

Investigating College Student-Athletes' Role Identity and Career Decision-Making Self-efficacy

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The academic and athletic endeavors of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student-athletes have been commonly reported in the media and the literature. Researchers have investigated various influences on student-athletes' academic and athletic performances, looking for variations according to gender, race, socioeconomic status, sport played, and strength of athletic identity. One interesting area of research has studied student-athletes' career maturity and career decision making abilities. A prominent idea in the literature holds that student-athletes are less able to prepare for careers beyond college due to the additional constraints of participating in intercollegiate athletics (Ferrante & Etzel, 1991; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lottes, 1991). Other research has suggested that student-athletes are at greater risk than other students on campus to be unable to avoid identity foreclosure (Good, Brewer, Pepitas, Van Raalte, & Mahar, 1993). Identity foreclosure occurs when one role becomes predominant at the expense of all other roles, and thereby limits personal exploration of alternative ideas and experiences (Marcia, 1966).

Several scholars have suggested that student-athletes are at greater risk for identity foreclosure, and this in turn leaves them ill-prepared for career decision making and preparation (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Nelson, 1983; Pepitas & Champagne, 1988). Furthermore, research has shown that college student-athletes have lower levels of career maturity than do their colleagues on campus (Blann, 1985; Kennedy & Dimick, 1987). Murphy, Pepitas, and Brewer (1996) found that a strong identification with athletic identity resulted in delayed career development for student-athletes. A subsequent study did not entirely support this finding, but did suggest that the relationship between "athletic identity and the career behaviors of student-athletes may be moderated by one's student role identity" (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000, p.60). This study investigated the relationships between student and athlete identity and career decision-making self-efficacy among 162 NCAA Division I intercollegiate student-athletes. Participants completed measures of student identity, athlete identity, career self-efficacy, and demographic information including race, year in school, sex, and sport played. Several significant relationships were identified, including sex and student identity ($r = -.31, p < .01$), type of sport and student identity ($r = -.249, p < .01$), student identity and athlete identity ($r = -.28, p < .01$), and student identity and career self-efficacy ($r = .32, p < .01$). Results indicated that student identity of student-athletes at these three institutions was a significant predictor of career decision making self-efficacy. Previous studies suggested that this relationship be investigated (Brown & Hartley, 1998). Consistent with previous studies, no relationship was found between athlete identity and career self-efficacy (Brown & Hartley, 1998; Kornspan & Etzel, 2001). Brown and Hartley (1998) suggested that a relationship may not exist between athletic identity and career maturity because student identity acts as a moderator between the two constructs. The results provide insight into the nature of the relationships between these student-athlete identity roles and career self-efficacy. Suggestions for future research on influences to career self-efficacy for student-athletes are included.