

Athletic Identity and Identity Foreclosure Among Student Athletes at an NJCAA Institution

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The present study investigated the levels of athletic identity and identity foreclosure among student athletes to explore differences based on gender, race, ethnicity, and sport played. Additionally, the relationships between athletic identity and identity foreclosure were examined. Data were collected from 150 student athletes at a National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division I institution, and the results were analyzed using reliability testing procedures, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics. The following results were obtained: (a) high levels of athletic identity were reported with no significant differences based on demographic data; (b) identity foreclosure levels were low to moderate, with significant differences based on sport played and gender; and (c) a positive relationship was found between athletic identity and identity foreclosure. These findings suggest that student athletes identify with their athletic identity more than they do with their student identity, therefore putting them at risk of academic detachment. Results underscore the importance of understanding the challenges of the student athlete and the importance of academic and career development interventions.

Keywords: student athlete, athletic identity, identity foreclosure

INTRODUCTION

One's sense of self is a major developmental experience for adolescents, making the college years a critical time for identity formation (Champ, Ronkainen, Littlewood, & Eubank, 2020). During these years, adolescents are in search of their identity, exploring their personal values, beliefs, and goals, transitioning to adulthood, and looking at the future in terms of a career (Erikson, 1956). Grounded in Erickson's (1956) theory of psychosocial development, identity foreclosure is a construct that is used to describe an individual who has made a premature commitment to an ideology or occupation based on the influence of others without exploration of alternatives for themselves (Marcia, 1966).

The term *student athlete* was created by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to identify college students participating in intercollegiate sports; the term implies dual identities, with student

as the primary role. Further underscoring the importance of academics, the NCAA has stated that “Providing opportunities to earn a college degree is at the heart of our mission” (“Our priorities,” n.d., para.1). Nevertheless, despite the claim that there is a focus on education, research has revealed that the time demands of college sports are such that little time remains for academics resulting in risk for academic performance (Adler and Adler, 1985; Battier, 2016; NCAA, 2016; Parham, 1993; Nwadike & Zhang, 2021; Richards and Aries, 1999), leaving student athletes ill prepared for a career outside of sport (Chartrand and Lent, 1987; Nelson 1983; Petitpas and Champagne, 1988). Many student athletes spend so much time and energy on sport participation and spend little time exploring alternate academic and social activities, which impedes development (Brewer and Petitpas, 2017). “Exploratory behavior,” according to Brewer and Petitpas (2017), is necessary in order for the individual to make decisions about their “personal values, interests, and skills, and enables them to develop coping strategies and confidence in their abilities to be successful in adult life” (118); in order for optimal development to occur, developmental theorists assert that it is critical for “individuals to explore a variety of activities and interact with people from different backgrounds” (Brewer and Petitpas, 2017, 118).

According to the NCAA, of the average 480,000 NCAA student athletes each year, just a few will become professional athletes. In men’s sport, that number is 1.6% for football, 1.1% for basketball, 9.7% for baseball, 6.6% for ice hockey, and 1.4% for soccer; for women’s basketball, that number is less than 1% (“Estimated Probability of Competing in Professional Athletics,” 2016). With only a very small percentage of student athletes moving on to compete at the professional or Olympic level, it is critical that the student athletes develop holistically and prepare for a career outside of sport. In this regard, the issue for student athletes becomes the ability to balance athletic participation with academic success (Buer, 2009; Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013). For athletic academic advisors (AAAs), college faculty, and administration, the critical issue is the ability to identify students at risk for academic detachment or identity foreclosure to provide effective counseling regarding the development of a holistic identity (and a life after sport). For the institution, the critical issue is to cultivate an environment wherein the promise of an education is attainable for all student athletes and non-athletes alike.

Athletic identity is defined as the degree of strength and exclusivity to which a person identifies with the athletic role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). In their seminal work, Adler and Adler (1985) found that many student athletes arrive at college with strong student and athletic identities, and the desire to succeed both academically and athletically; however, at some point in the college years, there is a shift, and the student identity begins to fade as the athletic identity strengthens. The academic goals and behaviors of the student athlete are impacted by the external factors of their environment, such as prioritizing sports in family dynamics, creating extrapsychic influence (Adler & Adler, 1985). The environment impacts student athletes through social learning, in which one derives attitudes because of one’s environment (Nelson & Quick, 2017); an environment that reinforced their athletic identity, as they were cheered by coaches, media, fans, and boosters; and recognized in class and on campus as athletes. In contrast, academics was not reinforced as there was limited interaction between student athletes and faculty and between student athletes and their non-athlete peers. According to Hoberman (2000), as cited by Heird and Steinfeldt (2013, p. 144), “if one identity receives greater recognition and acknowledgment than another, then more time will be spent focusing and developing the identity that receives more recognition, at the expense of the other aspects of one’s life”; as a result, athletic identity becomes the salient identity, while the student identity is suppressed.

Kissinger, Newman, and Miller (2015) studied athletic identity and identity foreclosure among male student basketball players at a highly visible, competitive institution that was seeking to reclassify from a Division II to a Division I status. The student athletes who were recruited to the institution were interviewed to assess their levels of athletic identity. According to Kissinger et al. (2015), the institution’s level of competitiveness may have an impact on the student athletes’ self-identity, behavior, and decisions. Division I institutions attract the most competitive, elite athletes (student athletes who are more inclined to identify primarily with their athletic role, resulting in identity foreclosure). Kissinger et al. (2015) found high levels of athletic identity among student athletes and a “clear focus on sport over school” (p. 1); furthermore, the researchers concluded that students with high athletic identity view the college years as a steppingstone to professional status as opposed to an opportunity to get an education.

Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer (1996) reported strong athletic identity to be positively correlated with identity foreclosure, defined previously as a construct that is used to describe an individual who has made a commitment to an ideology or occupation without exploration of alternatives (Marcia, 1966). According to Murphy et al. (1996), “the physical and psychological demands of intercollegiate athletics, coupled with the restrictiveness of the athletic system, may isolate athletes from mainstream college activities, restrict their opportunities for exploratory behavior, and promote identity foreclosure” (p. 240). Horton and Mack (2000) found the likelihood of foreclosure to be facilitated by intercollegiate sport as student athletes focus primarily on athletics and “often shut down any possibilities to explore their other internal needs and values” according to Washington (2016, p. 5).

Given the empirical studies linking intercollegiate sport and athletic identity (Adler & Adler, 1985; Adler & Adler, 1987; Bowen & Levin, 2003; Gayles & Hu, 2009) and athletic identity and identity foreclosure (Murphy, Petitpas & Brewer, 1996; Good, Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raalte, & Mahar, 1993; Horton & Mack, 2000) and the impact of these two constructs on development (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017), the purpose of this study was to assess the levels of athletic identity and identity foreclosure among student athletes a National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division I institution. The information derived from this study is meaningful for college administration, faculty, and advisors assisting students who may be at risk of academic detachment and/or identity foreclosure to intervene with appropriate strategies that will assist the student athlete as it relates to athletic and academic growth. Based on previous research, it was expected that the levels of athletic identity and identity foreclosure would be high, and that identity foreclosure would increase relative to increases in athletic identity.

METHODOLOGY

Design

A cross-sectional, correlational study design was used in this quantitative study. The study took place at a NJCAA Division I institution located in a northern state of the United States of America between January 2021 and March 2021. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained for this research to collect data from the student athletes.

Data Collection Data Collection Procedure

An email invitation was sent to 443 student athletes currently on the roster of at least one NJCAA Division I athletic team. Data was collected using the online platform Survey Monkey. In consideration of the student athletes’ schedules, it was determined that an online platform would be the most effective data collection method. The online survey allowed the participant to complete the survey as scheduling allowed. Follow up emails were sent in two-week intervals. The survey remained open for four weeks.

Participants

Participants were 150 intercollegiate student-athletes (34% usable response rate) who were on the roster of at least one NJCAA Division I sport. Of the 150 valid responses for demographics, the demographic breakdown is as follows: males (n = 99, 66.0%), females (n = 48, 32.0%), and three participants did not reveal the information (n = 3, 2.0%) for gender; African American (n = 70, 46.7%), African descent (n = 12; 8.0%), Asian (n = 3; 2.0%), Caucasian (n = 26, 17.3%), Hispanic/Latino (n = 62, 41.3%) and non-Hispanic/Latino/a (n=77, 51.3%) for race/ethnicity; baseball (n = 26, 17.3%), basketball (n = 12, 8.0%), cross country and track and field (n = 17; 11.3%), football (n = 41, 27.3%), rugby (n = 19; 12.7%), soccer (n = 18; 12.0%), softball (n = 10, 6.7%) and volleyball (n = 5; 3.3%) for sport played. Upon data cleaning procedures the usable N was reduced Athletic identity was assessed with the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale AIMS (N = 149) and Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status OM-EIS (N = 144).

Measures

Athletic identity was assessed with the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS; Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). The AIMS instrument, which measures the strength and exclusivity of

identification with the athletic role, includes items such as “I consider myself an athlete” and “Sport is the most important part of my life.” The instrument is comprised of seven items that are scored on a seven-point Likert-scale with response options ranging from strongly disagree (one) to strongly agree (seven). The seven-point Likert scale responses were summed to provide the total athletic identity score for all respondents. The total scores range from 7 to 49, with higher scores indicating higher levels of athletic identity. Scores were compared to norms established by Brewer and Cornelius (2001). Earlier research conducted by Brewer et al. (1993) has provided evidence for the test-retest reliability ($r = .89$ over a two-week period) and internal consistency (alphas = .81 to .93) of the AIMS instrument.

Identity foreclosure was assessed with the Foreclosure subscale of the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS; Adams, Shea, & Fitch, 1979). The OM-EIS instrument is used for classification purposes or as a general measure of individuality or self-differentiation and consists of four subscales which measure the extent to which each of the four ego identity statuses (Diffusion, Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Identity Achievement) is present (Adams, Bennion & Huh, 1989). The Foreclosure subscale of the OM-EIS instrument consists of six items with questions such as “I might have thought about a lot of different things but there has never been a decision since my parents said what they wanted” and “My parents had it decided a long time ago what I should go into and I’m following their plans.” Responses are on a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree (one) to strongly agree (five). The five-point Likert scale responses were summed to provide the total identity foreclosure measurement for all respondents. The total scores range from 6 to 30, with higher scores indicating higher levels of identity foreclosure. Furthermore, the total scores can be compared to the cutoff score of 21.47 for classification into the state of foreclosure. Adams et al. (1979) provided evidence of the internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = .76) and convergent validity of the Foreclosure subscale.

Data Analysis

Data were imported into and analyzed using SPSS version 23 for Windows (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY). Cronbach alpha analysis was performed, and results indicated that both constructs were reliable alpha = .716 for AIMS alpha = .726 for OM-EIS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the scores of athletic identity and identity foreclosure, overall and by gender, ethnicity, race, and sport played.

Four independent samples t-tests were utilized to determine if there were significant differences in athletic identity and identity foreclosure based on gender and ethnicity. Four one-way ANOVAs were run to determine if there were significant differences in athletic identity and identity foreclosure based on race and sport played. A two-tailed Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine if a relationship existed between athletic identity and identity foreclosure for the sample under study, and furthermore, to assess strength and direction if findings revealed the existence of a relationship. The normality and homogeneous variance assumptions for the parametric tests were examined and were satisfied. For statistical tests, a p-value less than 0.05 indicates significance.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency, were generated to provide measures of and variability in AIMS and OM-EIS scores for the sample (Table 1). The results indicated that participants had a high level of athlete identity ($M = 41.63$, $SD = 6.00$) and a moderate level of identity foreclosure ($M = 15.62$, $SD = 4.58$). The mean score of identity foreclosure for all athletes was below the cut-off of 21.47, indicating, in general, the sample is not in a state of identity foreclosure.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF SCORES FOR AIMS (N =149) AND OM-EIS (N =144)

Variable	Possible range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Athletic Identity	7-49	41.63	6.00	23.00	49.00
Identity Foreclosure	6-30	15.62	4.58	6.00	30.00

To understand the levels of athletic identity and identity foreclosure by subgroup, the data were stratified by gender, race, ethnicity, and sport played (Table 2). The mean AIMS and OM-EIS scores for males are reported at 42.14 and 16.27, respectively, and for females at 40.43 and 14.28, respectively. An independent samples *t*-test revealed significant differences between levels of identity foreclosure based on gender, $t(139) = 2.46$, $p = 0.015$, with male students scoring higher than their female counterparts. Significant differences were not detected for athletic identity relative to gender.

Relative to race, AIMS mean scores ranged from a low of 39.00 for Asians (important to note the sample size in this category: 2% of total respondents reported as Asian) to a high of 41.12 for African Americans; mean OM-EIS scores revealed a similar finding, with the mean score for Asians at 13.33, to a high of 16.02 for African Americans. Mean AIMS and OM-EIS scores revealed Hispanic participant scores to be higher at 42.42 for AIMS and 15.75 for OM-EIS, relative to not Hispanic, whose AIMS score computed at 40.84 and OM-EIS at 15.51. Significant differences were not detected for athletic identity and identity foreclosure relative to ethnicity and race.

By sport played, the mean AIMS scores ranged from 39.00 for the all-female volleyball players to 44.27 for the all-male baseball team; a similar finding was presented for the mean OM-EIS scores, a low of 10.60 for volleyball players to a high of 17.24 for the baseball team. Both all-female teams had the lowest AIMS mean scores (39.00 and 39.60 for volleyball and softball, respectively). Significant differences were not detected for athletic identity relative to sport played.

Results of the one-way ANOVA comparing mean OM-EIS scores between groups in the sport played category revealed a significance value, which indicated not all group means to be equal, $F(7,134) = 2.702$, $p = .012$. Given the finding of statistical significance in the *sport played* sub-group, the Tukey post hoc was conducted to identify the subgroups with significant differences in mean OM-EIS scores. The Tukey post hoc revealed borderline statistical significance in the mean scores between volleyball ($M = 10.60$, $SD = 4.04$) and baseball players ($M = 17.24$, $SD = 4.47$), mean difference of 6.64, $p = .05$. The results also revealed statistical significance in the mean OM-EIS scores between the volleyball players ($M = 10.60$, $SD = 4.04$) and the football players ($M = 17.14$, $SD = 4.60$), mean difference of 6.54, $p = .04$. No other statistically significant differences were detected between subgroups in the *sport played* category.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON ATHLETIC IDENTITY AND IDENTITY FORECLOSURE
STRATIFIED BY GENDER, RACE, ETHNICITY, AND SPORT PLAYED AIMS
(N =149) AND OM-EIS (N =144)

Variables	%	Athletic identity		Identity foreclosure	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender					
Male	66.00	42.14	5.71	16.27	4.73
Female	32.00	40.43	6.60	14.28	4.11

Race					
African American	46.70	41.12	5.99	16.02	4.51
African Descent	8.00	40.67	7.51	15.08	4.12
Asian	2.00	39.00	3.00	13.33	4.04
Caucasian	17.30	40.15	7.27	14.11	4.68
Ethnicity					
Hispanic/Latino(a)	41.30	42.42	5.43	15.75	4.58
Not Hispanic/Latino(a)	51.30	40.84	6.39	15.51	4.56
Sport played					
Baseball	17.30	44.27	5.23	17.24	4.47
Basketball	8.00	42.73	5.76	14.18	2.52
Cross Country; Track and field	11.30	41.77	5.48	15.06	4.44
Football	27.30	40.78	6.31	17.14	4.60
Rugby	12.70	40.79	6.07	14.11	4.18
Soccer	12.00	41.94	5.05	15.00	4.60
Softball	6.70	39.60	6.80	14.80	4.78
Volleyball	3.30	39.00	10.02	10.60	4.04

A one-tailed Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine if a relationship existed between athletic identity and identity foreclosure for the sample of this study, and furthermore, to assess strength and direction, if findings revealed the existence of a relationship. Results of the Pearson product-moment correlation revealed a significant, positive, weak relationship between athletic identity and identity foreclosure, $r = 0.250$, $n = 144$, $p = 0.001$. Analysis of the bivariate correlation test supports existing research that levels of identify foreclosure increase relative to athletic identity (Murphy et al., 1996).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PRACTICES

The results of this study provided the levels of athletic identity and identity foreclosure for the sample as well as a baseline for future studies at the NJCAA level. Given the determination that all the sub segments of the population of interest are represented in the sample, the data obtained allowed for a reasonable comparison of the levels of athletic identity and identity foreclosure relative to the norms established by Brewer and Cornelius (2001) and the cut-off score developed by Adams (1998). Relative to these norms, in the current study, male and female athletes with mean athletic identity scores of 42 and 40 scored in the 70th percentile and 65th percentile, respectively.

In addition to looking at the scores relative to norms and to understand a classification of ‘high, medium, and low,’ the mean scores of 42 and 40 were translated to a seven-point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree (one) to strongly agree (seven); higher scores representative of higher levels of athletic identity. Both 42 and 40 are equivalent to six (agree) on a seven-point scale. Scores ranging from 46 to 49 translate to seven (strongly agree) on the same seven-point scale; 32% of the male athletes and 23% of the female athletes in the current study scored 46 or higher. Simply put, both mean scores for male and female are on the higher end, which means high levels of athletic identity. Based on these assessments, it is reasonable to conclude that both male and female student athletes in the sample identify strongly with the role of athlete. The finding of high levels of athletic identity for the sample is consistent with research that points to Division I athletes as having high levels of athletic identity (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 2012; Kissinger, 2015). High athletic identity may result in over-commitment to the role, which may contribute to the use of performance enhancing drugs (Hale & Waalkes, 1994) or other mental health and wellbeing consequences (Sothorn & O’Gorman, 2021). Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) and Stephan and Brewer (2007) found evidence that high athletic identity can lead to overtraining, which can lead to burnout and anxiety. High levels of athletic identity are also associated with mood disturbance following injury (Brewer, 1993), and difficulty adjusting to the termination of a sport career (Grove, Lavelle, & Gordon, 1997). In addition, studies have revealed that student athletes who relate strongly to their athletic identity often do so at the detriment of their student identity; this is a result of the two roles conflicting with each other, forcing one identity to emerge as the salient one (Adler & Adler, 1985; Adler & Adler, 1991; Chen, Snyder, & Magner, 2010; Marx, Huifmon, & Doyle, 2008; Paule & Gilson, 2010; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007). Research has shown that student athletes who identified strongly and exclusively with the role of athlete were found to have low levels of career maturity and to be ill prepared for careers outside of sport (Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Murphy et al., 1996).

Results demonstrate no statistically significant difference in levels of athletic identity based on gender, ethnicity, race, and chosen sport played. The authors suspect this result is due to small sample size and encourage additional research to better understand the relationship between demographics and athletic identity. Existing research supports that identity development is influenced by both the intrapsychic characteristics of the person and the extrapsychic influences of the environment (Champ et al., 2020; Nelson & Quick, 2017). There is research that points to issues in the college environment and the athletic program that may cause one athletic identity to emerge as the salient identity (Adler & Adler, 1985; Kissinger et al., 2015; Love, Watkins, & Seungmo, 2017; Murphy et al., 1996; Singer, 2008;). One of the topics that has shown up repeatedly in the existing literature is the issue of time and physical demands placed on student athletes, leaving little time and energy for academics (Adler & Adler, 1985; NCAA, 2016b; Richards & Aries, 1999; Simiyu, 2010). While the NCAA has responded to claims of excessive time demands by placing limits on the amount of time an athlete can devote to sport both in and out of season (NCAA, 2016a), there is enough evidence that the rule has been ignored (NCAA, 2016b; Ohr, 2014; Staurowsky, 2014).

High levels of athletic identity, however, do not necessarily indicate a problem, as elite student athletes should be committed to the role of athlete (and be supported in same) to be competitive and to perform on the field (English, Fleischman, Kean, Stevenson, Broome, & Cury, 2022). Some of the advantages of high athletic identity include a commitment to training, high levels of motivation and discipline, positive effects on athletic performance and improved social relationships; a feeling of life satisfaction and overall well-being; improved confidence and self-esteem (Love & Rufer, 2021; Williams, 2007; Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder, 2012; Settles, Sellers, and Damas, 2012). The challenge, however, is the ability to balance the two identities and be able to switch identities as required (Buer, 2009; Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013). When the student athlete is not able to switch off the athletic identity in the classroom, then that time is not productive, which impacts educational attainment.

Relative to the identity foreclosure cutoff score of 21.47 developed by Adams et al. (1979), the mean identity foreclosure score of 15.62 indicates the group is not in a state of foreclosure. This was an unexpected finding, especially for the African American male football and basketball players who have

been the subject of multiple studies showing high levels of identity foreclosure (Entine, 2000; Harrison et al., 2011; Howe, 2022; Scales, 1991; O'Brien, 2012; Person & LeNoir, 1997).

The finding of statistical significance in identity foreclosure based on gender and sport played should not raise any concerns, as the identity foreclosure scores for the sample were found to be low to moderate and below the cut-off of 21.47.

Regarding the relationship between athletic identity and identity foreclosure, the results of the Pearson's correlation ($r = .250$, $n = 144$, $p = 0.001$) supported the expectation that there is a relationship between athletic identity and identity foreclosure such that increases in athletic identity will result in increases in identity foreclosure.

Based on these findings and in context with extant and contemporary literature, college administration, faculty, and advisors should consider the student athlete population to be at risk for issues associated with high levels of athletic identity relating to career focus, academic self-efficacy and general wellbeing (Monteiro, R Monteiro, D., Torregrossa, & Travassos, 2021; Brewer et al., 1993). Administration and faculty alike should consider that student athletes may have trouble adjusting to a transition from sport (Park, Lavalley, & Tod, 2013) and demonstrate low levels of career maturity, which necessitates a directed and intentional focus of support for these specific needs (Murphy et al., 1996). In addition, research has shown that high athletic identity will impact the student athletes' propensity to dismiss the exploration of alternative careers (Beamon, 2012; Brewer & Petitpas, 2017; Brewer et al., 1993; Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Lalley & Kerr, 2005; Murphy et al., 1996). Due to this, dedicated efforts from campus support departments like Career Services may be impactful towards fostering professional success of student athletes.

College administration, faculty, and advisors must understand the unique needs of student athletes and effectively intervene with strategies that will encourage student athletes to apply the same level of effort in the classroom as is shown on the athletic field (O'Neil, Amorose, & Pierce, 2021). Regardless of the intervention strategy that is selected, the critical issue for college personnel is to be cognizant of the unique challenges that student athletes face, including a deep love for the sport, the termination of which represents a lost relationship (Werthner & Orlick, 1986). In this regard, student athletes may experience grief when their playing career ends; this is especially true if the student athlete has high athletic identity. In addition, as cited by Heird and Steinfeldt (2013), according to Baillie (1993), the termination of an athletic career may leave the student athlete with much free time and the loss of a significant role identity. It is important to guide students towards counseling as a support mechanism for transitioning in and out of athletic roles (Kissinger, Newman, Miller, & Nadler, 2011; Ofoegbu, Gaston-Gayles & Weight, 2022).

LIMITATIONS

A major limitation of this study is that the sample was derived from the population of student athletes at a single institution; another limitation is the small sample size in some of the subgroups. To address these limitations, future research should include larger samples (from multiple NJCAA institutions) across all the subgroups of the sample. This will address the issue of generalizability for future studies.

Single direction evaluations yield limited information and should be avoided in favor of multi-directional analysis to prevent over generalizations (Boz & Kiremitci, 2021). In consideration of this, the authors note the limitations of the current analysis included in the present study and call for a more robust exploration for future research.

Another limitation of this study is that the foreclosure subscale of the OM-EIS is not sport specific. Use of a sport specific identity foreclosure instrument is recommended for future study. The use of a sport specific identity foreclosure instrument may offer sport specific insights and additional directions for understanding the relationship between academic identity and identity foreclosure.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the finding of high levels of athletic identity, it is recommended for future research that incoming student athletes be tested for levels of athletic identity throughout the duration of their academic and athletic

careers. This proposed research would provide insight as to the impact of personal and environmental factors influencing student athletes. It is also important to extend research globally to further understand how athletic identity may influence identity development both domestically and abroad following fulfillment of academic goals, like graduation (Navarro, Williams, Pittelkow, Schulenberg, Morris, & Salm, 2020). Longitudinal research design would be meaningful to assess the development of athletic identity and identity foreclosure over the course of the college career. In addition, the incorporation of qualitative research would help to provide in depth analysis of the impact of athletic participation on the student athlete.

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