differences between the three groups, though questions are worded differently while covering the same topics. The administrator group was asked one less question since they are observers of the team, not full participants. The interviews with student athlete participants included 14 questions, but each participant was encouraged to direct the conversation and topics. The coach participants were asked 14 questions and administrators were asked 13 questions, with both groups also encouraged to direct the conversation. The interviewer also had the ability to ask relevant follow up questions.

Case Study Guidelines

Another consideration that went into the design of the interview protocol, question creation, and data collection is the importance of creating space for internal anonymity for each participant. While confidence is high for external anonymity with the security measures put in place concerning participant data and information, it was important for the researcher to create

an interview environment where participants felt comfortable leading the conversations at their own pace. The questions outlined in Appendix A, B, and C, while specific enough to address the topics of identity development and the role of coaches, are intentionally general and not directed at this specific university and team. This was done to allow participants to share information within their level of comfort, should any other participants or individuals familiar with the program read the final results. Participants had the opportunity to provide specific examples within their answers, but it was at their own election to do so.

The intention of this study was to add to the understanding of how student athletes develop their identities. By examining one successful program at an elite university with high level athletics, additional explanation of this student experience can begin to build a foundation to replicate to a larger group of students. Data was collected and analyzed through document analysis and semi structured interviews. The conceptual foundations of mentoring research were used as a lens for analysis. The unique needs of student athletes have been identified in many areas. Identity development is one area of additional support that can be included in understanding the student athlete's college experience. It is hoped that the results of this study can lead to findings that support the holistic needs of this unique population.

Chapter 4: Results

This research focused on the perceptions of three different groups of stakeholders from inside one specific athletic program. The perspectives of these groups of stakeholders are valuable, not only because of their unique viewpoints, but also because of the knowledge, influence, and biases that they have while interacting with each other. Each group has an intimate knowledge of how the others function, perform, and collaborate; all while coexisting together and working toward multiple common goals. Given that context, it is valuable to dig deeper to understand how student identity is valued, developed, and influenced by coaches within the athletic environment.

There are seven themes that emerged from the qualitative inquiry of these stakeholders: (1) The importance of establishing trust in relationships between students and coaches/staff through honest dialogue, mutual respect, and care beyond sport. (2) Playing time as a critical piece to the coach/student relationship and student athlete experience. (3) Reliance on departmental resources for identity development. (4) Impact of team culture on individual mindset. (5) Lack of awareness of identity development/identity foreclosure as a part of the student athlete experience. (6) The impact of time demands on coaches and students when prioritizing personal development. (7) Individual responsibility in one's own identity development. Each theme will be explored below, with the Discussion chapter being utilized to connect each theme to specific research questions.

The themes are made apparent by quotes and perspectives from all participants. Each of the participants has been given a pseudonym to protect their identity. The four student participants have been given the names Malik, Chase, Davonte, and Blake. The two coach

participants have been given the names Coach Jones and Coach Leonard. Finally, the three

administrators have been given the names Megan, Michael, and Jeff.

Theme 1: Importance of Establishing Trust

This topic was clearly evident from multiple perspectives and a theme that came up in

answers to various questions, especially those focused on the coach/student relationship. There

were two focal points surrounding this theme. The first had little to do with identity

development, but outlined establishing trust as a part of the coach/student relationship. All three

groups of participants interviewed acknowledged building trust as a foundation to the

relationships. "Trust and comfortability are the two most important factors to me when looking

at my relationship between coach and player," said Malik. "I feel a good coach and player

relationship is when you feel like you can talk to them about whatever and you feel comfortable

coming to talk to them about things other than basketball." Chase identified active listening as a

sign of strength in the relationship between coaches and students, "coach and student athlete

relationships are good when a student is listening to the instructions and the coaches give good

instructions." Davonte talked about positive aspects of the coach/student relationship without

labeling trust specifically, "when the relationship between a student and coach look good, the

coaches will often check on the player outside of practice and off the court to see how they're

doing. They'll be supportive of them on the court through mistakes." Blake used the label

'respect' as an identifier of positive relationships between coaches and students, which can be

directly related to trusting relationships. He said, "I think in a good relationship, there is mutual

respect, when the coach respects the player and the player respects the coach. First, and most

importantly, one-on-one communication has us all on the same page, we all have the same

goal… and if there are any problems, we can solve them and talk about it."

Megan acknowledged trust as an important value in the coach/student relationship saying, "relationships are good when a student trusts that their coach has their best interests at the forefront and cares about them outside of their abilities on the court. I think the core of all good relationships is trust and building trust takes time." Michael did not use the word trust specifically, but identified the value of coach/student interactions happening outside of just their sport to build the relationship – specifically acknowledging the positivity of high frequency interactions. He explained positive relationships that include "a lot of daily interaction and feedback for both on and off the court. When coaches know they are doing… really looking out for them. I think the coaches letting (students) know that they truly care." Jeff also identified similar attributes of relationships built on trust, "open communication… transparent… honest… empathy and sympathy are partners with one another. A coach being willing to open the door and allow that relationship to develop and grow. Transformational coaching takes a lot of time and intentionality and our coaches are willing to make time to create that space."

Coach Jones outlined attributes of an environment of trust highlighted already by both students and administrators, "honest conversations, time spent together both in the gym and more importantly outside of the gym, staying in touch after they leave school, and personal and work-related growth." Coach Leonard also identified trust as a key factor, "you may not always agree… but if you don't trust each other and trust the leadership in program there will be brake downs right away." He continued, "many of our coaches focus on the whole student and are intentional about how they are doing off the court, observing stressors and just talking to (students). That is the essence of our program." One specific example outlined by Coach Leonard that relates to building trust is how intentional he is not to create an environment of shame, "if players are doing their best and we don't get the results we want and we say that is

ridiculous – that is shaming them. If they are giving everything they have and honoring what is important to the program and the results aren't there, then we have to celebrate what they're doing and keep working and trying to improve."

A second focal point of establishing trust highlights how critical it is in order to prioritize identity development for students. Multiple individuals acknowledged that programming and even personal advice would not be as well received without an established relationship between student and coach/staff. Jeff quantified trust through maturity, "I do think it comes down to maturity. I think the relationship only gets better, in my opinion, as both parties mature and learn more about each other. They are more vulnerable with each other as time goes on, because you build trust." Coach Jones framed this within the lens of competition, "a rare few (coaches) believe caring will allow for winning to be a byproduct." Michael summarized, "this staff is talking to (players) and communicating with them as people and friends, showing them that they care."

Theme 2: Playing time Impacting Coach/Student Relationship

One very important layer to the complexity of the relationship that coaches have with student athletes is the unique power that sport has on each relationship. There may be no other mentoring-type relationship that has the power dynamic brought about by sport (Cosh & Tully, 2015). Coaches are held responsible as public figures to their universities, fan bases, teams, and individual players to find the perfect balance of in-game strategy to find success (Clotfelter, 2011). However, they also have developmental influence over their student athletes, which has been outlined in this project. Athletic success, specifically playing time, is extremely critical to given the strength of athletic identity in many student athletes. Coaches have to balance the pressure for the team to succeed with the individual development of their student athletes.

This dynamic was evident to all participants, recognizing that it impacts the relationships between players and coaches and is a moving target that can be constantly changing. Though Malik did not specifically identify playing time as a factor impacting the coach/student relationship, all of the other student participants did. "Some factors that impact the dynamic between coaches and students is playing time and relationships. Interactions change between the coach and student athletes when something comes up with playing time," said Chase. "(We know) they are always there during the good times and bad times, but (if you aren't) playing as much, that causes a different interaction," he continued. Blake added, "A coach might think that a player is better than he really is and then when he gets to the team feels like there was a mistake in recruiting. There are a lot of factors like that."

Michael explained that relationships between coaches and students change due to playing time, "playing time is probably the number one priority. I think you find a lot of coaches changing and adapting to the times. If (players) are not getting playing time and moping around, the first thing that pops into peoples' minds is that (the player) is going to transfer. Coaches have to try to manage those attitudes and demeanors." He continued, "When January comes and conference play comes, you know the roster gets tighter and you can just kind of see athletes' attitudes and their expression diminish or change or become quieter or more recluse. I'm sure coaches and support staff can think, (the player) is unhappy, he's out of here." Jeff looked at playing time through the lens of the evolving coach/student relationship noting that relationships are impacted by "winning/losing and playing time, but I do think it comes down to maturity. The relationship only gets better as both parties mature. They learn more about each other as time goes on because you build trust." Megan recognized a similar evolution while noting that playing time was a factor that impacts the relationship, "lots of factors impact this dynamic;

personalities, communication styles, playing time, and other student athletes can impact the dynamic as well."

Last, but certainly not least, coaches realize that playing time is a component of the complex relationships they have with students. Coach Leonard recognized the influence of playing time as well, "when someone isn't playing or is going through a hard time, that is a challenge. So much of this is about 'hey this is my dream' and you're taking this away… and (the coach) has this idea that you might not be ready and that you have to work. Whether you agree or disagree, I think how (a coach) handles the young men, whether they end up staying or leaving, you have to treat them with respect; encourage and uplift them in front of the team while continuing to speak truth." Coach Jones agreed, "relationships are harder to navigate during athletic related hardships such as lack of playing time or hard losses."

Theme 3: Reliance on Departmental Resources

As college athletics has evolved, more resources have become available for student athletes (Clotfelter, 2011). While this has many benefits for student support, macro level departmental support programs for student athletes also take an emphasis away from coaches. The focus of this study was to acknowledge the valuable role coaches have in impacting identity development, yet participants from all three groups noted the value of the personal development priorities within the athletic department. "I think the athletic department does a good job with providing resources outside of our personal team, that's become an important part of collegiate athletics at institutions. They have the resources and we have staff that are trying to do more," Coach Leonard said. Coach Jones also acknowledged the extensive resources available, "jobs have been created to help support athletes: academics, operations, nutrition, etc." Megan agreed and recognized their own role as a part of the departmental infrastructure, "Part of my role is to

make sure (the students) are always thinking about other interests and life after basketball. I've been lucky to organize workshops for the team in which they are exploring other interests." Michael did not directly point out the departmental resources dedicated toward student development, however Jeff did, "we try to create opportunities for (students) to explore areas outside of basketball, with the recognition at this point in time, a lot of these young men aren't in a place where they take that seriously."

Students also acknowledged the infrastructure that is available within the athletic department to assist in their development. Chase said, "student athletes here are really supported well because of how greatly funded (the university) is. They can access a lot of different enormous resources by having a well-funded school." Malik concurred and acknowledged the impact of professional staff members encouraging students, "to look at things outside of basketball because we never know when basketball is going to stop for us." Davonte shared a similar perspective, "we have a career development program that we use to explore career paths and make connections." Blake was the lone outlier, who acknowledged the role of support staff working at the request of students, but did not specifically acknowledge the student development programs. He said, "I don't think we are limited in any way, we're getting help in practically every aspect. If we're sick, we're getting help. If we're feeling down, we can ask for help. If we're struggling academically, we're getting help."

There is irony that additional programmatic support can take away from the impact of coaches. The influence of coaches (Chan, Lonsdale, & Fung, 2012) and the significance of their relationships with student athletes (Kim, Kim, & Won, 2018) shows the impact coaches have on the student experience, yet many participants from all three groups in this study recognized the departmental programs in place and suggested they were sufficient support for students. This

general theme suggests that there can be a disconnect between the programmatic infrastructure available and the impact it can have on the student experience, with specific reliance on each individual student's own investment. The oversight of coaches in this area could increase the impact on students. Jeff acknowledged that departmental resources are in place, but that the level of engagement is up to each student, "as much as we want to provide those opportunities, I'm not sure how the level of engagement is and that is more individual, but we try to make sure to offer workshops, career development opportunities, etc. in different areas. I would have to admit this is an area that we can continue to grow and improve upon as we move forward." Coach Jones admitted that follow through with some of the internal programs can be challenging, "post-playing career development has been discussed, but there's not much time outside of sport to cultivate these bonds over time."

Theme 4: Impact of Team Culture

There has been research on the power of peer influence and team culture within student athlete populations (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). However there has not been a specific analysis on how the college athletics environment can support or dissuade student identity development. The overwhelming theme from the discussions of this research is that both team and athletic department culture influences student openness to personal and identity development. Multiple participants from the student group referenced casual conversations that happen with their peers, inferring a higher comfort level than more formal and structured programmatic conversations with their mentors/coaches/advisors. "We talk a lot about future plans after college and what we would be doing if we weren't playing collegiate sports," said Malik, "I think that team culture shows what people the school recruits are about. We want people who embody those (values)." Chase shared a similar sentiment, "team culture is a big part in personal identity development

because we have a good team culture. Everyone is going to follow what was already built into the team. You have those leaders and mentors that came before you that built this foundation, all you have to do is follow it and continue to build it. I want to be locked in and continue that culture." Davonte was less emphatic, but did acknowledge the influence of the team, "I think team culture has a slight influence on someone's personal identity. When you get to a new place you want to try and fit in, so some people might change who they are slightly to be able to fit in with the rest of the guys in the locker room." He did acknowledge that the interactions with his teammates was positive, "my peers and I sometimes talk about what we want to do when basketball is over. It's cool to hear the different interests that we have outside of the game and it shows that life is bigger than basketball." Blake did not comment on the influence of team culture on identity development, but offered an interpretation through an athletic lens, "we're obviously on the court all the time and we have to be able to play together and get along together. Everybody is from different places. We have foreign guys from different countries and Americans from different states. Everybody is bringing something new to the table. Everybody learns from everybody and we're becoming better people because we see other cultures like that."

The conversations and connections that students have outside of sport speaks to the values within the team culture being shared organically as a part of the student experience. The importance of those authentic connections is significant, but there is value in acknowledging that this environment is created intentionally by the leaders of the program. Coach and admin participants spoke to how the team culture pushes students to explore outside of sport and acknowledged that it fostered individual growth. "Behavior is a function of a person and the environment that they are in," said Coach Jones, "there must be somewhat of an initial fit.

Epiphany is unlikely. There must be some malleability within the individual." He continued describing coach/student interactions, "being intentional, seeing how they handle situations, trying to observe stressors, and just talking to (students)… that is the essence of our program." Coach Leonard agreed, "culture does influence a young man. Sports is the greatest classroom and our staff is challenged to be transformational instead of transactional (with students)."

Admin participants echoed very similar sentiments concerning the impact of the culture of the organization on their interactions with students. Megan added perspective on how that environment is fostered, "students spend four years immersed in a team culture that often becomes part of who they are. When thinking about the (values of this program), they have quickly become a part of my life. Not only do they frame how I approach anything having to do with the team, I find myself referencing them in conversation or when making decisions." Michael recognized how the team culture is established early in the recruiting process, "I think (the coaches) do a good job of recruiting people they think will fit. Their model of what they're looking for in a player or athlete, sometimes those off the court traits mesh with those same things on the court." Jeff acknowledged that a safe environment created within the team culture can have a positive influence on development saying, "if you don't have a safe place where you can be who you are, it stunts growth and opportunity for development to occur. If it is a welcoming, safe space, there is a greater opportunity for that identity to take place."

Theme 5: Lack of Awareness of Identity Development

The lack of familiarity with identity development theories and philosophy was very evident through the variance of answers by all groups. It showed that this is a topic that is not only talked about rarely, but also not well understood throughout the program. Many responses had a wide variety of understanding. For example, students noted very generally that different

people can impact identity development, without being able to articulate the distinctive

differences of these influencers. Malik noted that the "the people you surround yourself with can

contribute to your identity development." Chase specifically mentioned the impact of coaches,

"the amount of time spent between the coach and player off the court and on the court builds a

relationship dynamic between the two." Davonte broadened that understanding acknowledging

the impact of many groups of people, "friends and family, coaches, and also even your

professors. I believe a lot of identity development is done while you're growing up, so the

biggest factor for me would be my parents." Blake agreed and pointed out that "coaches,

roommates, and family all impact identity development."

The lack of concrete understanding was especially evident when understanding the

answers from coaches and administrators. The authority and impact of coaches has been

established (Cosh & Tully, 2015), allowing them to prioritize identity within personal

development. It is extremely challenging to implement identity development philosophies given

the lack of awareness and familiarity with the topic. Coach Jones addressed the importance of

recognizing where individuals spend their time as a way of developing identity and personal

values, "what are (students) good at? What do (students) spend time doing? What do others

validate?" Coach Leonard focused on a holistic understanding of identity development,

"(basketball) is what you do, not who you are. There is a whole person – a basketball side, an

academic component, emotional component, and spiritual component."

Participants from the admin group offered similar perspectives, "who and what you spend

your free time doing contributes to your identity development both in what you do intentionally

and unintentionally," said Megan, "often times I think students stumble upon opportunities that

have a large impact on their way of thinking. Sometimes they attend a speaker or workshop that

they aren't excited about, but it leaves a lasting impact." Michael looked at identity development

more through the lens of academic support, "it's pretty hard for most student athletes, especially

in football and basketball, to be an engineer and still be able to compete at the highest levels of

your sport because of the academic requirements." These very general understandings

acknowledge identity as a part of student development, but offer very limited understanding of

how to support student growth and the development of multiple identities. James added, "what

things we have experienced in life create who we are. What we bring to the table is our position.

What are our thoughts? What are our preconceived notions? What things have we experienced in

life that have created who we are? I think that really contributes to identity development."

In comparing the perspectives of participants from all three groups, the lack of thorough

understanding of identity development is apparent. While all participants acknowledged the

value of this development, the surface level understanding and inability to articulate details of

the developmental processes show that this is an area that would benefit from further discussion

and understanding among all participant groups.

Theme 6: Impact of Time Demands

The time demands that impact those involved with college athletics have been well

documented (Burden, Tremayne, & Marsh, 2004). While this study hopes to shed a light on the

importance of supporting identity development and limit identity foreclosure, the lack of

awareness that was highlighted previously shows that it is difficult for this topic to be a priority.

It is especially challenging to gain any traction in this area given the intensity of the demands on

coaches, staff, and students. It is clearly an uphill battle for identity development to become a

priority of programming. Individuals from all participant groups acknowledged the limited

amount of time. Participants from the admin used terms "fully encompassing" and "non-

stop/year-round," to describe the how the athletic experience can consume student time management. It is especially challenging for coaches to make this a priority given the demands on their time. Coach Jones agreed, "students are limited without enough hours in the day to develop personal pursuits. Time is the biggest limitation to fostering identity development." Coach Leonard offered a similar perspective to his counterpart, "It becomes job-like, professional-like, and part of that is what it is for the scholarships and extra benefits that are coming (their) way, but I think it doesn't represent a healthy college experience away from the game, it becomes all consuming. Social media attention and fan involvement, what all that stuff has evolved into. How can (we) protect our young men from too many obligations, too much media attention?"

One interesting result from this theme is that the student group did not acknowledge the time demands as an impact on their development. This group was focused on the resources and support available. While this is a positive recognition of student support, it does show disconnect between the professionals and students when it comes to understanding the student experience. In conjunction with the literature (Whipple, 2009), these findings suggest that students do not appreciate the challenges they are experiencing in real time, which only further complicates their developmental processes.

Theme 7: Personal and Group Responsibility for Own Identity Development

The final theme that was present throughout the interviews was the balance of ownership within one's own development along with the role of others (family, coaches, mentors, etc.). This is the most prominent result of the seven themes because of the consistency by which all of the participants offered this suggestion. Participants from all three groups acknowledged the complex layers that can impact development, including the importance of coaches/mentors,

departmental programming, personal upbringing and values, etc.; along with recognizing the responsibility for one's own development is the self. Coaches, administrators, and students recognized that the identity development process cannot be forced upon an individual. An individual is the only one who can decide to fully engage with growth in this area.

The coach and admin groups both felt the duality of responsibility. Megan said that, "ultimately everyone is responsible, we all play a part in their development. It's like a bicycle, the student should be steering and pedaling to move the bike forward, but coaches are (also) pedals and when students push, the pedals go. Student development units are like the wheels that make it easier to get there." Michael recognized the complexity, "I don't think it is one complete answer, but I think most of it falls on the individual themselves, but I think they get a lot of guidance hopefully. Hopefully (they) have a great support network and a group surrounding them to help assist in any way that they may need." Jeff shared the same perspective, "I think the responsibility falls on the individual, but I do think there are players involved – parents, coaches, professors, teachers, friends, and teammates – that all play a role." Coach Jones suggested that the "perception of others is huge" and Coach Leonard added, "it's not just the head coach, it's not just the systems, it is everyone. There are so many different pockets in their life and their experience when they're with you, so it comes down to your academic advisor, your strength and conditioning coach, all of your coaches, the things you set up with your athletic department and university, the professors, it's endless… it is everyone and I don't think you can underestimate that."

The student participants agreed. Chase said, "I think it's just a part of everybody's (responsibility). No one is responsible for development, it's on you as the player and on the coach and the school because it is so many factors that dictate where you can develop and how

you are developing." Malik agreed, "I think the (individual) person and their family, along with their friends are responsible. The people who you surround yourself with are important in shaping your identity." Davonte offered a similar perspective, "I credit my parents mostly for my personal identity development and I think for everybody's personality, most of it is done through their family." "I think it's mostly me and the people I'm around. My family definitely has a big influence," Blake added. However, he also stressed the importance of his own responsibility, "I am making the choices in my life, I think that I have the ability to choose if I want to be this type of person or that type of person."

Document Analysis

Along with the seven themes that arose from the data collected through open interviews, a thorough document analysis was reviewed. This examination is able to provide a context to understand the environment of the participants. The understanding of this context increased rigor of the study by ensuring multiple data points were examined (Rossman & Rallis, 2016).

The documents analyzed in this study were selected from three different areas, starting with the broadest outline of the collegiate athletic landscape on a national level and working toward very specific levels of student support with the program being studied. The first set of documents analyzed came from the NCAA and the athletic conference to which this program belongs. The purpose of gathering this information was to provide a national context of the collegiate athletics environment. All items analyzed were public records put forth by these two organizations. The second set of documents were directly from the university and athletic department. Similar to the NCAA, the researcher was able to access public reports released by the university as a whole and also the athletic department. Finally, the third set of documents were internal records, obtained with permission, that tracked student engagement within the

specific team being analyzed. These three sets of documents will help the reader understand the macro and micro environments of the participants' responses.

The first set of documents collected came directly from the NCAA. Given the amount of governance and oversight required, the NCAA has data available about not only athletic competition, but also academic achievement, personal development, and student well-being. On its website, the NCAA outlines it's "Division I Priorities" which include: commitment to amateurism, fair competition, institutional control and compliance, student well-being, sound academic standards, diversity and inclusion, and responsible recruiting standards (NCAA, 2023c). The NCAA continues by saying that, "education is at the forefront of Division I's mission" and also lists that the organization supports student growth by providing more than $10 million annually in grants and scholarships (NCAA, 2023a). The NCAA also promotes the experiences of student athletes, outlining how the students have an active voice within their collegiate experience through representation with the NCAA (NCAA, 2023d). Last, but certainly not least, the NCAA also tracks graduation data and academic performance which can be analyzed by institution, sport, gender, and race (NCAA, 2023b). This information presents a holistic view of self from the governing body of college athletics, promoting the importance of student well-being as a part of athletic participation, which would include identity development.

Similar to the NCAA, the athletic conference which is the host for our participant pool provides documents and context for the collegiate athletic environment. It also publishes an annual report that highlights championships within all sponsored men's and women's sports. There are individual profiles of each institution included as well. The most relevant information for this analysis is based on the student experience and programs provided by the conference. The conference annual report included highlights of individual academic award and scholarship

winners, a conference analysis of graduation data, a recap of a conference summit on student health and well-being attended by all institutions, community service awards for each institution, conference academic award winners, and an acknowledgement of institution participants in the conference social justice initiative. All of these highlights, from at both the conference and national level show how integrated the student experience is with athletic participation.

The second critical analysis came from the university's annual report. This is a public document that reviews the accomplishments of the university as a whole and provides an update on academic programming, research pursuits, financial details, alumni relations, and campus plans, among other details. This yearly report also highlights athletic accomplishments. This specific edition promoted athletic success on the very first page, showing how integrated athletics is within the general university experience. Another full page of university annual report is dedicated purely to athletic accomplishments and fundraising efforts within the athletic department. Most significantly to this study, the annual report highlights and introduces student athlete development programming, "(the athletic director) announced a student leadership program that would build on athletes' experience to better prepare them to lead in society." This announcement shows a commitment to student development beyond athletic competition from both the athletic department and university as a whole and athletic department.

Another analysis came from a set of documents specific to the athletic department, both public and internal. The athletic department lists its mission statement on its website. Though the entire mission statement is not listed in this report in order to assure anonymity of the participants, it is possible to understand how the athletic department sees itself as a contributor to the greater university based on this mission statement. This is a similar deduction to the university's annual report highlighting the role of athletics. The athletic department mission

statement uses terms such as, "integral part of the university's commitment to educational

excellence" and "enhance and support the intellectual purpose of the university." It continues,

"these programs are designed to build support for and add value to the academic purposes of the

institution" and most related to this study, "developing students with strong values of leadership,

sportsmanship, equity, citizenship, physical fitness, teamwork, and a commitment to excellence."

The athletic department website also lists department goals with its mission statement, the first of

which is to graduate 100% of its student athletes. It is significant to point out that the first goal is

not athletic in nature, but rather a student success metric with developmental implications.

Similar to the university's general annual report, the athletic department also produces an

annual report that is made public. This annual report highlights athletic accomplishments of

teams and individuals, but also outlines the importance of academic success and student

development. Two of the annual reports assessed for this study feature the sustained overall

success of the department, with high rankings in the Director's Cup. The department also pointed

out that one of the years evaluated was its highest graduate success rating.

A further dive into the athletic department documents outlines internal infrastructure for

student support programming. Programs with full time professional staff members are dedicated

to academic affairs, career readiness, community engagement and leadership development. All

of these programs, with dedicated resources and staff members, have nothing to do with athletic

competition. These units are referenced in interview data by all three participant groups which

highlight the value of such programs, but often times at the expense of coach involvement. A

further breakdown of these programs is listed below:

<u>Academic Affairs</u>: Assists students in course selection, time management, content tutors, faculty outreach, learning needs, disability services, among other support services. Core values listed on their webpage: accountability, collaboration, inclusion, integrity, transparency.

<u>Career Readiness</u>: Career readiness coordinators seek to provide significant opportunities for all student athletes to develop skills, engage with faculty, alumni and employers, as well as provide support for professional development and internship opportunities. Customized career coaching is an essential element of the Career Readiness team, including resume work, mock interviews, and networking.

<u>Community Engagement</u>: Community engagement is an essential aspect of the student athlete experience. With an individualized approach, student athletes can participate in volunteer opportunities that match their interests throughout the community. Opportunities are available for both individuals and teams to connect with community members and to serve those around them.

<u>Leadership Development</u>: Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) representatives are given the opportunity to represent the university, conference, and NCAA on rules, regulations, policies and experiences that affect student athletes. SAAC provides a forum for student athletes to voice and discuss concerns related to life as a student athlete. This is a required NCAA program that exists at all member institutions.

<u>Mentoring Program</u>: Student athlete peer mentors serve to educate student athletes on health and wellness topics influencing the student athlete experience and empowering each other to help build a more informed, supportive, and welcoming athletic department culture. Their goal is to provide student athletes with a platform to be honest, vulnerable, and authentic through meaningful discussion with peers who understand similar pressures.

Leadership Development: This leadership academy provides students meaningful programming and networking opportunities with university, regional, national, and international thought leaders in various fields. The academy emphasizes ethical leadership and decision making, and in doing so equips its members with the tools necessary to be citizen leaders. The program is a two-year commitment. The leadership academy's first year experience revolves around ethical leadership. Students will hear from current thought leaders, as they explain the ethical questions and standards in their fields of expertise. Participants will engage with ethical dilemmas at each event and work toward the development of their personal model of citizen leadership. Year two is comprised of programming focused on current topics and issues, where student athletes create projects on their own.

Personal Development: There are active student groups intended to support student athletes with multiple identities. These groups, made up of only student athletes, are directly aligned with the research noted in this study. There are student led groups that specifically support student athletes who identify as LGBTQ+, Black student athletes, Black female student athletes, international student athletes, Jewish student athletes, Christian student athletes, and a group for student athletes committed to environmental sustainability.

Last, but certainly not least, was a review of internal documents related specifically to the men's basketball student athlete participation in developmental programming offered within the athletic department. The results of this data tracked involvement for four semesters. The level of participation varied by student; however, all 13 scholarship students did have at least two participation points during the timeframe of this report. Participation opportunities included; community service, personal development assessments (LASSI – learning styles and iStartStrong

– career exploration), personal finance seminars, mock interviews, resume writing, and

involvement in student organizations.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This case study analysis seeks to understand the role of coaches in the identity development of men's basketball student athletes at one university, with the hope of contributing to the overall literature concerning identity development of student athletes. Data collected and analyzed were categorized into the following seven themes: (1) The importance of establishing trust in relationships between students and coaches/staff through honest dialogue, mutual respect, and care beyond sport. (2) Playing time as a critical piece to the coach/student relationship and student athlete experience. (3) Reliance on departmental resources for identity development. (4) Impact of team culture on individual mindset. (5) Lack of awareness of identity development/identity foreclosure as a part of the student athlete experience. (6) The impact of time demands on coaches and students when prioritizing personal development. (7) Individual responsibility in one's own identity development.

This chapter discusses the implications of stakeholder perspectives as they relate to student athlete identity development and the role coaches play as a part of the student experience. These implications are influential in this case study process, analyzing what is to be believed as an exemplar program. Through using a lens of descriptive interpretivism as an emerging design perspective, the noted discussion connects participant responses to identity development theory from both Erikson (1959/1980) and Marcia (1994); and more narrowly student athlete identity development theory (Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder, 1993). Recommendations for identifying this program as an exemplar describe attributes of the student experience from within the program from myriad perspectives. Through participant descriptions and the previously outlined themes, this chapter answers the following research questions:

1. In what ways do coaches see themselves as influencing identity development of their student athletes?

2. In what ways do student athletes see their coaches as influencing their identity development?

3. How do coaches invest time to support the exploration of multiple identities, therefore preventing identity foreclosure?

4. What are some key factors that both coaches and student athletes identify as contributing to identity development?

RQ 1: In what ways do coaches see themselves as influencing identity development of their student athletes?

Participants from the coaching group did not present what might be seen as the tenets of identity development theory outlined in this study (Erikson, 1959/1980 and Marcia, 1994) or the specific viewpoint on student athlete identity development (Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder, 1993). This may not mean that they do not practice those tenets, only that when prompted they did not respond. This lack of response, or depth, in understanding identity development suggest an area of future research on coaches' self-awareness of the need for student athlete identity development and the way it may shape their interactions with students. Nor does this mean that their influence is limited (DuBois and Karcher, 2014) or even that their impact is negative. However, in the interviews conducted for this research coaches did not identify or label the aspects of identity development.

This is especially true when it comes to identity foreclosure. Research has shown that identity foreclosure is common among student athletes (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996) and is a critical component of the developmental process (Marcia, 1994). Coaches constantly find

themselves at important points in the foreclosure process for student athletes by the nature of their role. Athletic success is positively correlated with identity foreclosure (Danish, 1983), due to one's ability to commit and focus on the athletic endeavor. Coaches must find a balance between the athletic success required as a part of their job retention (Clotfelter, 2011) and their responsibility to individual student athlete development and well-being (Kim, Kim, & Won, 2018). A greater understanding of the limitations of Marcia's (1994) identity foreclosure theory would help coaches manage this complex balance within their understanding of and interactions with their student athletes.

While this lack of formal understanding of the identity development process can limit the influence of coaches, this study shows that coaches do recognize they play a role in the process. As noted earlier in the results section, Coach Jones said, "being intentional, seeing how they handle situations, trying to observe stressors, and just talking to (students)… that is the essence of our program." This thought is a clear connection to the crisis/resolution process from Erik Erikson's (1959/1980) identity development theory, without the acknowledgement of that theoretical understanding.

The administrator participant group was also able to offer a perspective on how coaches understand their influence on students. Megan said, "I think coaches see themselves having a great influence over the identity development of student athletes. I know how important it is to be on the same page with a coach when I'm dealing with a player. I know if the coach has my back and agrees with me that will carry weight when talking with the student." Jeff agreed, "I think that's the idea behind college athletics. I think this is an opportunity for these young men and women to find who they are outside of sport. We have a responsibility as coaches, teachers, leaders, to really foster and encourage that development." Michael offered a view on the

complexity of the priorities of coaches, "I'm not fully sure how much they care about (identity development). I think they want (students) to be good, well-rounded people, but their job is to come in and develop (students) as athletes and people too."

The lens with which coaches see their influence is often prioritized through athletics, but does not diminish that there is an understanding of the impact of their relationship. The lines are often blurred through this lens, which is how a more formal understanding of the theoretical processes could positively impact the student experience.

RQ 2: In what ways do student athletes see their coaches as influencing their identity development?

The student perspective is similar to that of coaches interviewed in this study. There is a notable struggle for students to articulate the ways that coaches influence their identity development. It would be challenging for any college students to have the ability to self-diagnose their developmental processes and very few have the theoretical knowledge to frame their experiences and processes in real time. More often than not, this understanding comes upon reflection and the educational process surrounding personal development (Renn & Reason, 2013). To that point, student athletes in this study struggled to express the impact that coaches have on their identity development. However, it was clear that these students' athletic and individual identity development are engaged with their coaches.

Research shows that the relationships between student athletes and coaches are very influential, often becoming a determining factor in school selection (Seifried, 2009) and that students seek out relationships with coaches that are not limited to only their athletic pursuits (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The students in this study confirmed these findings. They not only acknowledged that coaches' influence their identity development, but that it is a connection

which they desire to experience. Malik said, "I wanted to be with a coach that I felt could help me grow as more than an athlete. I wanted a coach I could model myself after." Chase said that a coach can "develop student athletes to a certain point… and build this kind of relationship so (students) can continue to grow." Davonte added that coaches are, "great role models and help guide us down a path that leads to a successful life and career."

These comments show the awareness of students concerning the influence of their coaches, without a consistent ability to articulate exactly what that means for each of their experiences. It is important to note the complexity of these relationships, hearing students discuss how importantly they value the influential relationship with the coach or the values of a particular program. While this was brought up on multiple occasions and is also noted in the research (Chan, Lonsdale, & Fung, 2012), the college experience of student athletes often falls short of these expectations (Beamon, 2012). This begs the question of whether this type of influential relationship is truly of importance to both students and coaches.

Though not directly participating in the coach/student relationship, the administrators interviewed also had valuable perspective to offer when it comes to observing how student athletes view the influence of their coaches. Meagan recognized the lack of clarity that comes with the student experience, "I'm not sure that in the moment students realize the influence their coach has on identity. (Students) just see them as an authority figure that they listen to, but over time I think they are able to see the ways in which their identity has been shaped by their coach or the life lessons they hold onto." Jeff mentioned a similar sentiment, "it's hard for (students) to understand. I think they probably understand it more once they're gone, more so than when they're here, but it is an important period of time in their lives to allow the people that they are surrounded with to be influential (to them)."

RQ 3: How do coaches invest time to support the exploration of multiple identities, therefore preventing identity foreclosure?

The lack of time for students to prioritize their own identity development, along with the time demands and pressure on coaches, highlight the challenge in fostering this type of student development. Time demand limitations were discussed earlier as one of the seven prominent themes of the results section. While time demand was significant enough to be highlighted on its own, it is also a point of intersection with four of the other themes: 1) establishing trust requires an investment of time put into relationships; 2) reliance on departmental resources, though often a support structure, is a replacement for coaches prioritizing this work in their own schedules; 3) the significance of team culture impacting individual development can be both positive or negative, depending upon the values of the program, which often require time and intentionality in building group values; 4) lack of awareness of identity development theory is directly related to the amount of time a coach can dedicate to non-athletic development.

The easy answer to this research question is that coaches do not significantly spend time supporting the exploration of multiple identities. While the reality is more complex, the harsh truth is that it is difficult for this topic to be a priority for coaches in the current collegiate athletic environment. This is an especially disheartening reality after establishing the significance of the coach/student athlete relationship (Chan, Lonsdale, & Fung, 2012). Combined with the lack of depth and understanding of identity development theory, identity foreclosure, and fostering multiple identities – the little time afforded for this type of programming, conversations, and exploration contributes to the frequent experience of identity foreclosure by student athletes.

The time demand topic has been one of common debate within college athletics (Clotfelter, 2011). This paper intentionally takes a narrow view of this topic, looking only at the influence of coaches on student athlete identity development. While we know that coaches are bound to competing priorities (Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Wendling, Kellison, & Sagas, 2018), their impact over the student athlete experience is significant (Cosh & Tully, 2015). The combination of past research with the results from this study suggest that even the smallest interaction concerning identity development will have a lasting impact. Each of the participants in the student group addressed the influence coaches have as role models and mentors, often providing guidance and life lessons. However, none of the students offered any examples when given the opportunity to clarify how coaches specifically spend time on these topics. These vague responses support the earlier suggestions that students understand the importance of this topic, but have a limited depth of understanding. Students know it should be something that is a part of their college experience, but the lack of depth limits their own ability to seek specific direction.

A similar sentiment can be deduced concerning coaches. Both administrator and coach participants acknowledged the value of developing students beyond athletics, but very little detail was given toward identity development and preventing identity foreclosure. The examples given by both groups prioritized conversational relationships between students and coaches, without being able to highlight any specific developmental topics that are intentionally outlined as a part of the coach/student relationship. This again suggests that the lack of understanding, in combination with the time demands, significantly impacts how coaches interact with students. Both administrator and coach participant groups were quick to acknowledge the departmental

resources as a way to bridge those gaps, which we have discussed can be both a blessing and a curse.

RQ 4: What are some key factors that both coaches and student athletes identify as contributing to identity development?

This research question will serve as a noteworthy jumping off point for future research. Gathering a clear understanding of the expectations of both coaches and student athletes can help bridge the gap between the two. It has already been established that coach/student athlete interactions are impacted by a handful of issues, time demands and the lack of understanding of identity development, most prominently. What links those two topics are the level of engagement that both coaches and students desire. This engagement can be limited by identity foreclosure (Marcia, 1966; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996), where student athletes do not utilize the relationships and resources available. Or, this engagement can be fostered by the influence of coaches (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003) and the desire of both groups to grow in these areas. This can be a complex equation, often changing over time, where expectations and expertise can work in harmony to develop a deeper understanding and connection.

The results of this study show that both coaches and students share a similar understanding of what factors influence identity development. While the depth of understanding might be limited, as described earlier, the overlap of understanding can be a starting point for shared engagement and growth. Participants from each group identified similar key topics that they believe influence identity development.

The most common understanding shared by participants is the influence of the people around each individual. Davonte explained that, "the support system around you, so your friends and family, coaches, and also even professors" contribute to identity development. Malik added,

"I think the people you surround yourself with can contribute to your identity development."

Blake narrowed it down more specifically to the college experience identifying the influence of

roommates, "everyone has their roommate here, so probably that's the biggest one… who you're

hanging around, friends, and non-basketball people." Chase included coaches in his

understanding while acknowledging the value of the relationship between coaches and students,

"the amount of time spent between the coach and player off the court and on the court builds a

relationship between the two."

Administrators and coaches felt similar. Megan said, "who and what you spend your free

time doing contributes to your identity development." Michael added, "I think you're exposed to

a lot (in college) and sometimes it can be daunting to take that all in and find out where you

really want to go, but just being open and communicating with those people to share your

interest in your life." Jeff agreed as well suggesting that one's positionality "dictates what you

want to seek, what you're pursuing, what influences you… who you are going to surround

yourself to influence you. The influence of team culture is directly related to this discussion,

highlighting the impact of those individuals who spend the most time around student athletes.

This often is impacted by self-selection which begins as a part of the recruiting process both by

coaches and incoming students. This becomes the beginning of the culture building process and

reinforces the values of the program. Coach Jones said, "behavior is a function of a person and

the environment that they are in," and Coach Leonard agreed saying, "culture does influence a

young man."

Program Recommendations

The literature review of this study has shown the significant impact that coaches have on

the experience of student athletes both inside and outside of their sport. The interview data

collected validated this past research, highlighting that coaches are perhaps the most influential

component of the collegiate experience for a student athlete. One recommendation is to have

universities highlight and acknowledge coaches as educators. The demands on coaches are

significant (Clotfelter, 2011) which would make it unrealistic to place student development

responsibility solely on their shoulders. However, integration between academic programs and

student affairs directly with coaches could create substantially more meaningful receipt of

student development theory and personal development opportunities by students. The expansion

of the intercollegiate athletic enterprise has siloed athletic departments, specifically coaches and

teams, from other campus programs. More integration, by recognizing coaches as educators

would promote a deeper level of growth for student athletes.

A second recommendation is to meet coaches where they are. Rather than the integration

mentioned above coming purely from an academic source, student development professionals

could seek out organizations and individuals within the coaching world to further legitimize this

work. As it relates to this specific study, having coaches and student affairs professionals present

at the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) convention would promote this topic

and educate coaches in an environment where they are comfortable. Most importantly, it would

encourage peer to peer collaboration to take back to their teams.

A third recommendation links the previous two, in seeking buy-in from both coaches and

students. The demands upon these individuals start with winning and losing. It is the essence of

sport and truly the best way to grab the attention of both coaches and students. Both groups will

grasp the importance of this messaging if athletic departments can find a way to link athletic

achievement to identity development. This could perhaps be shown with data on student

retention, team cohesiveness, or team experience levels, to name a few. This is a very

challenging task, but definitely the most direct way to promote engagement with these two groups.

The final recommendation is something that is already happening on many campuses in limited fashions. As shown in the interview data from this study, athletic department programming around student development is a part of student and coach experience. Much of the responsibility falls on student affairs professionals within athletic departments and across college campuses. More coach participation in these types of programs further develops the coach/student athlete relationship and legitimizes the importance of these topics in the eyes of student athletes.

When considering any recommendations, it is important to keep in mind the ever-changing landscape of college athletics and how the student experience is impacted by that shifting landscape. As noted in the introduction of this paper, new policies on NIL, frequency and ease of student transfers, and the growing influence of money are all impacting the student experience. Any recommendations are subject to swift and significant changes as students, coaches, and administrators continue to understand their place in this changing world. The student experience can look very different year to year in this environment, which requires all entities; the NCAA, universities, and athletic departments to remain flexible to understand student needs when creating programming to support their development. This awareness could be seen as a recommendation onto itself. Leaders need to be actively seeking information to best understand the student needs and experiences, including national best practices. Perhaps most importantly, administration must be prepared to create programming with the ability to adjust with the changing climate in real time. Updated programming based on continual evaluation of student needs can bridge the gap during this transitional period in NCAA history. Departments

will be able to establish their cultures, programs, and policies once the landscape has settled and new norms are established in college athletics.

Limitations and Future Research

There are limitations associated with this study that are important to address. The first, and most significant, limitation is inherent to qualitative research, especially in a case study format. The inherent personal bias that comes with qualitative research stems from the lens with which the researcher manages all aspects of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The design, qualitative interviews, data collection, and analysis are all processed through the personal lens of the researcher. One adjustment that could be implemented moving forward is to have multiple researchers collaborate to provide and utilize different paradigms to analyze data. This could help provide additional levels of creditability (Rossman & Rallis, 2016). The unique background of the researcher in this study was outlined in the methods section. All analysis must be understood with that perspective in mind.

Another limitation that is important to note is the lack of generalizability. This is also an inherent characteristic of qualitative research. While it does not disqualify the results, it does impact the ability to relate the data at considerable level (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This study was intentionally narrow, looking only at the impact of coaches on the identity development of student athletes from one specific men's basketball program. This has proven to be a difficult student and coach group to gain access, albeit an important one. The researcher's background provided access, which allowed an understanding that other studies have not been granted. That being said, the results were not intended to be generalized to other student experiences. Rather, this design was intended to better understand the experiences inside one program that can be identified as an exemplar due to both athletic and academic success. Relating to this program, the

study could be improved by expanding the research to include more team members, faculty, more athletic department employees, and program alumni. The small sample size limits depth and using more time to work with more participants would enhance the work. Using an embedded researcher would also be another enhancement, allowing for observations to augment interview data over a longer period of time (Rossman & Rallis, 2016).

Future research on this topic could attempt to build upon the understanding of this exemplar, redesigning the study to expand the scope. Researchers could enlarge the participant pool to include student athletes from other sports (both revenue and non-revenue), male and female teams, and students from different levels of competition (Division I, II, III, and junior college), to name a few. Understanding the variance between different coach and student experiences would help design effective programming. It should also be noted that the intentionally narrow view of this paper only looked at the impact of coaches on identity development, without exploring outside factors that can impact coach influence and student experience. The complex role of coaches is difficult to understand for those outside of the profession. Future analysis could build upon this work to explore more of the influences that impact the interactions between coaches and students at a greater level. These could include, but are not limited to level of education of coaches, access and engagement to university programming, pressures on coaches, time demands, and Name, Image, and Likeness legislation to name a few.

An additional suggestion for future research that was considered during the analysis of this study has to do with a longitudinal evaluation seeking to understand and dissect the shifting relationship between coach and student athlete. As discussed earlier, student athlete participants in this study noted that non-athletic and developmental opportunities impacted their college

choice. However, anecdotal information suggests that students prioritize athletic interactions with coaches. It would be productive to understand how the athletic demands influence the evolving relationship between coaches and students. Does this change in priority suggest that the initial interest in non-athletic development is merely lip service, or do the demands of college athletics prevent the growth of this type of multiple identities? Identifying those trends could help understand how to support both groups to promote healthy identity development.

Along those lines, another related area of future research could take a deeper dive into the student perspective. It would be beneficial to understand how students want coaches to interact with them on the topic of personal and identity development. As noted above, this is a very complex issue because many students are only open to athletic engagement with coaches. This study focuses on the impact of coaches, using three participant groups to create a broad understanding. There would be value to dig deeper into both the student and coach experiences. Understanding the expectations of both groups could enhance their interactions together.

Conclusion

This analysis is one of the first case studies to look specifically at the impact that coaches have on student athlete identity, exclusively within the world of men's college basketball. The high-profile nature of the sport and its insulated culture makes this a challenging participant group to understand. Past research on this topic was based on more broad understanding of personal identity development (Erikson, 1959/1980) and identity foreclosure (Marcia, 1966). There has been research on the distinct components of student athlete identity (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Whipple, 2009; Xisto, 2019), however not on the specific experiences within men's basketball. The case study method was chosen to gain knowledge of the perspectives of participants from a program that has been an exemplar of both academic and

athletic success, hoping to identify traits that support individual development and limit identity foreclosure, within the athletic environment.

The study sought out to answer four questions: 1) In what ways do coaches see themselves as influencing identity development of their student athletes? 2) In what ways do student athletes see their coaches as influencing their identity development? 3) How do coaches invest time to support the exploration of multiple identities, therefore preventing identity foreclosure? 4) What are some key factors that both coaches and student athletes identify as contributing to identity development?

Data collected identified seven themes that were consistent components of this exemplar program: 1) The importance of establishing trust in relationships between students and coaches/staff through honest dialogue, mutual respect, and care beyond sport. 2) Playing time as a critical piece to the coach/student relationship and student athlete experience. 3) Reliance on departmental resources for identity development. 4) Impact of team culture on individual mindset. 5) Lack of awareness of identity development/identity foreclosure as a part of the student athlete experience. 6) The impact of time demands on coaches and students when prioritizing personal development. 7) Individual responsibility in one's own identity development.

These themes supported overall conclusions that can shed light upon this program and lay a foundation for future evaluation. One conclusion is that coach influence remains a significant part of the college athletic experience. Past research has shown that coaches have substantial impact on the student athlete experience (Chan, Lonsdale, & Fung, 2012; Cosh & Tully, 2015), which was confirmed by this case study. All three participant groups acknowledged that coaches have power, which students often seek as a form of guidance. Another valuable conclusion to

draw from this case study is the understanding that identity foreclosure remains a troublesome

reality within the student athlete experience. As much as this study showed positive traits of an

exemplary program, its student athletes remain challenged to find balance between focusing on

their athletic pursuits while also prioritizing other areas of their identity. This is the challenging

dichotomy of the student athlete experience. Combining the two previous points outlined

suggests that even in a program as successful as this exemplar, more time spent by coaches

working with their students to prevent identity foreclosure will help enhance the students'

collegiate experience and support a more balanced and healthy identity development.

Appendix A – Interview Protocol/Student Athlete Participants

Letter to Participate in Research Study
(STUDENT ATHLETE PARTICIPANTS)

You are invited to participate in a study on the relationship between coaches and the identity development of student athletes. This study is being conducted for a doctoral capstone project by a student at the University of Virginia.

This study hopes to gather information on the relationship between Division I basketball student athletes level of athletic identity and the influence coaches have on their identity development and identity foreclosure. Athletic identity is defined as the amount of identity an individual refers to as an athlete. Coaches have a significant influence over the experiences of student athletes and this study hopes to better understand how this influence impacts identity development and identity foreclosure of student athletes within the program. As a result, the description of these relationships can help athletic departments support both coaches and students, specifically in personal development.

If you would like take part in this study, there will be a semi-structured interview which will ask you questions about your understanding of identity development and experiences of coaches and student athletes.

There is little anticipated risk for participation in this study. Any discomfort or inconvenience you may experience could include feeling uncomfortable responding to questions regarding your specific knowledge or experience as a student athlete, along with understanding your own identity development. Data will be collected electronically and interviews will be recorded. Though anonymity cannot be completely assured, your confidentiality will be protected by not using your name or university name in the analysis. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time. It is recommended that you take this survey on a private computer in a non-public setting to further protect your confidentiality.

By clicking to the next page, you confirm that you have read this form and will participate in the project described after signing below. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement, and possible risks and inconveniences have been explained to your satisfaction. You understand that you can discontinue participation at any time. Your consent also indicates that you are 18 years of age or older.

Please feel free to ask questions regarding this study. You may contact me at tjg3y@virginia.edu or 434-962-1513. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Brian Pusser, at bp6n@virginia.edu if you have additional questions pertaining to this study.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tyler J. Grams, Doctoral Candidate
University of Virginia
School of Education – Higher Education

Please feel free to print a copy of this consent for your records.

Informed Consent – Semi Structured Interview
(STUDENT ATHLETE PARTICIPANTS)

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. The information that you provide will be treated confidentially and protecting your identity will be a top priority. Your privacy will be protected by keeping data on secure computers and no responses will be connected to any individual participant. It may be possible for others to determine your identity because of the type of responses. Thank you for submitting the informed consent document. I would like to review the document before the interview begins. [Review document and confirm electronic consent].

I am interested in learning about the impact coaches have on the identity development of the student athletes they coach, including how that impact is perceived by both groups. This interview is going to ask questions about the type of interactions that take place between coaches and student athletes, the team culture/environment within this program as it pertains to developmental themes, and understanding how coaches prioritize identity development within the athletic atmosphere. If you do not feel like answering a particular question or would like to stop the interview at any point, please let me know. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

Do you have any questions before we begin? May I start the recording?

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Interview Questions
(STUDENT ATHLETE PARTICIPANTS)

Identity Development & Coaches
I would now like to have a conversation about your understanding of identity development, your experiences within the program, and the impact coaches have on identity development.

INTRODUCTION – What does identity mean to you?

1. In this program, how are you supported in your personal pursuits outside of athletics? (STUDENT SUPPORT)
2. In this program, how are you limited in your personal pursuits outside of athletics? (STUDENT SUPPORT)
3. What does a coach/student relationship look like from your perspective when it is good? Bad? (RELATIONSHIPS)
4. What are factors that impact the dynamic between coaches/students? (RELATIONSHIPS)
5. How do coach/student interactions change at different points of time? This could be various combinations of positive/positive (team winning and happy student), positive/negative (team winning and unhappy student or team losing and happy student), or negative/negative (team losing and unhappy student). (RELATIONSHIPS)
6. To what degree do you see your coaches as influencing your identity development? (COACH INFLUENCE)
7. How do coaches invest time to support you in the exploration of multiple identities? (COACH INFLUENCE)
8. What are some key factors that you see as contributing to your identity development? (IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT)
9. How does the team culture influence your personal identity development? (TEAM CULTURE)
10. What type of conversations happen among your peers about pursuits/interests outside of athletics? (TEAM CULTURE)
11. Who do you feel is responsible for an individual's identity development? (IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT)
12. How do you balance the need to focus on your sport with your other interests? (STUDENT SUPPORT)
13. How has your own identity evolved over time at the university? (IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT)
14. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss that I did not ask about?

Appendix B – Interview Protocol/Coach Participants

Letter to Participate in Research Study
(COACH PARTICIPANTS)

You are invited to participate in a study on the relationship between coaches and the identity development of student athletes. This study is being conducted for a doctoral capstone project by a student at the University of Virginia.

This study hopes to gather information on the relationship between Division I basketball student athletes level of athletic identity and the influence coaches have on their identity development and identity foreclosure. Athletic identity is defined as the amount of identity an individual refers to as an athlete. Coaches have a significant influence over the experiences of student athletes and this study hopes to better understand how this influence impacts identity development and identity foreclosure of student athletes within the program. As a result, the description of these relationships can help athletic departments support both coaches and students, specifically in personal development.

If you would like take part in this study, there will be a semi-structured interview which will ask you questions about your understanding of identity development and experiences of coaches and student athletes.

There is little anticipated risk for participation in this study. Any discomfort or inconvenience you may experience could include feeling uncomfortable responding to questions regarding your specific knowledge or experience as a coach, along with understanding your own identity development. Interviews will be recorded. Though anonymity cannot be completely assured, your confidentiality will be protected by not using your name or university name in the analysis. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time.

By clicking to the next page, you confirm that you have read this form and will participate in the project described after signing. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement, and possible risks and inconveniences have been explained to your satisfaction. You understand that you can discontinue participation at any time. Your consent also indicates that you are 18 years of age or older.

Please feel free to ask questions regarding this study. You may contact me at tjg3y@virginia.edu or 434-962-1513. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Brian Pusser, at bp6n@virginia.edu if you have additional questions pertaining to this study.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tyler J. Grams, Doctoral Candidate
University of Virginia
Curry School of Education – Higher Education

Please feel free to print a copy of this consent for your records.

Informed Consent – Semi Structured Interview
(COACH PARTICIPANTS)

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. The information that you provide will be treated confidentially and protecting your identity will be a top priority. Your privacy will be protected by keeping data on secure computers and no responses will be connected to any individual participant. It may be possible for others to determine your identity because of the type of responses. Thank you for submitting the informed consent document. I would like to review the document before the interview begins. [Review document and confirm electronic consent].

I am interested in learning about the impact coaches have on the identity development of the student athletes they coach, including how that impact is perceived by both groups. This interview is going to ask questions about the type of interactions that take place between coaches and student athletes, the team culture/environment within this program as it pertains to developmental themes and understanding how coaches prioritize identity development within the athletic atmosphere. If you do not feel like answering a particular question or would like to stop the interview at any point, please let me know. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

Do you have any questions before we begin? May I start the recording?

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Interview Questions
(COACH PARTICIPANTS)

I would now like to have a conversation about your understanding of identity development, your experiences within the program, and the impact coaches have on identity development.

INTRODUCTION – What does identity mean to you?

1. In this program, how are student athletes supported in their personal pursuits outside of athletics? (STUDENT SUPPORT)
2. In this program, how are student athletes limited in their personal pursuits outside of athletics? (STUDENT SUPPORT)
3. What does a coach/student relationship look like from your perspective when it is good? Bad? (RELATIONSHIPS)
4. What are factors that impact the dynamic between coaches/students? (RELATIONSHIPS)
5. How do coach/student interactions change at different points of time? This could be various combinations of positive/positive (team winning and happy student), positive/negative (team winning and unhappy student or team losing and happy student), or negative/negative (team losing and unhappy student). (RELATIONSHIPS)
6. In what says do you see yourself influencing the identity development of student athletes? (COACH INFLUENCE)
7. In what ways do you invest time to support student athletes in the exploration of multiple identities? (COACH INFLUENCE)
8. What are some key factors that you see as contributing to identity development? (IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT)
9. How does the team culture influence an individual's personal identity development? (TEAM CULTURE)
10. What type of conversations happen on the coaching staff about supporting students' pursuits/interests outside of athletics? (COACH INFLUENCE)
11. Who do you feel is responsible for a student athlete's identity development? (IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT)
12. What pressures do you feel limit your ability to foster identity development? (STUDENT SUPPORT)
13. How has your own identity evolved over time? (IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT)
14. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss that I did not ask about?

Appendix C – Interview Protocol/Administration Participants

Letter to Participate in Research Study
(ADMINISTRATION PARTICIPANTS)

You are invited to participate in a study on the relationship between coaches and the identity development of student athletes. This study is being conducted for a doctoral capstone project by a student at the University of Virginia.

This study hopes to gather information on the relationship between Division I basketball student athletes level of athletic identity and the influence coaches have on their identity development and identity foreclosure. Athletic identity is defined as the amount of identity an individual refers to as an athlete. Coaches have a significant influence over the experiences of student athletes and this study hopes to better understand how this influence impacts identity development and identity foreclosure of student athletes within the program. As a result, the description of these relationships can help athletic departments support both coaches and students, specifically in personal development.

If you would like take part in this study, there will be a semi-structured interview which will ask you questions about your understanding of identity development and experiences of coaches and student athletes.

There is little anticipated risk for participation in this study. Any discomfort or inconvenience you may experience could include feeling uncomfortable responding to questions regarding your specific knowledge or experience as a professional, along with understanding your own identity development. Interviews will be recorded. Though anonymity cannot be completely assured, your confidentiality will be protected by not using your name or university name in the analysis. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time.

By clicking to the next page, you confirm that you have read this form and will participate in the project described. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement, and possible risks and inconveniences have been explained to your satisfaction. You understand that you can discontinue participation at any time. Your consent also indicates that you are 18 years of age or older.

Please feel free to ask questions regarding this study. You may contact me at tjg3y@virginia.edu or 434-962-1513. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Brian Pusser, at bp6n@virginia.edu if you have additional questions pertaining to this study.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tyler J. Grams, Doctoral Candidate
University of Virginia
Curry School of Education – Higher Education

Please feel free to print a copy of this consent for your records.

Informed Consent – Semi Structured Interview
(ADMINISTRATION PARTICIPANTS)

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. The information that you provide will be treated confidentially and protecting your identity will be a top priority. Your privacy will be protected by keeping data on secure computers and no responses will be connected to any individual participant. It may be possible for others to determine your identity because of the type of responses. Thank you for submitting the informed consent document. I would like to review the document before the interview begins. [Review document and confirm electronic consent].

I am interested in learning about the impact coaches have on the identity development of the student athletes they coach, including how that impact is perceived by both groups. This interview is going to ask questions about the type of interactions that take place between coaches and student athletes, the team culture/environment within this program as it pertains to developmental themes and understanding how coaches prioritize identity development within the athletic atmosphere. If you do not feel like answering a particular question or would like to stop the interview at any point, please let me know. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

Do you have any questions before we begin? May I start the audio recording?

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Interview Questions
(ADMINISTRATION PARTICIPANTS)

I would now like to have a conversation about your understanding of identity development, your experiences within the program, and the impact coaches have on identity development.

INTRODUCTION – What does identity mean to you?

1. In this program, how are student athletes supported in their personal pursuits outside of athletics? (STUDENT SUPPORT)
2. In this program, how are student athletes limited in their personal pursuits outside of athletics? (STUDENT SUPPORT)
3. What does a coach/student relationship look like from your perspective when it is good? Bad? (RELATIONSHIPS)
4. What are factors that impact the dynamic between coaches/students? (RELATIONSHIPS)
5. How do coach/student interactions change at different points of time? This could be various combinations of positive/positive (team winning and happy student), positive/negative (team winning and unhappy student or team losing and happy student), or negative/negative (team losing and unhappy student). (RELATIONSHIPS)
6. To what degree do you think coaches see themselves as influencing the identity development of student athletes? (COACH INFLUENCE)
7. To what degree do you think student athletes see their coaches as influencing their identity development? (COACH INFLUENCE)
8. How do you see coaches invest time to support student athletes in the exploration of multiple identities? (COACH INFLUENCE)
9. What are some key factors that you see as contributing to identity development? (IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT)
10. How does the team culture influence an individual's personal identity development? (TEAM CULTURE)
11. Who do you feel is responsible for an individual's identity development? (IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT)
12. How has your own identity evolved over time? (IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT)
13. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss that I did not ask about?

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