

ROLE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT IN COLLEGE ATHLETICS

A Dissertation

by

ARDEN JOAN ANDERSON

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Chair of Committee,  
Committee Members,

Marlene A. Dixon  
George B. Cunningham  
John N. Singer  
Anna Wolfe

Head of Department,

Melinda Sheffield-Moore

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## ABSTRACT

Although holding multiple life roles is healthy, managers often expect individuals in high performance settings to sacrifice life roles in pursuit of a singular role. Such is the case with elite athletes, including but not limited to college athletes. The purpose of this study was to examine how a team of college athletes came to understand their roles, the outcomes of those role experiences, and how they managed those roles over time. I utilized an ethnographic and longitudinal design focused on a singular Division I women's volleyball team, including all current athletes, coaches, support staff, parents of current athletes, and faculty. Using discourse analysis, four messages emerged as central to the athlete's role development: we are one, self-governing system, academics are the priority, and there's more to college life than volleyball. Based upon these messages, the athletes developed a highly salient athlete role which impacted their college experience and well-being. The athletes also described the benefits of additional roles and need for alone time. Given these outcomes, the athletes adopted one of three role management profiles: volleyball is who I am, ideal student-athlete, and volleyball is one of many roles. Scholars and practitioners need to work to change "we are one" messages to also allow for messages of "individuality," and messages of "sacrifice" to allow for messages of "role expansion." Athletes can still place importance on their athlete role without making sacrifices to their student role or additional roles. From a theoretical perspective, this study addresses a gap in the literature by providing insight into how college athletes become engulfed, the outcomes of that engulfment, and the actions athletes may or may not enact to avoid becoming engulfed and/or manage that role engulfment. This study expands role theory by pointing to the need for flexibility and adaptability in the socialization process in order to build identification and

conformity without suffocating members of the organization. Future studies should explore role development in other elite performance contexts and continue to utilize discourse tracing and other communication perspectives to further our understanding of socialization and role identity.

## **DEDICATION**

To Poppy

– the only person I have ever loved and lost –

your dream came true and I know you are watching over me.

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I would like to give all the glory and honor to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has surrounded me with overwhelming love and extraordinary grace. He has blessed me with a wonderful family – my parents, Mama and Daddy, my brother, Alex, and my grandparents, Grandmommy and Poppy – who have given me love, support, and encouragement my whole life. He has also blessed me with an incredible group of best friends – Lucy, Kaylea, and Sara – who have always been there for me and will always be.

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### **Contributors**

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Ample research evidence has demonstrated that holding multiple roles, or specific social positions, such as being a scholar or member of the drama club, is beneficial to an individual's mental and physical health (e.g., Hong & Seltzer, 1995; Waldron & Jacobs, 1989). Role identity theory indicates, "Generally, the more role identities individuals hold, the more purpose, meaning, behavioral guidance, and approving social feedback they have available, and thus, the better should be their mental health or general well-being" (Thoits, 2003, p. 180). Although holding multiple life roles is healthy, managers often expect individuals in high performance settings to sacrifice life roles in pursuit of a singular role. Such is the case with elite athletes, including but not limited to college athletes.

While an athlete may enter college with a broad set of life roles, these life roles are often subsumed by the overbearing nature of college athletics. The college athletic environment often dominates an athlete's time, actions, and social circles (Adler & Adler, 1991; Blinde & Stratta, 1992), thus limiting their exploration of other roles. Moreover, coaches, teammates, and administrators often socialize college athletes into assuming a largely salient and often, singular, athlete role at the expense of other role identities (Anderson & Dixon, 2019). This socialization informs both their life in and out of sport, including who they live with, who they are friends with, what they major in, whether they travel abroad, and so on. In turn, as athletes become engulfed in a singular role, they may become dissatisfied with their sport experience and feel isolated from other people and groups (Anderson & Dixon, 2019). Moreover, engulfed athletes

experience loss and grief upon their exit from their athlete role due to graduation, or non-normative athletic retirement such as career-ending injury (Anderson & Dixon, 2019).

Interestingly, the outcomes of this engulfment seem to be dependent on how athletes experience their roles and the agency, or lack thereof, associated with adopting a singular athletic role. For instance, Anderson and Dixon (2019) found that athletes who unwillingly adopted a singular role, were dissatisfied and isolated, yet those who voluntarily became engulfed in their athlete role were satisfied with their athletic and overall college experience. These contrasting findings suggest that the outcomes of role engulfment are largely dependent on how athletes experience and manage their roles (see also Barnett & Baruch, 1985).

While current role theory can explain the negative ramifications of role engulfment, the literature provides little guidance on how individuals become engulfed and how one can avoid or manage that engulfment. Thus, it is essential to better understand the experiences of elite athletes as they develop and manage their roles, unpacking the factors that impact their sport and college experiences. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine how elite college athletes came to understand and develop their roles and how these roles and management thereof impacted their overall sport and college experience. In order to answer these research questions, I conducted an in-depth ethnographic study of a Division I college athletics team, including observations, interviews, and discourse analysis (Tedlock, 2000).

## **Significance**

From a practical perspective, in the present study, I attended to athlete integration into the campus community, athlete satisfaction with their sport and college experience, and the impact of participation in intercollegiate athletics on the social experiences of athletes. By exploring the experiences and perspectives of the athletes themselves (not coaches or experts), the findings

have the potential to influence the ideal management of role identities among college athletes, so that they are able to achieve greater satisfaction with their college sport and overall college experience without negative outcomes. Moreover, this research points to the true impact of elite sport on the development, lives, and futures of college athletes.

From a theoretical perspective, this study addresses a gap in the literature by providing insight into how college athletes become engulfed, the outcomes of that engulfment, and the actions athletes may or may not enact to avoid becoming engulfed and/or manage that role engulfment. By unpacking athlete experiences within team environments, this study builds a more integrated understanding of processes and outcomes toward role development and management that unfold in teams or organizations. Thus, the present study helps inform policy and practice for better integrating college athletes into the breadth of the higher education experience.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Utilizing several role theory constructs and frameworks, including role socialization, role identity theory, role engulfment, and role management, I explore how individuals come to understand their roles, the process of role engulfment compared to identity accumulation, and how individuals manage their roles. In turn, the following discussion is divided into three parts: role development, role engulfment and outcomes, and role management and outcomes. I start by discussing role development as this process begins long before the college athlete even steps onto a college campus.

#### **Role Development**

A discussion of role development must start with how people come to understand their roles, which is called role socialization. Within role socialization, I will detail the stages of socialization and socialization agents with a specific application to the lives of college athletes. Then, I will outline role identity theory and the outcomes associated with roles. Finally, I will examine what gaps still exist in the literature regarding role formation and where the present study will fill those gaps.

**Role socialization.** Scholars often situate the conversation of managing individuals within team environments within the organizational socialization literature (Bandura, 1977; Greendorfer, 1993; Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; Nixon, 1990). Within a team environment, individual members who join the team undergo a learning and adjustment, or socialization, process by which they learn and understand their roles, and develop their identity as a member of the team (Chao, 2012). Importantly, organizational socialization involves efforts by both the

organization and newcomer to “introduce, train, and develop the newcomer to become an accepted and functioning member of the organization” (Myers & Woo, 2017, p. 1). Below, I will describe the phases of socialization as well as socialization agents and associated tactics in the context of college athletics.

***Anticipatory socialization.*** Before committing to a university and becoming an official team member, various individuals have already begun to socialize college athletes into their athlete role through anticipatory socialization (Chao, 2012). According to Jablin (2001), anticipatory socialization begins in childhood and builds through life experiences as children and adolescents intentionally and unintentionally gather information which they will ultimately use to form expectations about organizations prior to entering them. During this first stage of socialization, athletes’ individual differences (e.g., personality and prior experiences) and their perceptions and interactions with the organizational context (e.g., its culture, mission, physical properties, and managerial practices) set the stage for socialization. In this way, interactions with youth and club coaches, parents, and peers prior to the college recruitment process likely contribute to an athlete’s anticipatory socialization. Then, during the recruitment and commitment process in which the athlete is sought after, attracted, and selected for team membership, the athlete forms their role expectations through their initial interactions with the coaches and team members. In other words, socialization agents (e.g., coaches and team members) transmit knowledge to prospective athletes in an effort to inform their expectations, attitudes, and motivations regarding their future collegiate sport roles and participation.

***Encounter.*** Upon their first days as a college athlete, newcomers enter a new lifestyle filled with competition and overwhelming demands on their time, attention, and energy. This

point in their college career is referred to as the encounter stage, in which the newcomer is characterized in the following way:

The new recruit is malleable, basic knowledge and values are taught, socialization agents are organizational superiors with power to reward and punish recruits, and the learning is ubiquitous because the recruit lives within the organization continuously or for significant time periods. (Chao, 2012, p. 582)

The encounter stage manifests in college sport as the coach, teammates, and athlete build upon their understanding of each other and work toward a mutual understanding of role expectations and behaviors.

In college sport, it is especially relevant to consider new recruits who are immediately placed in a team and only form social relationships with fellow team members (as opposed to other groups or people on campus). This situation may create the presence of in-groups and out-groups, whereby new team members only socialize with their team despite all other groups being a part of the same institution. According to Wech and colleagues (1998), cohesion is partly influenced by social identity dynamics whereby social identification and social categorization influence team members to perceive increased similarities with fellow team members and distinctions between their team and other groups. In other words, social identity theory explains group-based variations in the development of cohesion and bias (Huddy, 2004). While social identification relates to one's perception of belongingness to a team, social categorization allows one to locate or define roles in the social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1982).

On the positive side, the stronger the social identity of team members, the more likely group members are to cooperate with one another and direct additional effort to organizational tasks (Wech et al., 1998). However, this strong social identity with one group can have negative



consequences, including group conflict, individual role conflict, and stereotypes or bias toward other groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Huddy, 2004; Tajfel, 1982; Wech et al., 1998). For example, college athletes who adopt a strong athlete identity may hold biases toward non-athletes such as sorority or fraternity members. Furthermore, Tajfel and Turner (1979) acknowledged group members who are strongly identified may feel as though it would be impossible to get out of the group or find it difficult to conceive of “betraying” the group by leaving and joining a different group. Thus, the actions taken by coaches, administrators, and athletes themselves may strengthen the social identity of team members, but isolate individuals from other groups by contributing to bias toward outsiders.

*Agents and tactics.* Throughout the socialization process individuals learn their roles as college athletes by various agents and tactics within a particular team environment (Chao, 2012). Based upon the socialization literature and related findings, the first part of the proposed model organizes the socialization agents into four groups – (a) coaches, (b) teammates, (c) parents, peers, and academic faculty and staff, and (d) self (see Figure 1).

Organizations also utilize a number of tactics to socialize individuals into the desired roles. These encounters and organizational tactics continue throughout the individual’s team membership. Organizational tactics can vary in amount, duration, content, valence (e.g., positive or negative), and target (e.g., task versus social; on court versus off court behaviors).

One way for agents to implement organizational tactics is as a form of control. Edwards (1981) outlined three broad strategies of control: simple control, technological control, and bureaucratic control. Simple control reflects the “direct, authoritarian, and personal control of work and workers by the company’s owner or hired bosses” (Barker, 1993, p. 409). Technological control emerges from the organization’s physical technology (Barker, 1993).

Bureaucratic control reflects the “hierarchically based social relations of the organization and its concomitant sets of systemic rational-legal rules that reward compliance and punish noncompliance” (Barker, 1993, p. 409). These forms of control are implemented by various socialization agents within the realm of college athletics. Building upon Edwards’ (1981) control strategies, Tompkins and Cheney (1985) added concertive control in which the control shifts to the workers themselves, or in this case, the athletes. Below, I will identify which agents utilize these forms of control and provide specific examples.

*Administrators.* First, college athletic department administrators and personnel act as socialization agents through department-wide policies and procedures (i.e., bureaucratic control) that both enable and constrain athletes’ behaviors. By socializing the athletes, the athletes learn the athletic department rules and policies, thus enabling them to perform within and in alignment with the system. In turn, the athletes gain acceptance as they know the popular terminology and act in ways that show they belong (e.g., wearing the team colors, using specific catch phrases, participating in school traditions). But, these institutionalized practices may not allow athletes the opportunity to pursue diverse interests and develop as well-rounded individuals. Specifically, the organizational structure of intercollegiate athletics (e.g. highly centralized and formalized) may give rise to forms of alienation (e.g. depersonalization and detachment) (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1990) and leave college athletes feeling alienated and estranged (Parham, 1993). That is, there is a juxtaposition between the larger student body and campus community feeling more integrated due to college athletics, while the college athletes themselves are socially isolated.

Policies and procedures enacted by the athletic department can ultimately impact the quality of the athlete’s experience, educational attainment, and transition to life after college, among other outcomes (Riemer et al., 2000). Furthermore, feelings of isolation from the social or

academic culture of a university may lead to detachment from the goals of the institution and ultimately generate drop out among athletes (Myers & Woo, 2017). Although college coaches and administrators may appear to be concerned with their athlete's academic performance and social lives, they are likely most concerned with their athletic performance. Interestingly, Lally (2007) discovered that decreased identification with the athlete role did not have a detrimental impact on the athlete's sport performance, assuaging the fears of coaches and athletes. Instead, devoting oneself to athletics and other pursuits rather than sacrificing one in favor of the other may actually foster excellence in both (Miller & Kerr, 2002). Thus, there are implications for the limited social interaction of athletes on their academic and social development, but not necessarily their athletic development.

For example, a recent National Collegiate Athletics Association (2014) study of college athlete social environments revealed the majority of Division I and II athletes lived exclusively with teammates or other athletes. In contrast, the majority of Division III athletes lived with a mix of athletes and other students. Interestingly, men and women at Division III institutions were more satisfied with their current living situation and more satisfied with friends outside athletics as compared to men and women at Division I and II institutions. Across all three divisions, 70% of men and 78% of women reported being satisfied with their current social environment at school. On the other hand, 22% of men and 21% of women reported feeling lonely sometimes at school. Collectively, these results illustrate the geographic isolation of both male and female athletes who are housed in athlete-only dorms and the resultant dissatisfaction with their living arrangements and dissatisfaction with a lack of friends outside athletics.

Although "the extent to which this living arrangement was by choice or command was not explored" (Meyer, 1990, p. 51), researchers and counselors have criticized the use of

designated athlete residences due to the resultant isolation of athletes from the general student body (Miller & Kerr, 2002). Moreover, these practices are in direct opposition to the NCAA's stated purpose of college sport to provide educational, physical, mental, and social benefits for the athlete as well as maintain the athlete as an integral part of the larger student body (Blinde, 1989). Overall, the consistency with which administrators train new athletes each year helps to preserve these standardized and institutionalized processes and procedures.

*Coaches.* Second, as the prominent authority figure in college athletics, coaches play a prominent role in the socialization process, as they wield a vast amount of power and influence regarding the team environment, including perceptions of team cohesion (Cranmer & Myers, 2015, 2017; Turman, 2003, 2008).

If a coach is aware of the importance cohesion can play for small group sports one would assume that a significant amount of a coach's communication and interaction with the team would involve strategies to promote and develop unity and cohesion among athletes. (Turman, 2003, p. 89)

Specifically, coaches contribute to socialization through explicit and direct communication with the athlete (i.e., simple control), implementation of policies and procedures that govern the athlete's behavior (i.e., bureaucratic control), and reward or punishment behaviors that direct an athlete's attitudes and behaviors by signaling what is appropriate or desired (see French & Raven, 1959).

According to Turman (2003), athletes indicated coaches used strategies including "having them spend time together off the field, lift and study together, going to movies before games, having team meetings during regular and off season, team picnics, pep rallies, and having athletes go to group homes" (p. 97). Although the athletes associated these strategies with the

notion of the more time the team was together as a whole the more cohesion they felt the team had, many of the athletes described intra-team separation between various groups. For example, there was limited interaction between offensive and defensive athletes and starters and non-starters, as well as perceptions among black athletes of being separated from the white athletes both in and out of sport. Although these philosophies may assist the coach in developing a close team environment, the philosophy works at a disadvantage to the athletes (Hyatt, 2003). Thus, coaches must be cognizant of the potential for these issues to take hold amongst a team and how their actions impact the development of team cohesion as well as feelings of isolation.

*Teammates.* Third, team members contribute to socialization and influence the team environment through explicit and direct communication with their teammates (i.e., simple control), and role modeling and leadership behaviors (i.e., concertive control). Like coworkers, team members are an important socialization agent (Myers & Woo, 2017) as teammates provide support and help each other to persevere through the physical and emotional trials of college athletics. Moreover, teammates become extremely close and likely friends given the close proximity and vast amount of time spent with one another.

In a recent study, Anderson and Dixon (2019) indicated college athletes not only developed friendships but developed a family-like bond with their teammates characterizing their relationships as that of brothers or sisters. Given this close bond, the athletes desired their teammates, rather than the coach, take the lead on all team bonding activities. Moreover, athletes looked to their teammates as role models and modeled their behavior after their teammates; so, when they did not have any role models who had branched out beyond athletics, they maintained a strict “sport comes first” mentality that kept them from joining other activities. Thus, team members are particularly influential in the socialization process given the close bonds and

friendships formed among teammates and have the capacity to influence athlete's attitudes and behaviors.

*Parents, peers, and academic faculty and staff.* Fourth, individuals outside of college athletics, including parents (and other family members), peers, and academic faculty and staff, contribute to the socialization of college athletes. Parent and peer involvement is an integral aspect of the athlete's transition away from home to the stressful reality of college athletics (Baumrind, 2013; Stewart, 2008). In addition to providing support and advice during the athlete's college career, the influence of parents and peers extends back to an athlete's childhood and adolescence. As the athlete is growing up, parents and peers might share stories of their own sport experiences and even those who do not have sport experience might communicate what they think the athlete should expect, or how to think or act as a college athlete. Bhalla and Weiss (2010) agreed that parents help their child interpret their experiences. In other words, children learn how they are supposed to behave academically and athletically mostly from their parents. For instance, parents might push the athlete to specialize in one sport or promote their athletic pursuits as the athlete's ticket to college. Collectively, these subtle, or even overt, forms of communication from parents and peers can influence the athlete's priorities and contribute to the athlete's expectations and experiences as a college athlete.

Also, academic faculty and staff (e.g., professors, advisors, tutors) contribute to the socialization of athletes through their messages and behaviors. Faculty often treat athletes differently in comparison to other students, as many in the college community have formed negative attitudes and stereotypes toward Division I college athletes (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1989, 1991; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995). Some professors may feel as though athletes are not as smart or capable as other students and thus give them less individual attention.

Others may feel that athletes get away with too much given their athlete status and thus make athletes jump through additional hoops; for example, they might require that athletes complete extra assignments in order to excuse excessive absences due to athletic competition. In these ways, academic faculty and staff may contribute to how the athlete views being a college athlete, their expectations regarding their academic performance, and their resultant behaviors (e.g., how much time or energy to devote to academics and athletics).

*Self.* Since coaches control nearly all aspects of an athlete's life, the athlete possesses institutionalized powerlessness (Edwards, 1973) and takes into consideration the coaches' opinions and demands. Adler and Adler (1991) noted college athletes begin to perceive a role power structure among role-set members. Systems theory acknowledges that athletes themselves, despite their lack of perceived power, are active participants in the socialization process and contribute their own attitudes and behaviors concerning their role acceptance and priorities (Poole, 2014). In particular, the athletes themselves engage in their own socialization through sensemaking, whereby they focus on particular messages (i.e., extracted cues) to construct a plausible account (Weick, 1995). That is, athletes manage the equivocality of a situation by selecting one interpretation of their role identity out of all the possible meanings available (Weick, 1995). Importantly, socialization is not congruent with indoctrination whereby the athlete would be a passive recipient who conforms to each lesson that is taught by the socialization agents. Rather, it is a mutual understanding process in which the athletes engage in their own socialization and influence the process through role management or "embracing, rejecting, and/or providing feedback to the socializing agents" (Dixon, Warner, & Bruening, 2008; Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; Nixon, 1990).

**Role identity.** Through this socialization or learning process, the athlete develops a role identity as a member of their team (see Figure 1), in addition to other roles they might hold outside the team, which collectively make-up who they are as a person. In order to better understand the individual's perception of their roles and how those roles – both inside and outside the team – impact the individual and the team, researchers must look to role identity theory (Stryker, 1968, 1980, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1982). In the following section, I explain role identity as an individual perspective of a group phenomenon (i.e., team cohesion).

Based upon the notion of the self as differentiated into multiple roles, or identities, or role identities, identity theory (Stryker, 1968, 1980, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1982) aims to explain individuals' role-related behaviors as a reciprocal relationship between the self and society (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). For the purposes of the following literature review and subsequent discussion, I will refer to these multiple components of the self as roles. Turner (1979) defined a role as a “comprehensive pattern for behavior and attitude, constituting a socially identified part in social interaction, and capable of being enacted recognizably by different individuals” (p. 124). For example, a female college athlete's roles might include athlete, student, daughter, sister, musician, roommate, and friend.

Moreover, identity theory differentiates roles based upon their position in a hierarchy of salience (Callero, 1985; Hogg et al., 1995). Returning to the previous example, a female college athlete may rank her roles from most to least salient as daughter, sister, musician, friend, athlete, roommate, and student. It is also important to note the distinction between one's part they play on a team and their role as a team member or athlete. While individuals can have specific positions within a team, such as being the lead rebounder or the leader of team morale, I am not



focusing on the athlete's duties or responsibilities within the team, but rather their life role as a member of the team and athlete.

Furthermore, identity theorists have noted individual consequences of role-related processes (Hogg et al., 1995). These can be classified in terms of consequences for self-definition, social relations with others, and behavior (Callero, 1985). One, an individual who enacts a role satisfactorily based upon self-perception not only confirms and validates their status as a role member, but also should experience enhanced feelings of self-esteem (Hogg et al., 1995; Stryker & Serpe, 1982; Thoits, 1991). A female college athlete may feel as though she is successfully enacting her role as an athlete, thus validating her status and self-definition as a college athlete and generating feelings of high self-esteem. Two, these feelings of high self-esteem and satisfaction with her role as an athlete may be informed by her perceptions of the closeness and bonding within the team and in turn, inform her personal attractions to the team and perceptions of team cohesion. In turn, she may more frequently interact with her fellow athletes and diminish her social relations with others. Three, the salience of her athlete role should inform her actions, whereby actions related to the athlete role (e.g., practicing, lifting weights, eating healthy) should be more frequent.

Specifically, athletic identity refers to the "degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role" (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993, p. 237). Various researchers have discussed the relationship between athlete identity and such factors as career maturity (e.g., Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996) and transition (e.g., Parker, 1994). Further, the impact of one's success or failure in a particular role is heightened by the perceived importance of that role (Harter, 1990; Rosenberg, 1979). Athletes with strong athletic identities are likely to experience difficulty making mature career-related decisions and experience emotional distress with the

difficult transition into life after college (Anderson & Dixon, 2019). Thus, athletes who possess a highly important and salient athlete role experience greater impacts on their self-esteem, affect, and motivation compared to athletes with less salient athlete roles (Anderson & Dixon, 2019).

**Gaps in the literature and the present study.** While it is clear athletes have roles, are socialized into those roles, and who those socialization agents might be, it is unclear exactly *how* athletes are socialized into their role and how the team and organizational environment of college athletics contributes to the process. Adler and Adler (1991) argued the socialization of college athletes is “set forth by the peer subculture, reinforced by the coaches, and fueled, ultimately, by the structural demands of college athletics” (p. 225). That is, athlete role development and management is not free from outside constraints but operates within the team and organizational environment. While it is likely that the individual level processes and outcomes are informed by and inform team level processes and outcomes, scholars have yet to explore the multi-level dynamics at play within college athletics. There might be contextual factors, such as organizational culture or NCAA policies, that inform the development and management of athlete roles. In addition, associated team level outcomes might include team performance and team and organizational identification which become increasingly salient with more time spent in a given environment. Thus, it is important to explore each level, including the intersections between the individual and team/organizational level factors, and what is a part of the culture of elite athletics.

Overall, it is clear that messages sent by various parties inform role formation, so understanding what these messages are and who the agents are is the first step in understanding athletes’ roles. How does a team communicate a “team first” mentality? How are behaviors reinforced or discouraged? What do socialization agents actually do and say to create an

environment and response from athletes? How does that become “normal?” In the present study, I sought to unpack (a) what messages are being communicated concerning athletes’ roles, by whom, to whom, in what way (e.g., verbally or behaviorally, subtle or overt, formal or informal), and in what context, and (b) what cultural elements, such as policies, symbols, or rituals, reinforce those messages, and (c) how athletes interpret and respond to these messages. In order to advance theory in the area of role socialization and development, I sought to answer the first research question:

RQ1: How do college athletes come to understand their roles?

### **Role Accumulation and Role Engulfment**

Since role identity theory focuses on individual roles, identity accumulation hypothesis (Thoits, 1983) may help us to better understand how an individual’s roles may work together. Specifically, identity accumulation hypothesis proposes a positive relationship between the number of identities held by an individual and “one’s sense of meaningful, guided existence” (Thoits, 1983, p. 175). Identity accumulation, or possessing numerous roles, improves psychological well-being by garnering feelings of security and personal worth, and protects against the impact of identity loss (Thoits, 1983). Similarly, researchers suggest it is healthy for college athletes to pursue other roles outside of athletics (Anderson & Dixon, 2019; Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Thoits, 2003; Verbrugge, 1986). As shown in Figure 1, a variety of positive individual outcomes are associated with the quantity, quality, and salience of an athlete’s role identity.

Conversely, role engulfment describes the process by which a singular role emerges as the preferred role at the expense of meaningful exploration of other available roles (Schur, 1971). When individuals possess competing roles that demand a great deal of time and energy, they

look for a way to resolve the conflict or tension between those roles. Ultimately, they will make concessions or changes to some roles and associated goals, and focus on one central role while withdrawing from other roles (Miller & Kerr, 2003). As shown in Figure 1, negative individual outcomes, including isolation, and psychological and emotional difficulties, are associated with having a highly salient singular athlete role.

Role engulfment can also lead to emotional difficulties when the role becomes threatened (Wiechman & Williams, 1997). That is, role engulfment leads to greater psychological impact from identity loss due to the lack of alternative sources of identity to reinvest one's time and energy (Thoits, 1983). This kind of role engulfment may be particularly salient in college sport as threats to the athlete role are not only probable (e.g., injury) but inevitable (e.g., graduation). For example, consider a new athlete who is immediately placed in a sport team, and only forms social relationships with fellow team members (due to attempts by the coaches and teammates to form a cohesive environment). It is likely that this situation would serve to limit the perceived role identities of this athlete, and eventually lead to role engulfment into the athlete role. In the aforementioned example, the female athlete may have been overly socialized into her role as an athlete and consequently, unable to fulfill her role as a musician by joining a band or taking guitar lessons. Since this female athlete will likely not pursue a life-long athletic career and was unable to foster her talents as a musician, she may be behind in her career development upon graduation, feel unsatisfied with her college experience, and experience mental health issues such as depression.

In addition, once an athlete's time on the team has come to an end, the individual can feel completely isolated due to a lack of integration into the larger institution since the beginning. For example, Blinde and Stratta (1992) revealed college athletes who unwillingly exited their sport

felt a great sense of loss and had difficulty adjusting to life without sport. These athletes acknowledged sport had consumed the majority of their lives in addition to the overwhelming investment of time and energy they devoted to their sport career. Adler and Adler (1991) and Sparkes (1998) both noted that one of the consequences of role engulfment was the inability to foresee and plan for future roles. Therefore, the greater identification with a role, the more difficult it is for individuals to exit that role.

Anderson and Dixon (2019) demonstrated that the outcomes associated with roles depended on the nature of those roles. Athletes who held multiple roles reported higher levels of satisfaction with their college sport experience, higher levels of satisfaction with their overall college experience, and incurred positive psychological outcomes, including having an outlet for the stresses of their athlete role. In comparison, the athletes who held a highly salient and largely singular role as an athlete experienced role engulfment. Interestingly, athletes' perceptions of their role engulfment depended on whether they felt it was voluntary or obligatory. Those who desired being engulfed in their athlete role reported similar outcomes to those with multiple role identities, because it was their choice to make sacrifices to their personal and social lives in order to devote more time and energy to athletics. On the other hand, those who felt they had no choice reported feelings of social isolation, dissatisfaction with their sport experience and overall college experience, the need for an escape from sport, and role engulfment, resulting in difficulty transitioning to life after college. Overall, not only is it healthy for individuals to have multiple roles, but also autonomy over those roles, whether singular or multiple. So, it seems as though choice and control over one's roles may be just as important as the number of roles one holds; however, it is impossible to determine what is more important (number or nature) based upon the

aforementioned study or previous literature. This illuminates a gap in the literature and presents an opportunity to ask pertinent questions in the present study.

**Gaps in the literature and the present study.** Within elite athletic contexts like college athletics, role engulfment is a reality and has significant impacts on the athletes' sport and college experience. Yet, we still need to unpack how athletes become engulfed in their athlete role and what steps ultimately lead to role engulfment. How do athletes let go of other roles? What roles do they let go of? Do athletes let go of those roles voluntarily or do they feel forced to do so? Athletes may be more likely to become engulfed if they begin college with an already limited role set. So, do athletes begin college with an already limited or restricted role set? Do athletes experience such limitations or restrictions during their college career? It is also unclear what happens if athletes do not take advantage of initial opportunities to meet other people on campus and get involved in other organizations – are those opportunities gone or do athletes seek those opportunities later in their college career? Also, we need to better understand the attitudinal and behavioral implications for athletes who are compelled to have just one role identity, the impact of holding one compared to multiple role identities on athlete's experience and well-being, and whether one role identity enriches another or generates conflict between role identities. Thus, the second, two-pronged research question was the following:

RQ2a: How do college athletes become engulfed in their athlete role?

RQ2b: How does the number and nature (voluntary or obligatory) of college athletes' roles impact their performance, satisfaction, and well-being?

### **Role Management**

Given these potential outcomes, an individual athlete undergoes a learning and sense making process whereby they try to manage their athlete role (see Figure 1). For instance,

athletes may re-assess their role as an athlete to determine whether it is too salient, how it aligns with their priorities, and whether they feel held back from fulfilling another role in addition to their athlete role. In other words, the individual and team outcomes inform the athlete's attitudes and behaviors, which, in turn, impacts if and how the athlete manages his/her role.

In examining the role experimentation of college athletes at a Canadian university, Miller and Kerr (2003) determined athletes underwent a two-stage identity formation and management process during their college athletic career. During the first stage, athletes over-identified with their athlete role and maintained a singular focus on athletics. Yet, during the second stage, athletes increasingly invested in their academic and social roles. This deferred role experimentation occurred during their fourth and fifth years of college athletic participation. The athletic retirement literature would identify this process of management of identity as self-protection (Lally, 2007).

Although these findings are encouraging in that the athletes were able to ease their transition away from athletics by investing more in their academic and social roles before their inevitable role exit, it seems like the athletes may have had a more positive well-being if they were able to develop these other roles sooner or throughout their time in college. The researchers selected these athletes from a Canadian university that did not offer sizable athletic scholarships and did not generate significant revenue from athletics. It is likely that the increased demands of Division I college athletics, factored in with the pressure and control of an athletic scholarship and revenue-generating sports, might push this deferred role experimentation even closer to the end of their college career.

Interestingly, there was an ongoing negotiation between the athlete's athletic, academic, and social domains in which increased investment in one led to limited exploration of roles in the

other two. However, Lally and Kerr (2005) suggested athletes do not need to discount the athlete role in order to invest more in the student role and explore their future career path. Instead, coaches and managers should encourage athletes that investment in both athletics and academics, and even other roles, is possible without compromising one or the other.

Moreover, athletes can enact their own agency and be proactive when managing their role as an athlete and their larger role set outside of athletics (Anderson & Dixon, 2019). This role management feedback loop (see Figure 1) indicates that those who are dissatisfied with their team environment and role identities may take active control over their situation by altering identity standards or adopting new identities. In conversations with their coach, athletes may negotiate the standards of their athlete role identity, which allows them to miss practice in order to attend a sorority meeting or live with their non-athlete friends, for example. Athletes who broaden their role set, in turn may have similar profiles to those with multiple role identities, including satisfaction with their college sport experience, satisfaction with their overall college experience, and an outlet for the stresses of college athletics. Thus, athletes who are dissatisfied with their college sport and overall college experience may either suffer in silence or manage their roles in terms of the quantity, quality, or salience.

**Gaps in the literature and the present study.** While we know that college athletes may eventually experiment with and explore other roles, researchers still need to understand the actual actions that athletes take to manage their roles and balance the demands of athletics, academics, and other pursuits. If they begin to explore other roles, when do they do so? What experiences or feelings motivate them to do so? What types of roles do they explore? Also, it is unclear with whom athletes communicate the conflict they may be experiencing between roles. These individuals may include an athlete's coaches, parents, and peers. How do these individuals



assist the athletes with managing their roles? Who else might be involved in helping the athletes manage their roles? Thus, the third research question was:

RQ3: How do college athletes manage their roles?

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### Research Design

I adopted an ethnographic approach for the present study. Ethnography is a field-based approach that “combines research design, fieldwork, and various methods of inquiry to produce historically, politically, and personally situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations, and representations of human lives” (Tedlock, 2000, p. 455). Researchers have utilized this method in various academic disciplines and applied areas, including sociology, social psychology, and management, when seeking to uncover the discourses, rituals, symbols, and languages of a given culture (Tedlock, 2000). Moreover, Skinner and Edwards (2005) promoted the use of ethnography within sport management. Given the close proximity and prolonged interaction with a certain population in their everyday lives, ethnography is particularly useful for better understanding the beliefs, motivations, and behaviors of individuals within a certain culture compared to other approaches (Nite & Singer, 2012; Tedlock, 2000). In particular, I used a combination of observations documented via field notes and interviews, in addition to other sources of data including questionnaires, and artifacts and texts (e.g., written and printed documents).

Further, I adopted a longitudinal design as it was likely that the participants’ role identities and role management strategies would change and evolve over time (Davies & Harré, 1990). The team (i.e., players and coaches) was involved in data collection from August to December. I was on site during two weeks of preseason (i.e., August), three weeks of midseason (i.e., October), and three weeks of postseason (i.e., December). In between these visits to the

research site, the players completed weekly journals and I conducted any interviews by phone that were unable to be completed while on-site due to time constraints or scheduling conflicts. Thus, an ethnographic and longitudinal design not only provided insight into the evolution of roles, but also aided in establishing how individuals managed their roles based upon the overall quantity, salience, and quality of their role experiences.

### **Research Setting**

Often ethnography features a detailed investigation into a singular case (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). The women's volleyball team that was the focus of this study was situated within a four-year, independent liberal arts college in the southeastern United States. The campus is located within a true "college town," which is home to six higher education institutions. This college has been consistently recognized and ranked by the *US News & World Report* and other major publications as one of the best national liberal arts colleges. The college operates on a rather unique schedule with a fall and spring semester and a January interim.

In 2017, the student body was comprised of 1,683 undergraduates (912 women and 771 men) majoring in 26 different programs of study. Approximately 20% of the students represented minorities and 93% of the full-time students lived in college housing. Forty-three percent of the students in the 2017 entering class were in the Top 10 percent of their high school class. The faculty to student ratio was 1 to 10 with 89% of the full-time faculty holding a Ph.D. or other terminal degree.

The college offered a total of 18 varsity sports (8 women's, 9 men's, and 1 co-ed). The volleyball program began in 1980 and became a Division I program in 1995. In 1997, the college joined its current conference, which is comprised of 10 institutions spanning six states in the southeast. The 2017 season was a record-breaking year for this program – this season was their

winningest in conference play (10-6) and in a Division I season (22-11). In addition, the 2017 team had the best conference tournament finish by making it to the finals – in program history, the volleyball team had never advanced out of the quarterfinals.

Looking forward to the 2018 team, the program had all six starters returning, only losing three seniors, with notable newcomers including a three-time All-American and two two-time state champions. This 2018 team was comprised of 17 athletes – 4 first-years, 4 sophomores, 4 juniors, 3 seniors, and 2 fifth-year seniors. The coaching staff included the head coach, associate head coach/recruiting coordinator, and two assistant coaches. This was the head coach's fourth season, associate head coach's third season, and both the assistant coaches' first seasons with the program. Interestingly, one of the assistant coaches began her collegiate volleyball playing career at this college before transferring elsewhere after her first year.

The decision to focus on a Division I program was largely based upon the high level of competition, vast athletic department resources (i.e., partial and full athletic scholarships), and the overall emphasis placed upon the athlete role. Thus, Division I athletes are likely to be subject to a strict athletic environment and culture compared to athletes who compete at either Division II or III institutions, and thereby may be more likely to suffer from isolation and role engulfment, and subsequently enact role management strategies.

By including the entire team, I was able to obtain a holistic picture of the team dynamics as well as the underlying individual dynamics at play regarding role development and management. The first-year and sophomore athletes were able to address how their initial role experiences aligned with their role expectations, how they came to understand their roles, and how they initially managed their roles. In contrast, the junior and senior athletes were exposed to the intercollegiate culture for a significant period of time and thus, had time to better understand

and manage their roles as well as influence the roles of the younger athletes. Moreover, junior and senior athletes had reached a level of maturity that allowed them to reflect upon their experience and critically discuss their experiences (Miller & Kerr, 2002).

### **Researcher Positionality**

In the words of Malterud (2001), “A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions” (p. 483-484). As a co-creator of the knowledge that was produced through this research project (Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoerber, 2005), it is imperative that I disclose both my positionality as a researcher and personal connection with this topic and setting at the outset of the study.

Based upon a social constructivist perspective, the primary goal of my research is to connect with and affect change in the lives of sport populations by better understanding their experiences. In large part, this mission is informed by my personal experiences as a Division I college volleyball athlete. Not only am I a former college athlete, but I hold a personal relationship with this research setting – I attended this same college, was a starting member of the volleyball team for four years, graduated from this college five years ago, and have remained close with the college and volleyball program since my graduation. I have returned to attend sporting events, followed the volleyball program on social media, kept up with their program news, and maintained a level of knowledge about the happenings across the college via social media. Moreover, during my college career, I experienced coach-driven isolation, so I wondered if other college athletes had similar experiences and how this impacted their satisfaction and

well-being. Collectively, my experiences as a college athlete with this particular college have shaped my perceptions of college sport and the roles of a college athlete.

While much of the university has remained the same, the volleyball program has drastically changed since my graduation. I did not play under the current coaches, did not play alongside the current players, and did not practice or compete in the current facilities. In fact, my first day in the field was only my second time meeting the head coach, second visit to this arena, and first interaction with the other coaches, athletes, and support staff. It is important to note that this study was never intended to be about this college or even this particular volleyball program. Instead, my connection gave me access to the team, when several other universities refused me access.

Overall, I could be seen as an insider-outsider in this setting. While I brought certain biases to this study from its inception to publication, my positionality also afforded me certain advantages. I believe my understanding of the context and role enhanced my awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to the many challenges, decisions, and issues encountered by college athletes and assisted me in observing and talking to the athletes in this study. From an interpretivist perspective, my connection to the college and volleyball program was not necessarily a liability for this research, so much as a valuable point for reflection on how my entry points and relationships may inform how participants engage with me (or not). Although my intimate knowledge of and personal connection with the college athletic environment and this particular college may have influenced the collection, interpretation, and presentation of the findings, research and researchers are never without bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **Data Collection**

Given the prolonged and potentially intimate nature of ethnography, ethical considerations were an integral part of the present study. Upon approval by the Institutional Review Board, I used my personal network to contact the athletic director and head volleyball coach by email. Once I made initial contact and both parties had shown a positive interest in the study, I followed up with an email to obtain a permission letter from both the athletic director and head volleyball coach. Prior to any interviews or observations, I obtained voluntary informed consent from all team members (athletes and coaches), support staff (i.e., athletic trainers, strength and conditioning staff), and other individuals who may have been interviewed or observed for the purposes of the study (e.g., administrators, parents, faculty). Pseudonyms were used to assist with the confidentiality of all participants. Moreover, I assured all participants that participation was voluntary, they could withdraw from the study at any time, and all data collected would remain confidential. In the following section, I provide a description of each method (i.e., observations, interviews, journals, documents, and questionnaires), the rationale for its inclusion, and how that particular data was collected.

**Observations.** In the social and behavioral sciences, scholars have described observation as “the fundamental base of all research methods” (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 389) and “the mainstay of the ethnographic enterprise” (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987, p. 257). According to Angrosino and Rosenberg (2011):

Rather than attempting to describe the composite culture of a group or to analyze the full range of institutions that supposedly constitute the society, the observation-based researcher will be able to provide a rounded account of the lives of particular people,

focusing on the lived experience of specific people and their ever-changing relationships.  
(p. 476)

In order to achieve such a “rounded account,” I engaged in naturalistic observation of the team and its members by immersing myself in their daily lives and routines. This included, but was not limited to, attending and observing during workouts, practices, games, team meetings, team meals, social activities, study halls, and physical therapy sessions. To put it simply, I observed during all activities that constituted the daily lives of the team. I limited my influence on the team environment by serving strictly as an unobtrusive observer (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011; Gold, 1958). In other words, I observed while being careful “not to alter the flow of interaction unnaturally” (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 380).

Based upon the directive of Cloutier and colleagues (1987), I observed the characteristics of participants (individually and as a group), interactions, non-verbal behavior, and physical surroundings. I documented the setting, time, date, people involved, potential groupings of individuals, task-oriented interactions, social-oriented interactions, team culture interactions, and rules/policies during all observations. One source of observational data was the participants' behaviors, facial expressions, gestures, bodily tone, clothing, and other nonverbal indicators. I used the data from these sources to shed light on the meaning of a participant's oral comments. Another source was the environment in which the observation takes place; for example, if an observation took place in the locker room, the furniture arrangement, presence of players and coaches, and time of day served as indicators of a participant's experience.

During preseason, the observation was largely unstructured yet focused progressively on the issues that were seen to be important for the study (Shipway & Holloway, 2016) – team activities and communications. I utilized the work of Adler and Adler (1994) who spent



extensive time in the field observing college athletes to guide these observations. Within the team activities, I documented the type of team activity, who was present for each activity, and how each individual was involved in the activity. Moreover, within the team communications (i.e., conversations), I documented what was said, by whom and to whom, in what context, and the attitudinal and behavioral response of participants to such communication. If necessary, I followed up these observations with interviews of those involved in the given activity or conversation to better understand their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors leading up to, during, or following the activity/conversation.

In addition to these observations, during midseason and postseason, I also decided to observe individual athletes who fell into certain categories concerning their roles: athletes who felt forced into a highly salient athlete role, athletes who chose a highly salient athlete role, and athletes who had multiple roles. In other words, I purposefully sampled athletes who fell into each of these categories and observed a day in their life which included attending their classes, meals, informal hangouts with their friends, and other activities. I based my determination of who fell into what category upon the data I collected during preseason, including observations, interviews, and questionnaires. By doing so, I was able to gather more information about how different athletes managed their roles and the impact of such role management on their experience.

Following observation-based research as outlined by Werner and Schoepfle (1987), I first engaged in descriptive observation by observing every conceivable aspect of the team and environment. As I became more familiar with the setting, I moved to focused observation or discerning the relevant from the irrelevant and concentrated on certain group activities (such as those concerning role identity formation and management; Werner & Schoepfle, 1987). At this

point, I engaged in informal interviewing to aid in such discernments. Finally, I engaged in selective observation by concentrating on the most salient aspects of the social setting using my knowledge of the “native” point of view (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987, p. 263-264).

In order to document these observations, I recorded extensive field notes of all observations as outlined by Emerson and colleagues (1995). In addition to the aforementioned observations, I also documented my reflections on those observations, my role as a researcher, and the research process. In other words, I recorded both descriptive and reflexive observations to describe my experiences and observations that I made while participating in the environment. My field notes initially took on the form of “jottings” or quick markings and words while I was in the field. I later filled out these jottings with full sentences or interpretations. Although field notes cannot be replayed and there is a loss of details, the primary advantage of field notes is that it is the most economical in terms of time and money (Kieren & Munro, 1985). Since all of the interviews were recorded, it was not financially possible for me to also pay for transcriptions of hundreds of hours of observations. Also, field notes allow for simultaneous collection and analysis of data; thus, recording observations in the moment, memories, and ideas from observations. The same observation procedure was conducted at all three time-points. Once data collection was complete, I scanned these field notes and analyzed them according to the same procedures outlined below for the interviews.

**Interviews.** Ethnography also involves learning about a culture or group of people by speaking with members of the culture or group – in this case, members of a college athletics team – through interviewing (Tedlock, 2000). Using similar protocol to Dixon and Bruening (2007), who focused on understanding participant experiences and the factors related to those experiences, I conducted semi-structured, in-person interviews. Interviews have a distinct

advantage when the researcher does not know all of the issues surrounding a topic (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Due to the lack of literature regarding the process behind how and why college athletes develop and manage their roles, these interviews allowed me to gain needed exploratory data. Moreover, interviews allowed me to go directly to the source and capture the perspectives and lived experiences of the participants in their view and their words (Creswell, 2013).

Prior to conducting an interview, I contacted the athlete or coach to set up a date, time, and location for the interview. In an effort to limit the inconvenience on the participant(s), I worked with the participant to choose a quiet, distraction-free area for the interview site. These sites included unused classrooms, gym concourse, student center building, and dorm room. I used a semi-structured, interview guide to ensure that similar questions were addressed in each interview (Kvale, 1996). I began each interview with an icebreaker question to establish rapport between myself and the participant (e.g., tell me about yourself, describe your college experience; Krueger, 1998). I asked open-ended questions to spark discussion and probing questions were used as needed. During the interviews with the athletes, I handed the athlete's completed questionnaire back to them during the interview prior to asking them questions about their roles and role management in order to aid in recall.

The interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. I recorded notes during the interviews to identify data as the interview progressed (e.g., the participant's nonverbal behavior, key pieces of information, reminders to myself about follow-up questions sparked by their responses) and added to these notes once the interview was over to summarize the interview and my impressions (Kieren & Munro, 1985). I also audiotaped the interviews for purposes of verbatim transcription. The same procedure was conducted at all three time-points.

**Journals.** As a method of data collection, researchers have accepted journaling as a valid method of accessing rich qualitative data (Hayman, 2012). According to Swenson (2004), researchers can use journaling in combination with other data collection methods to enrich information gathered from interviews. While researchers can use journaling for a variety of reasons, in the context of this paper, journaling refers to the process of participants sharing their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences through writing. In comparison to a log or diary, a journal is both a diary and a log in that it blends personal reflections, accounts of events, and descriptions of experiences (Chabon & Lee-Wilkerson, 2006). Thus, journaling is a useful tool to document specific experiences and feelings associated with them.

In the present study, the aim of the journaling was twofold – to collect data that would enrich and confirm the data collected during observations and interviews, and to clarify data and seek responses to questions inadequately explored during the observations and interviews (Swenson, 2004). At the end of each week of the season, I sent the athletes a link to an online journal. The use of the Internet for journaling provided a convenient, accessible, and secure environment (Hayman, 2012). Every week, I asked the athletes to respond to two open-ended journal prompts in which they described the sport-related team activities and social team activities that they were involved in from that specific week. On some weeks, I asked the athletes to respond to up to two additional open-ended prompts concerning their experiences. See Table 1 for the additional journal questions from some weeks.

In order to combat potential issues with participation, I provided examples within each prompt, maintained regular and routine contact with the athletes each week, and provided reminders. In addition, I provided explicit direction about the types of information the athletes might want to include in their journals for each prompt in order to clarify the content

expectations and help them to stay on track with their responses. These strategies gave the athletes a better sense of what was expected and, as a consequence, they were able to contribute more readily and thoroughly.

**Documents.** Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material. Document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies or ethnographic studies such as the present study – intensive studies producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon, event, organisation, or program (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). According to Bowen (2009), documents can serve a variety of functions; documents can (a) provide data on the context within which participants operate, (b) call attention to situations that need to be observed or questions that need to be asked during interviews, (c) provide supplementary data, (d) provide a means of tracking change and development over time, and (e) verify findings or corroborate evidence from other sources. These functions also point to the use of document analysis in combination with other qualitative methods as a means of triangulation (Bowen, 2009). Thus, the data drawn from these documents can help to contextualize, bolster, and verify data collected from the other methods.

For the purposes of the present study, I collected documents produced, distributed, and/or used by members of the team in their daily lives, including but not limited to, schedules and handouts. In addition, I collected documents about the team and associated personnel, such as biographies, press releases, and newspaper articles. I collected these documents as they were made available over the course of the season. I used these documents as a way to learn more about the athletes' past (e.g., previous volleyball accomplishments, awards), keep up with the team happenings in-between site visits (e.g., awards, match outcomes), and chronologize and orient the other data in relation to the team schedule (e.g., match outcomes).

**Demographics and role questionnaires.** These questionnaires provided the ability to gather and quantify key demographic information from the athletes and information regarding the type, number, salience, and quality of the athlete's roles. Additionally, questionnaires in combination with interviews allows researchers to (a) discover contradictions between data sources, (b) expand upon data achieved in interviews, (c) provide a complementary source of information regarding the phenomenon, and (d) use results from the questionnaire to inform the interview questions (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989).

At the start of my time in the field at the beginning, middle, and end of the season, I emailed the athletes to request completion of the questionnaires prior to their participation in an interview. At the first time-point, the athletes completed both the demographics questionnaire and the role questionnaire. At both the second and third time-point, the athletes only completed the role questionnaire.

**Parent and faculty questionnaires.** Toward the end of the semester, I asked the athletes to provide the email addresses of one or both of their parents and their current professors in their weekly journal. I then emailed the parents and faculty members a link to their respective online questionnaire to obtain additional perspectives on the athletes' roles, role development, and role management. I sent weekly reminders to the parents and faculty members to complete the questionnaire for three weeks. The parents and faculty only completed the questionnaire once. A total of 10 parents and 13 faculty members completed the questionnaire.

### **Instrumentation**

In the following section, I will detail the instruments that were used in the present study for the interviews, journals, and questionnaires.

**Interviews.** Each interview was semi-structured with open-ended questions based upon concepts prevalent in the literature, yet not directly drawn from any specific instrument or previously utilized interview protocol. The interview questions elicited the athletes' role expectations, experiences, quality, salience, conflict, and management (to speak to RQ1, RQ2a, and RQ3), and the associated impacts on their health and well-being (to speak to RQ2b; see Appendices A and B). I obtained additional perspectives on the athletes' roles, role development, and role management from the coaches at pre-season and post-season (see Appendices C and D). I limited the questions to twenty questions as not to tire the participants and maintain a specific, focused scope to the interview (Kvale, 1996). In large part, I followed the same interview protocol for the interviews at all three time-points; however, I did not include the questions about role expectations and included follow up probes regarding how their roles and management thereof had changed over the course of the season during the mid- and post-season interviews.

**Journals.** Each online journal included two to four open-ended prompts. Over the five months, the athletes were asked to describe the (a) sport-related team activities, such as practices, games, and workouts, and (b) social team activities, such as meals, movies, or time they spent "hanging out" together, that they were involved in from that previous week. These two prompts also indicated the content expectations by instructing the athletes, "Your response might include the type of activity, who was involved, who was in charge of organizing the activity, and how the activity made you feel about your team, coaches, and self." As the season progressed, questions regarding their roles were added. Yet, the journal did not exceed four prompts in a given week in order to aid in participation.

**Demographics and role questionnaires.** I asked the athletes to provide basic demographic information in the demographics questionnaire (see Appendix E), and I asked the

athletes to identify their roles, the salience and hierarchy of those roles, and the quality of those role experiences (i.e., “indicate how satisfied you are with each role”) in the role questionnaire (see Appendix F).

The collection of roles included in the role questionnaire was based upon the role identity categories included in the Social Identities Questionnaire (i.e., associational, kinship, occupational, peer, recreational, religious, and romantic; Jackson, 1981) and Sport Identity Index (SII; i.e., family, friendships, athletics, academics, religion, and romance; Curry & Weaner, 1987) — all of which were applicable to college athletes and non-athletes. The Sport Identities Questionnaire was originally constructed to measure college students’ commitment to several role identities. Similarly, the Sport Identity Index has been used to study sport salience and commitment among male college students and athletes (psychometric properties are detailed below for the specific items used to design the present instrument). Based upon these role identity categories, I either listed the category as a role in and of itself, or identified and listed roles that would fit into the category. For instance, the category of friendships was simply listed as “friend,” while the category of family included roles such as “sister,” “daughter,” and “cousin.” The final list of 28 roles was a combination of elements from both instruments.

To accompany this list of roles, I asked the athletes a series of three questions. First, I asked the athletes, “For each of the following roles, please indicate how important that role is to who you are.” This question was adapted from the sport identity rating item on the Sport Identity Index (Curry & Weaner, 1987). The athletes responded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all important to who I am” (1) to “extremely important to who I am” (7). A response of “not applicable to who I am” was included. This scale was adapted from the Social and Personal Identities Scale (Nario-Redmond, Biernat, Eidelman, & Palenske, 2004).



Since the athletes could have indicated that multiple roles were extremely important to who they were or any of the other scale points, it was important to ascertain which of these roles were the most to least important. So, for the roles that were applicable to the athletes, I asked the athletes, “For each of the following roles, please rank them according to how prominent, significant, and important the role is to your overall identity as a person.” The athletes assigned a number to each role in the blank space provided. If the athlete had previously indicated the role was not applicable in the first question, then the athlete was not shown this role in the second question. This question was adapted from the aforementioned Sport Identities Questionnaire (Jackson, 1981) and the sport identity ranking item on the Sport Identity Index (Curry & Weaner, 1987).

Third, I asked the athletes, “For each of the following roles, indicate how satisfied you are with that role.” The athletes used a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly dissatisfied” (1) to “strongly satisfied” (7). Finally, I asked the athletes to indicate their overall quality of life along a 5-point Likert scale. Researchers have found single item measures of subjective well-being (e.g., Diener, 1984; Sandvik, Diener, & Seidlitz, 1993) to be useful supplements to more extensive measurement procedures.

**Parent and faculty questionnaires.** The parent questionnaire (see Appendix F) contained six open-ended questions, and the faculty questionnaire (see Appendix G) contained five open-ended questions. Both questionnaires provided additional perspectives on the athletes’ roles, role development, and role management. In particular, I asked the parents to provide insight into how they had influenced the athletes’ expectations and their perception of the athletes’ experiences, including how college athletics had impacted them, the conflicts they had experienced between roles, and how they had helped the athlete manage their roles. I also asked

the faculty members to describe their perception of current members of the volleyball team, their experiences with current volleyball athletes during that semester, and in what ways the volleyball athletes may operate differently in the classroom compared to other students or other athletes.

### **Data Analysis**

Throughout this study, I engaged in simultaneous data collection and data analysis in which my emerging analysis shaped my future data collection procedures (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For instance, the early analytic work conducted during or after preseason data collection lead me to collect more data around emerging themes and questions during midseason. By simultaneously conducting data collection and analysis, I was able to avoid amassing large volumes of unfocused data that would not only overwhelm me, but also would not lead to anything new (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition, I was collecting and analyzing data as I went along. For instance, simply the process of choosing what to write in my field notes and my subsequent interpretations of those notes can be considered simultaneous collection and analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Once all the data had been collected and I could view the data in its entirety, I engaged in discourse tracing. One way to better understand how and why organizations function in the way that they do is to study discourse (Ainsworth, 2017) as language use is a way of “making sense of our experience and acting out our social relationships” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 29). According to Paul du Gay (1996), discourse is “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a topic and a way of producing a particular kind of knowledge about a topic” (p. 43). Thus, discourse not only refers to the production of knowledge through language, but also the way that knowledge becomes institutionalized, “shaping social practices and setting new practices into play” (Du Gay, 1996, p 43).

Specifically, I utilized discourse tracing, which “analyzes the formation, interpretation, and appropriation of discursive practices across micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis” (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009, p. 1518). In other words, I traced how a given topic had been discursively constructed over time. Discourse tracing is suitable for any case or process that transforms over time – in the present study, the key focus was on role identity development and management over the course of a sport season (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009). Overall, discourse tracing is oriented toward “asking *how* and *why* such issues came into being and how various levels of discourse play a role in their creation and transformation over time” (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009, p. 1522).

Discourse tracing can be divided into four phases: (a) research design, (b) data management, (c) data analysis, and (d) evaluation (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009). Within the research design phase, the researcher must review the literature to identify gaps in the literature and potential research directions, as I have done in the previous chapter. In addition, it is necessary to define the case by identifying the rupture or turning point – February 2018. “Researchers define their cases according to significant events or changes that signal moments of discursive organization or reorganization” (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009, p. 1524). I quickly realized in my interviews with the athletes that one first-year generated a change in the team dynamics and culture upon her entry to the team as a mid-year enrollee; she joined the team at the start of the spring season in February. Up to this point, all newcomers had assimilated quite easily into the existing team operations, but she did not. She challenged their assumptions about how a member of the team was supposed to think and act. As a result, the team had to figure out how to get new team members and those who fail to conform to do what they want, or how to reorganize their team to accommodate the newcomer’s point of view and experience. In response, the team

generated new structures and policies in the face of resistance that continued into my time in the field. Given her disruption of the team's operations and culture, this point (February) represents an ideal point at which to begin the case and from this point forward, focus on the discursive practices that followed.

With regard to data management, the tasks involved in this phase included ordering the data chronologically and reading over the data for emergent themes (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009). At the start of data analysis, an external transcriptionist transcribed all interview audio files, and I compiled all field notes, journals, and pertinent documents. Then, I assembled all the data in chronological order. By chronologically ordering the data, I was able to detect the emergence of discourse and social processes across time. Then, I read through the field notes, interview transcripts, journals, and documents, to establish a basic understanding of the data as a whole and look for emergent themes and issues (Creswell, 2014). Since texts “contain, incorporate, respond to, and anticipate other texts and they derive meaning from their relationship to other texts” (Ainsworth, 2017, p. 2), I read the texts in relation to other texts rather than read them in isolation.

Then, I began the data analysis by creating focused questions based upon the literature and emergent themes and applying those structured questions to probe the data set (see Table 2). In other words, I analyzed the data to generate a combination of theoretical and emerging codes. Theoretical coding allowed for utilization of concepts and categories that were prevalent in the literature (e.g., role identity, role management), while emergent coding allowed for inspection of themes that emerged from the data itself (Creswell, 2014). I then created a codebook based on theoretical codes and the initial emergent codes, which was permitted to develop and change, especially as any emergent themes arose (Creswell, 2014). Once I coded all of the data, I

compared initial codes with the peer debriefers, discussed and resolved any coding discrepancies, and recoded for consistency. Finally, I grouped themes by research question. In other words, themes that spoke to role development were used to answer RQ1, those that spoke to how they became engulfed in their athlete role and how their roles impacted various outcomes (e.g., performance, satisfaction, and well-being) were used to answer RQ2a and RQ2b, respectively, and those that spoke to role management were used to answer RQ3.

**Questionnaires.** Since the data derived from the questionnaires strictly were used to inform my interview questions and describe the overall landscape of the team and its members, I did not calculate any inferential statistics or conduct any tests that would speak to significant differences or lack thereof between the athletes' roles, role salience, role satisfaction, or well-being over time. Using the demographics questionnaire, I was able to tabulate various descriptive statistics to describe the demographics of the athletes. Moreover, I calculated the average number of roles held by an athlete; the number of athletes who hold each type of role; the average ranking for each type of role; the average satisfaction score for each type of role; and the average well-being score for the athletes. These simple calculations provide a basic idea of the athlete's roles and role experiences, but do not speak to significant differences within or between athletes.

## **Evaluation**

In an effort to improve the trustworthiness of this study, I engaged in several additional steps based upon the evaluative criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). In order to establish confirmability or the extent to which the findings of the present study were shaped by the respondents rather than my bias, motivation, or interest, I engaged in reflexivity. Thus, I attended systematically to the effect of my role in every step of the research process. In order to foster reflexivity and a reflexive research design, I kept a reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). I made regular entries into this diary during the research process to record methodological decisions and the reasons for them, the logistics of the study, and reflections upon what was happening in terms of my own values and interests. Reflexivity also involved reporting my own perspectives, positions, values, and beliefs that may have come into play during the research process. Given this expected bias, the following techniques were used to work toward establishing credibility.

Specifically, I utilized prolonged engagement, triangulation, persistent observation, member checking, peer debriefing, and negative case analysis to establish credibility (Glesne, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2007). Consistent with the adopted ethnographic research design, prolonged engagement or spending sufficient time in the field to understand the social setting and organizational culture involved spending adequate time speaking with a range of people, developing relationships and rapport with team members, and observing various aspects of organizational life (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I spent enough time in the field to become oriented to the situation in order to appreciate and understand the context, be able to detect and account for distortions or discrepancies in the data, and rise above my own preconceptions. Moreover, I engaged in persistent observation as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 304):

If the purpose of prolonged engagement is to render the inquirer open to the multiple influences – the mutual shapers and contextual factors – that impinge upon the phenomenon being studied, the purpose of persistent observation is to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail. If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth.

This depth was aided by the use of triangulation of methods (i.e., qualitative and quantitative; observations and interviews), and sources (i.e., different points in time, people with different viewpoints such as players, coaches, administrators; Denzin, 1978; Lather, 1986; Patton, 1999). Collectively, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation were used to ensure my account was rich, robust, comprehensive, and well-developed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Authenticity and Verification**

In order to authenticate and verify the data, I engaged in member checking, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, thick description, and audit trails (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). During data collection, I engaged in the process of member checking (Lather, 1986) by reiterating certain questions and verifying participant's responses to the questions on a continuous basis during the interviews. Data analysis involved two peer debriefers who were researchers who were not directly involved in the project; these researchers reviewed the codes, themes, and interpretations. I engaged in negative case analysis by searching for any disconfirming data that contrasted with the primary themes that emerged during data analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), which allowed me to reflect further on the issues under study.

In presenting the findings, I provided thick description to aid in establishing transferability of the findings to other contexts. First used by Ryle (1949) and later by Geertz (1973) who applied it in ethnography, thick description refers to the detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context (Holloway, 1997). Finally, I provided an audit trail, or a detailed account of the steps of the research process to ensure data quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Overall, these techniques were used to evaluate the trustworthiness of the present study.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In presenting the findings, I have assigned each of the athletes a pseudonym in order to aid in confidentiality. Ranging in age from 18-22 years old, the majority of the athletes were White, with one athlete who identified as Biracial. The team was spread almost equally among years with four freshmen, four sophomores, four juniors, three seniors, and two fifth-year seniors. The athletes held a variety of majors including Business Economics, Biology, Spanish, Humanities, Psychology, and Math, while a few were undeclared. Since the college was in the southeastern region of the US, it was not surprising that the vast majority of the athletes were from the southeast, while only three were from the midwestern region.

The team played a total of 30 matches with an overall record of 0.467. In their conference, the team played 15 matches with a record of 0.438. At home matches, the team was largely successful with a record of eight wins and only two losses. At away matches, the team was largely unsuccessful with a record of only one win and eleven losses.

#### **Role Development (RQ1)**

Anticipatory socialization extended back to the athletes' childhoods continues through to their recruitment and followed through to their arrival on campus. Some of these athletes had been playing club volleyball since seven or eight years old; one athlete was even recruited to play college volleyball at fifteen years old. The athletes described getting closer to their teammates and specifically forming bonds with their fellow classmates during summer camps organized by the college volleyball program. Often the athletes would attend these same summer camps for multiple years prior to entering college giving them several years to establish



connections with the team and coaching staff, and learn about the culture of the program. The athletes interacted with the team on social media, seeing pictures of the team hanging out with one another and other friends on campus giving them a glimpse into their potential future as a college athlete. The athletes also attended unofficial and official visits to the colleges in which they took a tour of the college, spoke with the coaches and current team members, and met with faculty members to understand their academic prospects.

Interestingly, the athletes recounted conversations with their club coaches, former volleyball teammates who had already gone on to college, and parents warning them of the hard work involved in college athletics. Based upon these conversations and experiences, the athletes expected to have less free time, expected more intense volleyball demands, and expected school to be more challenging. For instance, Amelia, a first-year, remarked, “It’s a little bit easier than I thought, because someone told me that we were gonna be puking and passing out.” Overall, they imagined a more physically and mentally taxing college environment in regard to all aspects of their life. Yet, their college experiences did not meet these expectations. Based upon these anticipatory socialization experiences and even unmet expectations, it is clear the athletes in this study were socialized prior to their entry into college.

Once the athletes entered college, four messages were central to the athletes’ socialization into their roles: we are one, self-govern, academics are the priority, and there’s more to college than volleyball. The content/essence of each of these messages is described below, as well as a discussion of (a) the sender, receiver, delivery, context, and timing, (b) the cultural elements that reinforce or contradict the messages, and (c) how the athletes interpreted and responded to these messages. The quotes included below were deemed most representative of the data.

**We are one.** The athletes stepped onto campus in August for preseason practices, in this case, seventeen days before their first regular season match. Primed by their anticipatory socialization experiences, preseason was meant to rapidly socialize newcomers as the athletes spent the vast majority of every day for three weeks with their team prior to the start of school. These days included waking up in their dorm room with their teammate roommate, eating breakfast as a team in the college cafeteria, attending a two-hour morning practice, eating lunch as a team in the college cafeteria, returning to the gym for a two-hour afternoon practice, lifting as a team, eating dinner as a team or in small groups, and retiring to their dorm rooms for the evening. The team even carpooled together from location to location. Notice, there were very few moments, if any, for time away from the team.

Not only did the athletes begin to form new connections or elaborate on already established connections with one another, but their interactions with the coaches also contributed to their feelings of being a part of the team. The athletes interacted with the coaches during practices, matches, and meetings. The head coach also organized social events with the team off-campus, including at her home. Erica, a first year, noted in her journal, “I finally got to see them as my coaches rather than the coaches of a team I was not a part of.”

During practices, the coaches and athletes explicitly communicated a message of unity. When giving instructions for a drill during a practice, the head coach said, “Your friend is holding the ball on this side of the tape.” While this statement was simple, it implied that the athletes were friends with one another, or at the very least, should be. Another interesting exchange occurred between Catherine, a first-year, and the associate coach as the two were discussing serving to particular zones on the court.

Catherine: “I don’t know yall’s [your] zones.”

Associate Coach: “Not yall’s zones. Our zones.”

Catherine: “Our zones.”

While this exchange seems to be a minor issue of semantics, this explicit command from the coach to use “our” rather than “yall” communicated to the athlete that she was not separate from the team, but a part of the team. In response, the athlete accepted and even repeated the phrase back to the coach as a way of demonstrating her compliance with what she had just learned – we are one and should speak as such.

During another practice, the team began to gather before a short break, but some of the athletes were standing on the other side of the net. When the associate coach noticed, he told the team, “You’re a team. Be on the same side of the net.” Later, Josephine, a team captain, instructed the team in the same way, thus adopting and reproducing this message. In many subsequent instances, the team would often go over to or call over their injured teammates who were not participating in practice. These behaviors communicated that everyone should be included in team activities even as small as a huddle, thereby reproducing the ideal, we are one.

Another way that the athletes communicated a message of unity was by holding an athlete-only team meeting during preseason. During this team meeting, the five seniors communicated what was expected of the team and the team culture. Arizona described the team meeting in the following way during our preseason interview.

We had “Captains and Cookies” last night. They [the captains] do it once a year every season and it's the captains in their apartment. We all went over, and they bake cookies, and we all sit, and they kind of tell us the standards for this year and what they think we're going to do and it's kinda chill. It's like the coaches have their rules, and the team has their own that they have to talk about. It was just a good little thing with seniors come

in and they say, this is what we're doing, this is what we're going to focus on, this is how we're going to act, this is how the year's going to go.

At this meeting, the five seniors created and distributed a document detailing the team's "(cult)ure." This document centered around four words which the seniors chose – selfless, adaptable, relentless, and accountable. In particular, the "selfless" rule echoed the message of "we are one" and particularly, "giving up your wants to put the team first" as described by Ellis. Teddy indicated part of being selfless included "not talking about anyone on the team to anyone outside the team." After this meeting, Cristina said in a journal entry, "We want our team to be relentless, aggressive, selfless, and sacrificial." Erica, a first-year, noted during postseason, "We all talk at the beginning of the year. We all have that sheet of paper that lays out exactly what we all think and want." By using "we" and "our team," these athletes indicated their agreement with and adoption of these ideals as what it meant to be a member of this volleyball team.

This (cult)ure also dictated how the athletes dressed, where they sat in the cafeteria, and the words they used. The athletes wore the same t-shirts during all practices. When Josephine showed up to practice wearing a different shirt, Maggie and the head coach told her, "change [your shirt] so you can be a part of the team." The team mostly sat together in the cafeteria as a visual representation of their unity. Teddy remarked, "You always can find us in the same exact sweatshirts at one table." This was just one of many observable expressions of team unity. While there were times when the athletes pushed back against these expectations by sitting with other friends in a different spot in the cafeteria or questioning whether or not they *had* to wear a certain shirt to lifting, they mostly complied with these cultural expectations and passed these expectations down to newcomers.

Further, the athletes used the same language to distinguish themselves from other groups on campus. Miranda described the language and breakdown of groups in the following way:

I've heard NARP [non-athletic regular people] and I just call people NARPs. It's just like a culture. [...] Athletes, frats [fraternities], s-rats [sororities], and then the NARPS. You are an athlete, you are a Greek, or you don't know what you're doing.

As a graduating senior, April remarked in her final meeting with the head coach, "I'm a NARP. I'm a nobody now." By using these terms, the athletes not only confirmed their identity as an athlete, but also their identity as a member of the team. Importantly, though, being a NARP was equated with not knowing what you are doing with your life or being a "nobody," which implies that the athletes viewed having an organizational affiliation, whether through sport or Greek life, as a central orienting identity anchor.

Another example of how the message of unity was communicated was actually revealed in a failed attempt to socialize a newcomer, Catherine. Typically, seniors would serve as role models to the first-years. Miranda and Maggie who were roommates recalled taking in Catherine right away saying, "We put her under our wing." With the older players serving as role models and guides of sort, Josephine recalled that as a first-year, "We just did whatever everyone said." Additionally, it was convenient to be friends with one's teammates and acquire other athlete friends through those teammates. Miranda described it in the following way:

It's just all about convenience with a school this small, because my being an athlete, you already have friends. You automatically have your team and you automatically have the other team because this one person's friends with this person.

Thus, newcomers usually easily assimilated into the team's operations, values, and behaviors.

However, Catherine did not have a conventional entry into college; she graduated from high school early and entered college in the spring semester (February). Josephine described Catherine's entrance in the following way:

She had to come in the spring [...]. She struggled really hard just transitioning and she did her thing and some people were like, "Oh my God, this kid's wild," and everyone tried to start being her mama bear, and then she started feeling like everyone was on her back and everyone didn't like what she was doing.

It is important to note that when she mentions that "she did her thing," she means that Catherine did not want to spend all of her time with the team. Instead, "she was one of the people that went and hung out with her other friends a lot" and "some of the girls were upset that she didn't always go to our team hangouts." Catherine described the strict team rules:

If we go out, we go out as a team, and we don't leave the team when we go out. That's kind of weird. It was first started as, "Let's go out as a group and then we can disperse and do what we want," which again, I think is kind of weird. It got way too clingy for my liking, and I got ridiculed for it last semester.

This was the first time this group of seniors had encountered a newcomer who did not immediately adopt their unity message. In response, the team pushed harder to get her to conform to their ways, which she felt was suffocating and smothering her. She said:

I honestly think my team had problems, because I did branch out and I made other friends, and I think they weren't expecting that. They kind of took it the wrong way at first, kind of wanted to mom me, and like, "You have to be with the team when we do this, or when we go out. we have to stay together," and I definitely was my own person

when I went out, and I think they weren't expecting that. I think they just expected me to hang on their hip a little bit more and let them guide me when I was on my own.

Given her lack of complete integration (i.e., resistance to constantly being with the team) and her negative reception of their assimilation efforts, there were two noticeable outcomes. One, the new first-years followed her lead and explored their independence from the team while still maintaining a close bond with their fellow first-years in particular. Josephine indicated, "I feel like they [first-years] want to be independent. I feel like she's kind of leading them away from being cool with the team." Two, the team attempted to modify their socialization tactics with the incoming first-years so as to not be as suffocating or controlling. April noted, "I think people have done a great job of trying to help them [first-years] out while not suffocating them." Izzie explained the difficulty finding the balance between integration and freedom:

We don't want to have that smothering aspect again, but we also don't want them to just be fendng for themselves. So that's kind of been a hard balance to find. It's important to get to know your freshman, but I think eventually we need to figure out, either they need to decide they want to integrate with us or we have to figure out better ways to pull them in with other people.

In the end, this one first-year's resistance to the team's tactics to socialize her into the "we are one" mentality resulted in changes to their future socialization techniques. The returners gave advice to the newcomers and included them in team activities, but also made a conscious effort to give them the freedom to have their own experiences separate from the team. For instance, some of the older players invited the team over to their apartment, but they made it clear in their message that this was not mandatory, so everyone could come and go as they wanted. In turn, the newcomers did not express feeling suffocated and talked about how they enjoyed getting to

know their teammates, but were also making friends outside of the team. Thus, these techniques were certainly more effective and palatable in terms of socializing into the team culture without suffocating the newcomers.

While each of these instances can be seen as important yet isolated instances, it is the culmination and repetition of these messages from multiple people, semester after semester, year after year, with ramifications if the athletes disagreed in word or deed, that socialized the athletes into accepting that the team should think as one mind and act as one body. Collectively, these explicit, spoken messages and actions sent by the coaches and athletes to the team in regard to “we are one” permeated how they should speak and behave, including with whom they should or should not spend their time.

**Self-governing system.** As a means of enacting and enforcing the “we are one” message, the team self-governed itself with little enforcement of team rules from the coaches and no enforcement from athletic department or university personnel. On the first day of preseason, the coaches had a meeting with the athletes to discuss the team handbook. The assistant coach described this meeting as, “Here are the rules. Please follow them.” Interestingly, both the associate head coach and head coach tried to dial back the language used to describe the handbook and its enforcement. When describing the rules, the associate head coach said, “I wouldn't say they are a relaxed set of rules but they're almost guidelines. You can really break them down to essentially be good people, be on time, do what you're supposed to do.” When describing the enforcement, the head coach recalled, “If you miss class and I find out, there'll be a physical punishment, or I say consequence.” For example, on a few occasions during practice or lifting, an athlete would suddenly step out of a huddle or practice to do burpees, as a physical consequence for cussing.



Interestingly, these athletes were not ordered to do these burpees by the coaches in those moments – these were self-punishments based upon the rules outlined in the team handbook. Callie noted, “They [coaches] expect you to be good and discipline yourself.” The assistant coach agreed saying that if there are any issues, the “girls will address it within themselves.” The associate head coach believed the athletes were able to self-govern because “these girls are so academically-driven and successful, so there is a lot of self-accountability and therefore a lot of self-governing.” Yet, if the issue persisted or was too big for the athletes to handle themselves, the associate head coach explained:

We really don't have to do a lot of enforcement and if we do, it's [the head coach] usually handling that one on one and really talking with them about those things. Rather than yell at them, scream at them, and do physical consequences and those things, [she]'s going to talk to them about it. She's going to let them know that she's disappointed. And that this can't happen again and this is what needs to happen. This needs to change.

Thus, the team was meant to self-govern, needing little to no input from the coaches, and even input from the head coach would only involve a conversation rather than strict punishment.

In order to demonstrate how this system played out during the season, I will focus on one issue that began during preseason and continued into postseason. This incident is centered around the use of juuls or e-cigarettes. The head coach described the original incident:

There was something early on with some of the freshman in juuling. So apparently, a bunch of our football players have these juuls and they were outside. And [Josephine] saw them and the freshmen out there and definitely one or two of them had a juul. And so [Josephine] said she tried to talk to them about it, but then they just kind of like blew her off, and she knew that they were out there again and she talked to them and she got mad

at them and she's like, "So now what?" Okay, now I get involved. I brought each of the freshmen in and each one of them cried. I don't yell at them really. I say, "Does your mom know you have that?" "No." "Well what would your mom say?" "She would be furious." "Then why would you think that you should do it here?" "Well, I don't know." I definitely trust that they will try what they feel is appropriate like talking about it, saying that this is not something that we're going to do. And if that doesn't seem to sink in, then yes, I will get involved.

Josephine also explained her frustration, especially after she had already spoken to the offenders:

We're not supposed to be vaping, but then a couple of our girls are vaping. So then some girls were like, "We're not supposed to be vaping," and I was like, "Okay, yeah you're right," so I had to pull those people aside and be like, "You can't vape," even though, low-key I'm like, "It's just vaping." For me it's not that big of a deal, but it's kind of a big deal. Whatever. It's [the head coach]'s rules.

Yet, this issue was not resolved after Josephine spoke to the first-years or after the meetings between the head coach and the first-years. Instead, the first-years were caught juuling again the next week. Josephine explained, "The freshmen got caught vaping again and this was after I had talked to them. [...] So, this actually happened last night, so I was like, "What do I do to the freshmen?" Several of the older players were "pissed about it," so Josephine felt as though she had to enact some type of punishment. The athletes were quite vocal about being frustrated by the lack of consequences for breaking team rules. Cristina frustratedly admitted, "There's no consequences for anything on this team, really nothing. It drives me crazy because people can get away with anything." Ellis noted, "Our freshmen don't really think it's that big a deal and I think it's because of how nonchalant our captains are in enforcing that stuff."

It seemed that not only the lack of punishment, but also the mixed messages concerning whether the rule violation was worthy of punishment may have contributed to the continuation of these incidents. Josephine felt as though she had to punish the first-years even though she did not think it was a “big deal.” In addition, Cristina commented, “They were doing it in the room last night and she asked me, “Does this bother you?” And I was like, “Well, you probably shouldn't be doing it, but I'm fine.” Miranda also noted, “The freshmen weren't even a problem anymore. They had stopped doing it in public. What they do at night by themselves is their own shit.” While part of the team believed breaking team rules should result in consequences, other members of the team made the athletes feel that it was alright to break the rules.

Even though the self-governance message was clear, the lack of consequences and mixed messages contributed to a governance system that would never truly work in regulating behavior counter to the team rules and norms. Relative to the “we are one” message, it is interesting that the athletes were willing to wear the same shirts, sit together at meals, and use “we” when referring to the team, but failed to comply with team rules by smoking. Even the athletes who did not smoke, but indicated to the offending athletes that it was not a big deal or did not bother them were giving less credence to the team rules. It seemed to have little to do with the act of smoking in particular and more to do with a general resistance to the team controlling their entire lives.

**Academics are the priority.** In this case, the single most overwhelming message recognized by all of the athletes and the coaches was that academics were the top priority. Prior to entering college, the athletes were well-aware of the college's reputation in the conference for being the “smart school team.” In addition, the athletes' parents communicated to them that there would be demands on their time, mostly between athletics and academics – yet, the priority

should be placed upon academics. A sophomore athlete noted, “My parents told me some about just making sure that schoolwork comes first.”

Once the athletes entered college, they were sent this same message from their coaches and teammates. According to Ellis, the head coach “preaches” that academics are the priority. In the head coach’s words, “It’s school first, volleyball second, and everything else comes after.” It is important to note this message was sent also from the top – the university administration. As explained by the head coach in the following quote, the university administration explicitly communicated to her the importance of academics.

They pretty much showed me the record of the program for the last 20 years and I think there was two winning seasons in the last 20 years. You know, winning isn’t our major priority. No one’s going to be fired for not winning, but we need to have the right kind of kids. We need to have academic success, like kids that come here and graduate with a degree from here and can do the work, that was probably the thing that I heard over and over again. So that was probably the number one thing that was pounded into me.

In turn, the coaches placed this message at the forefront of their recruiting efforts, perpetuating the reputation of this college in their conference for being “the smart school.” The associate head coach who was in charge of recruitment explained, “When I’m talking to a recruit, that [academics] will always be priority number one here. And you may not always like it, but academics will always, always come first here. And volleyball will always be secondary to that.” Teddy also remembered, “When we first got here they even said, ‘We are a DI school with DIII academic standards.’”

The coaches followed up these statements by implementing practices that also communicated the priority placed upon academics to the team. For instance, the assistant coach

noted, “We'll have study group, they have study time and study sessions when we're on the road.” The head coach even told April to go work on her two papers rather than scout an opponent during a tournament as shown in the following quote from the senior.

At the tournament last year, I had two papers due while we were there. So, while the schedule would be stay, watch the game, she was like, “Go back to the hotel, write your papers, come back when you're done.”

Moreover, the head coach held monthly meetings with each of the athletes to check in on their classes, assignments, grades, and GPA. During one such meeting, Cristina was discussing with the head coach how she was working to maintain her training time in the weight room. In response, the head coach said, “You got to do what you got to do, but you also need to focus on school.” On several occasions throughout the season, one or more of the athletes would obtain permission from the coaches to arrive late to a team event in order to attend a school activity (e.g., class, meeting with professor). In fact, Izzie remarked, “She's like ‘you don't miss school stuff unless we have a game. If there's an extra credit thing, you go to that, even if there's practice. You can make it up.’ She's very clear about that from day one.”

Additionally, the faculty reaffirmed the importance of academics by upholding the athletes' academic responsibilities. Instead, the faculty maintained the same classroom expectations for the athletes as they did their other students. For instance, one professor noted, “I also make it clear that while their absences from class are excused, they are still required to get notes from others and complete all required work on schedule.” Although the current volleyball players had to miss many classes in order to travel for games, the faculty members all noted that the athletes were serious, hard-working students who contributed to class and “participated just as any other good student.” Even prospective athletes who attended class with a current member

of the team were called upon by professors to participate in class, extending this message back to their anticipatory socialization experiences.

As a result of the athletes receiving this consistent message from their parents prior to entering college and then from their coaches, teammates, and faculty once on campus, the athletes embraced this same order of priorities. Arizona revealed her priorities were “student then athlete. Like [head coach] says, we are a student-athlete. We are not an athlete-student. Always put school first and I agree with that.” April stated in her journal that a member of their team “should place strong priority on school as well as the program.” Josephine noted “many people on our team are the true definition of student-athlete.” The athletes even communicated the importance of academics to their teammates as described by the assistant coach:

A lot of times it's player-implemented so they'll be like, "Hey, I'm going to study bio, who wants to come with me?" or somebody else is doing homework next to somebody else, you see them pull out their homework too. We don't have to really do a lot from that level just because they are self-motivated. They know that school comes first.

These role model behaviors seemed to be a part of the self-governing system. In other words, the athletes monitored their own academic performance and that of their teammates to make sure it complied with the expectation of being a good student and putting academics first. While not all of the athletes were excellent students, as several of the athletes struggled in the classroom, these athletes still gave top priority to their academics and received assistance and encouragement from their teammates to strive for academic success.

For many of the team members, however, prioritizing academics was actually a way to remain eligible, thereby actually prioritizing athletics. In other words, the priority was the same, but the motivation was different. For example, when reflecting upon her first year, Maggie

revealed, “I struggled like crazy my freshman year with school. I think I failed one class and I think I got a D in another. But then I got good grades, so I was still eligible to play.” Moreover, Josephine noted, “I think it's [school] important because that's part of keeping up the grades to be able to play and it looks good, but I don't do it because I genuinely enjoy it.” So, it seems that the “academics are the priority” message communicated to some that academics were important for the sake of athletics. The goal was to prioritize enough to be eligible, but not too much to take away from their athletic role.

While some of the athletes were intrinsically motivated to prioritize their academics, others were extrinsically motivated by athletic eligibility requirements to prioritize their academics. Despite these differing motivations, the entire team consistently recognized, acted upon, and communicated an “academics are the priority” message. In turn, the athletes passed down the prioritization of academics over athletics to the next generation of team members and perpetuated the perception of the team as the smart school team within the conference.

**There’s more to college than volleyball.** Another message that was communicated to the athletes explicitly about their role sets was that there is more and should be more to their college experience than just volleyball. One such agent of this message was the faculty members who believed that athletes should have the same opportunities outside of the classroom as other students as shown in the following quote from a professor of Spanish:

Sometimes my students and advisees think that because they play a sport they might not be able to participate in certain activities like study abroad or certain majors, but I let them know that there is always a path to find a way.

A psychology professor told the athletes, “You will all be going pro in something other than volleyball.” In response, Meredith felt this equal treatment from the professors gave her a new

perspective on life – “They don't treat athletes different. They kind of make sure that we all have equal opportunities. [...] There is more to volleyball. There is more to life.”

Similarly, the coaches indicated that the athletes, in many ways, should be just like any other student as shown in the quote below from the associate coach.

We address it like, "Hey, we want you to be involved on campus." I always call it, “Be a normal student,” because normal students get to do all those things and student athletes don't necessarily get to all the time because they have other obligations.

Sometimes the head coach would incorporate a non-volleyball activity into their travel for volleyball, such as painting or whitewater rafting, as she wanted them “to feel like ‘I did things’”. After the team went whitewater rafting before a game during preseason, Adele said, “I think her letting us do it before our game made the impact on people that, ‘Okay, volleyball's not everything.’” According to Izzie, the head coach liked “having well rounded people on the team.” She went on to say:

Volleyball is my most important thing, but we get to do other stuff. They let us have these other identities. You're allowed to have these other parts of your life. I think she [head coach] wants us to come out as good human beings. Yes, she wants us to win [the conference], and yes, she wants to make us volleyball players, but I think the really special thing is she wants to make us better people too.

Adele who transferred from another Division I volleyball program after her sophomore year remarked that this message was key in her recruitment to the program:

[Head coach] sold me on the whole, “We're very serious about getting the job done, but we also understand that you're people, and you get to have lives, and your whole life isn't volleyball,” and that's what got me to come here, because my whole life was volleyball in



my other programs. We literally woke up, did the exact same thing every day, like you weren't around anybody else except for your team, which is okay, but eventually you get sick of them.

Even though the various agents communicated that athletes were just like any other student, the language used by team members reflected a separation between athletes and the rest of the student population. As discussed earlier in relation to the “we are one “ message and similar to the associate coach’s use of “normal student” shown in the quote above, all of the athletes and coaches used the term “NARP” or “non-athletic, regular people” to describe non-athletes. Before practice, Addison noted, “I want to be a real person” when discussing with Adele what it would be like after they left college to which Adele jokingly questioned, “Not an athlete?” Therefore, the athletes and coaches still communicated a distinction between the athletes and other students (who held several roles) despite their comments that the athletes were “free” to explore other roles.

An additional caveat to this message was that the athletes were free to pursue other interests as long as they did not compromise the “we are one” mentality. The coaches and athletes made it explicitly clear that other roles were acceptable only if they came after their priority athlete role. Arizona who often traveled abroad remarked that some of her teammates get upset when she goes away. Josephine was praised by her teammate for waiting to study abroad until her last spring as shown in the following quote:

I'm glad I'm doing mine now, because I didn't really think it was an issue with my team, but [Izzie] was like, "I really respect that you decided to do it your last spring. That really means a lot that you didn't kind of skip out on it.”

Moreover, the athletes' parents encouraged their daughters to take advantage of the opportunities provided by college, but with the clear expectations that sport and school were the priorities. Cristina's mother noted, "We talked about enjoying her college experience [by] taking advantage of all the school offers on and off the court and keep a good balance of school work, sports, socializing, and rest." Interestingly, these message combinations seemed to simultaneously communicate role priority and role freedom.

Interestingly, this message was not universally communicated to all athletes. Rather, the coaches and returners were explicit in communicating to the first-years to focus only on volleyball and school. As a result, the younger players, especially the first-years, maintained a strict, limited focus on academics and volleyball, and were far more cautious about getting involved in other roles. On the other hand, the older players were more involved in their other roles and more apt to add roles, or in the words of the assistant coach, "stretch themselves." The associate coach commented on this trend:

As they get older, they get more involved because they understand time management and what they can and can't do. I think it's very rare to see freshmen immediately jump into those things, because they're still figuring out the academic rigor and they're still figuring out what they want their role to be, not only at volleyball, but at [college] in general.

Several of the athletes followed this pattern, including Josephine:

I'm president of the Pottery Club and then I'll be doing a solo exhibit in the fall. [...] My freshman year, I just kind of stuck to my team, which was all I knew. But then there was a club that started up called Women of Color, so I was able to join that. [...] Freshman year, I was just trying to stick around my team and stick with what I know, but once I broke out of that, it's gotten better, and I've been able to express myself more.

Thus, the “there’s more to college life than volleyball” message was not universally communicated to all team members despite the successes of the older players to balance a larger role set and the positive impact of that larger role set on their experience.

Although the athletes were allowed (by the coaches) and even verbally encouraged to explore other roles (by various agents), there were restrictions and limitations placed upon those explorations. As long as the role exploration or role accumulation did not jeopardize “we are one,” distract from “academics are the priority,” then that exploration or accumulation was sanctioned by the team. These parameters placed significant limitations and restrictions upon what the athletes would experience as a part of their college life, leaving very few opportunities for the athletes to explore and add additional roles.

*Role development discussion (RQ1).* Organizations benefit from their members being identified with the organization. Thus, role prioritization is a key aspect of their socialization into the organization (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Chao, 2012). Role socialization is a valuable tool for organizations to communicate role priorities to organizational members. Strong, consistent messages can communicate to organizational members how to think, act, and be in the organization (Chao, 2012). This study utilized discourse analysis to explore how these messages are communicated to athletes in a team environment. The findings revealed that on this team, the messages were delivered in ways that communicated role priority without necessarily narrowing roles so much such so that they were engulfing. Four messages were central to the athlete’s role development: we are one, self-governing system, academics are the priority, and there’s more to college life than volleyball. Within these thematic messages, those that were recurring, consistent, and priority (in terms of timing) seemed to become dominant and communicate priority roles; those that were less frequent, less consistent, and/or secondary in timing became

less dominant (and less prominent in terms of role salience). In the following discussion, I will outline how repetition, consistency, and timing contributed to the dominance of these messages.

First, the repetition of these messages from multiple agents at multiple times in multiple ways, created strong discourse in which most of the team members embraced a highly salient and prioritized athlete role. Specifically, the “we are one” and “academics are the priority” messages were the most repeated across agents, time, and manners of communication. More so than simply hearing multiple agents repeat that the student role should be their top priority, the agents repeated this message immediately and over several years, verbally and in action, overtly and covertly, and continued to give new life to the message in each reiteration and reproduction. Repetition is central to language, learning, and the (re)production of culture and social organization (Moore, 2011). Clearly, repetition within the socialization discourse communicated priority and salience.

Second, the messages which were consistently communicated to and by the athletes received priority and dominance. According to Ondrack (1975) and Kowtha (2018), an environment of consistent attitudes, values, and role model cues encourages more pronounced socialization compared to an environment with less consistency in cues. The “we are one” message was consistent across people and contexts, including when the athletes faced sanctions for breaking team rules.

However, the “academics are the priority” and “there’s more to college life than volleyball” messages were not necessarily consistent. Some of the athletes did not wholeheartedly prioritize academics over athletics. Some of the athletes (e.g., newcomers) were discouraged about following through on experiencing more than just volleyball in college. At times, these two messages seemed to counter the “we are one” message. One of the athletes who

seemingly followed the “there’s more to college life than volleyball” message received chastisements from her teammates for her behavior as it was deemed contrary to the “we are one” message. It seems the athletes viewed role expansion beyond athlete and student as a privilege that needed to be earned by demonstrating competence in role management. Perhaps, part of the team’s difficulty with Catherine (mid-year enrollee) was that she did not “earn” the privilege before expanding beyond school and volleyball. While the coaches and athletes said that academics were the priority and there was freedom for the athletes to have other roles, the response from the team indicated that the “we are one” message was paramount and the athlete role was truly of utmost priority. In turn, all other roles were weighed and discussed in relation to the athlete role. Thus, the “we are one” message was extremely consistent and even resilient in spite of other messages that may have offered a contradiction or conflict; the other two messages were less consistent and therefore, less dominant in the role narratives and lives of the athletes.

Third, the timing or ordering of the messages contributed to how the organization communicated the salience of the athlete role. Ashforth (2012) contended early events exert a disproportionate impact, especially if the newcomers are less familiar with the setting and have less experience. In turn, the individual will derive more meaning from these early events and “the knowledge gained opens the doors to certain opportunities while shutting the doors to others” (Ashforth, 2012, p. 164). In this case, the “we are one” message was not only communicated in the athletes’ athletic experiences prior to college, but was also one of the first messages communicated to the athletes during their first year. During the three weeks of preseason, the athletes were literally scheduled to be in their athlete role all the time. In addition, the athlete’s informal conversations with one another in the athlete-only dorms and ritualized formal team meetings (e.g., Captains and Cookies) reinforced the prioritization of the athlete

role. Then once classes started, regular formal meetings with the coaches, input from the faculty, and continued interactions with the athletes built upon these initial conversations and interactions. As a result, this message athletes were constantly reminded and reminded themselves that their actions could not go against the team even if they were beneficial for their own well-being.

Similarly, the “academics are the priority” message was communicated to the athletes early on during their recruitment and throughout their college career. Given the first-order messaging of both “we are one” and “academics are the priority,” the athletes seemed to constantly be in a battle of whether to prioritize their athlete or student role in a given moment. For instance, the athletes had to decide whether they should sleep more in order to prepare for lifting the next morning or study more in order to prepare for a test the next day. Moreover, the inconsistent messaging of “there’s more to college life than volleyball” further highlighted that the athletes should focus on their athlete and student roles. As a result, the athletes experienced a quandary about how to balance their athlete and student roles and most chose to limit their role set in order to maintain that balance.

Overall, the cumulative nature of these messages from multiple agents across contexts and across time communicated the priority of their athlete role, and then the secondary nature of other roles. Not only the content of the messages themselves, but also the repetition, consistency, and timing impacted the role identity of the athletes, and how they thought, spoke, and behaved in and out of the team environment.

### **Role Engulfment and Role Accumulation (RQ2a and RQ2b)**

As a result of the previous role messages, the athletes held highly salient athlete and student roles. The overall socialization message communicated to the athletes to be a good

student (e.g., go to class, make good grades) and a solid team member (e.g., attend all team events, work hard, support teammates). Once they had mastered those two areas, they were then permitted to explore other roles. Even though some of the athletes ranked other roles (e.g., daughter, member of religion) higher in terms of importance, they spent the overwhelming majority of their time engaging in their athlete and student roles.

While the athletes were heavily involved in their student role, their portrayal of their athlete role depicted an even deeper connection to their identity despite being potentially ranked lower than their student role. The language the athletes used to describe their athlete role indicated the degree to which their identity was dictated by their athlete role. Josephine explained:

[Being an] athlete is important because that's just my life. Whenever you meet someone, it's like, "Oh, tell me about yourself." First thing you say is, "Volleyball, I play volleyball." At the end of the day you put so much into it, that just becomes who you are. A lot of who I am today is because of volleyball.

Further, Teddy said, "I've been an athlete since before I was born." Cristina said, "I've been playing volleyball since I was eight. So for as long as I can remember, it's been a part of me and I love it. I don't ever want to give it up." Izzie revealed all aspects of her life revolved around volleyball saying, "I've known since I was 10 years old, I was going to be a Division I volleyball player. I live, breathe, and die volleyball." Maggie said, "I started playing when I was in fifth grade, so pretty much my whole life." So, some of these athletes had been socialized and had adapted into their athlete role at least ten years prior to entering college, and then their socialization during college only confirmed the prioritization of their athlete role.

As a result, the athletes described the impact of their athlete role on their college experience and well-being. Further, some of the athletes who held additional roles discussed the benefits of additional roles. The athletes also discussed the need for alone time separate from their roles. Each of these themes is described below.

**Impact of athlete role on college experience.** Due to their highly salient athlete role, the athletes encountered a variety of outcomes in regard to their college experience, including isolation from individuals outside of volleyball, the inability to fulfill friend and familial roles, and limited exploration of other roles. The athletes discussed these outcomes as negative or at least as limitations or restrictions which detracted from, as opposed to enriched, their lives.

Miranda explained her athlete role restricted her friend group generating feelings of isolation:

I was just kind of like, “Oh, I’ll be a part of volleyball. I’m glad I have my teammates to be my friends so I don’t necessarily have to branch out,” and I didn’t; I kind of regret that. I have friends outside of volleyball, but not people I would hang out with on a regular basis. And even if I do have friends that don’t play volleyball, they’re involved with volleyball. Or, I’m friends with other athletes, but that’s out of convenience, because football’s here at the same time we are, women’s soccer’s here at the same time we are, men’s soccer’s here. I’ve kind of isolated myself. All my friends are athletes.

Moreover, several of the athletes experienced conflict between their athlete role and friend or familial roles. Ellis explained this conflict:

Sometimes it’s hard for friends outside of volleyball because I have volleyball and that’s super busy. I can’t go to things like events that they’re doing like if they’re doing a concert. I can’t go to those to be there with them and cheer them on because I have volleyball. So it’s hard with the athlete and friend thing sometimes because I want to be



able to hang out with people outside of the volleyball team. But since we're together all the time, and since we have practices all the time, it's tough to make time where they're free, too, because everybody's busy in college.

April also journaled about the impact of her athlete role on her friend and familial roles saying, "I get so wrapped up in being a student and athlete that I forget to be a good friend and family member or as good of one as I can potentially be. I can't even enjoy the people in my life." Erica also commented, "I am too focused on volleyball and not on my family."

Additionally, some of the athletes spoke to the ways in which their athlete role limited their exploration of other roles or experiences. For instance, Callie felt, "Being an athlete takes a lot of my time so I can't give enough time to stuff like religion." Similarly, Maggie said, "I haven't been to church in forever, but I also blame that on volleyball." Adele described during postseason that when she was playing volleyball, she was held back from skiing, wakeboarding, or rock climbing, because volleyball was her priority. She explained, "I did not want to do something stupid to put myself in danger." Moreover, Meredith described the sacrifices she made in her academic, spiritual, and extracurricular realms:

Being an athlete is definitely a sacrifice. I have not been able to get involved on campus or go to church with regularity or just different stuff like that; you kinda have to give up that to be an athlete. At points its really been frustrating, especially from an academic standpoint. You're not really able to get the internships you want to cause you don't have flexibility in the summer. I would have loved to go volunteer more in the community but I didn't have a car and I had practice. I wanted to be more involved academically and more hands on where I just couldn't.

Meredith also explained, “It’s kind of hard to have a summer job,” which impacted her ability to explore what she may want to do for a career after graduating from college. In turn, she noted, “I really am not sure what I want to do after school.” Overall, it is clear that the athletes’ highly salient athlete roles impacted various aspects of their college experience and may even have implications for their life after college.

**Impact of athlete role on well-being.** While the athletes’ highly salient athlete role impacted their college experience in negative ways, their athlete role impacted their well-being in both positive and negative ways. Several of the athletes discussed volleyball or their athlete role as a positive outlet from the stressors encountered as a part of other roles. Adele explained, “When I get done with volleyball, I plan to still be in the gym all the time, because that’s where I get release and that’s how I feel good. It just makes me feel better.” Teddy said, “As an athlete, I physically feel so much better when I work out or play. I sleep better. I am more alert. I am happier.” Miranda explained, “Volleyball’s my outlet from school. When I’m pissed off at my teachers, I go play volleyball.” Also, Izzie revealed, “Volleyball is my favorite thing in the world; it’s what I do when I’m having a bad day.” Thus, several of the athletes indicated their athlete role had a positive impact on their physical and mental well-being and at times, their happiness and mental stability was contingent upon the presence of volleyball in their life.

On the other hand, some of the athletes, mostly younger players, explained that their athlete role had a negative impact on their well-being. For instance, some of the younger players described that their sleep often suffered because volleyball left them “pressed for time” and as a result, they “struggled with choosing meals or sleep over homework.” Erica noticed by midseason that she was challenged to get enough sleep, “because work and volleyball take up a lot of the day. I don’t get a lot of sleep. I’m constantly tired from waking up so early and going

to sleep late.” Lexie wrote in her journal, “I’ve not been getting enough sleep because the extra hours mean I have to push my homework time later into the day, so I’m up till about midnight every night and we get up at 5:30.” So, lack of sleep was one way in which the athletes’ well-being was impacted due to their overwhelming athlete role.

Further as first-years, the two fifth-year athletes (Meredith and Addison) sustained significant negative impacts on their mental well-being under a different head coach. The current head coach described, “They had post-traumatic coach syndrome. They were always really skittish and fearful. It was not a nurturing environment.” Meredith described her first-year volleyball experience as “intense” which impacted her academics and mental state. Addison described her experience below:

I didn’t think I would hate college volleyball as much as I did my freshman year. It was awful and I still have things that I need to work through just because of what the coach put us through and the things that he told me. I knew it was going to be intense, but having a coach just saying mean things to you, personally attack you. So, that was frustrating and really hard to deal with. I kinda blocked out a lot of the memories that I have about the court and on the court. So volleyball wasn’t positive my freshman year.

Thus, these athletes sustained negative impacts on their mental well-being as younger players from their athlete role.

Also, some of the athletes, particularly younger players, experienced negative impacts on their satisfaction and mental well-being when they were not playing well or not playing in matches. Erica was not satisfied with her athlete role because she “was struggling.” She wrote in her journal, “I personally struggled on the court which made me sad and worried.” Further, Lexie was frustrated with her lack of playing time during the season. She revealed during her

postseason meeting with the head coach, “I was honestly miserable this year. As a result of what's been going on, I haven't felt like myself in the last year, maybe year and a half.” The assistant coach noted that Lexie “gets too consumed with volleyball like it's her entire life. If volleyball is not going to go well, nothing in life is going to go well. She's almost gotten obsessed.” Ellis’ injury and inability to play a few games also revealed the impact of her athlete role on her mental well-being:

When I thought I was going to be out, I was just so heartbroken. That whole week, I was extremely depressed because I was like, “If I miss our first game with my team, that's going to be heartbreaking for me.” That was probably the lowest point in my semester. It happened during pre-season, so there was nothing else going on around which made it worse. I couldn't take my mind off of it.

These circumstances regarding lack of playing time or injury were, in some way, out of the athletes’ control. It is possible that the lack of control was frustrating in and of itself. Yet, it is likely the athletes’ inability to live up to their own expectations or those of others regarding their athlete role generated negative feelings of being sad, worried, miserable, or heartbroken.

These negative feelings were particularly severe for Miranda. She described an even deeper connection between her athlete role and mental well-being:

If I didn't have it [athletics], I would literally go crazy. Last spring, I was kind of depressed and I hated school. I wasn't struggling in classes, but I wasn't doing as well as I should have been. I was down about boys. I didn't want to go home because I was always miserable when I was at home. Volleyball was the only thing that kept me happy. At the time, it was the only thing I felt like I had. If I didn't have it, I'd be depressed. I think I

would have killed myself by now, because I don't have a whole lot of outlets. If you were to tell me I couldn't be an athlete anymore, I really don't know what I'd do.

Since Miranda's athlete role provided an outlet or escape from the stresses of other aspects of her life, the idea of her life without volleyball left her feeling depressed, suicidal, without an outlet, and unsure of what she would do instead. Like Miranda who was a junior, some of the older players were unsure of what their lives would hold after graduation without volleyball. April was nervous about her transition out of her athlete role which had long-been a huge part of her life. She said, "I've had sports literally my whole life and I've always done really well at them. I'm nervous for after this year, after I graduate, and I'm not an athlete any more. It's how you define yourself for so long." Thus, some of the older players were unsure about their futures without being an athlete.

Overall, the athletes experienced both positive and negative impacts of their athlete role on their well-being. While some members of the team felt being an athlete positively contributed to their physical (e.g., alertness, sleep) and mental well-being (e.g., happiness, feel better), others felt as though being an athlete negatively contributed to their physical (e.g., sleep) and mental well-being (e.g., personality changes, depression). For some of the younger players, their well-being depended on whether their athlete role was going well in terms of playing time and performance; for some of the older players, it depended on whether or not their athlete role was simply present in their lives. Thus, as the athletes moved closer to graduation, the negative impact of their athlete role on their well-being focused on the idea of what their life would be like without volleyball and being an athlete, rather than lack of playing time or performance.

**Benefits of additional roles.** As a result of being socialized into placing a large importance on their athlete role, Addison wanted "to break out of that athlete mold instead of

being afraid to challenge the roles that I've been given." Similarly, Callie was heavily involved in mission work prior to college in which she traveled to other countries to help other people and communities. Based upon what she had learned so far about what it meant to be an athlete and member of the team, Callie worried about not being able to continue her mission work and fulfill that part of herself. She explained:

I want to have that other part of me still here, not just being a student and an athlete. I like having those other things to keep me busy, keep me focused in doing something meaningful, giving a little bit more of a purpose than just being a student-athlete.

While some of the athletes, like Callie, were unsure as to whether or not they would be able to explore other roles, several of the athletes took steps toward expanding their role set by adding roles. For example, Izzie said she was able to "do everything still. I'm not just an athlete. It's nice to remind myself that I'm more than a volleyball player. It's important to remind yourself that that's not all you are." Thus, the athletes valued being able to have additional roles.

The athletes described the benefits of having additional roles included racial identity exploration, career development, support, protection from negative experiences, and outlet from stress. Josephine described that adding roles over the years had not only improved her satisfaction with her college experience, but also allowed her to express herself and explore her racial identity:

Freshman year, I was just trying to stick around my team and stick with what I know, but once I started talking to more people and started breaking out of my little volleyball circle, it got better. I'm the one who leaves all the time, so I'll go to parties or I'll go visit friends at bigger schools. I've been able to express myself more in all of these things. I

was able to join Women of Color and kind of be able to get that branch out that I needed if I needed to be able to relate to someone.

Not only were the students and faculty at the university predominately White, but the volleyball team was entirely White except for Josephine who was biracial. Thus, her decision to explore other roles, especially those that allowed her to express herself and other aspects of her identity, allowed her to connect with similar individuals on campus and break out of the perceived or observed confines of her athlete role.

Another athlete saw her additional intern role as an opportunity to develop her future career plans. For instance, Addison took on an internship during her last semester, which provided an outlet from various stressors. “I think it's what saved me. There’s just so much stress with fifth-year, like trying to figure out a job, you have volleyball, you have school, and it's just nice to have an outlet of professionalism.” It is important to note that as a fifth-year, Addison was only taking a couple classes, so she had more time to devote to an off-campus internship.

Also, the athletes’ friend and family roles provided a much needed support system. April described how being a friend and family member provided such support:

They help me stay stable, because if I didn't have those roles, if I wasn't a friend, or if I didn't take pride in being a family member, I wouldn't have any support system around me. I wouldn't have anyone to tell me to keep going. It's a mental game and there are those moments where you tell yourself, “I can't do it anymore,” and by remembering those roles and that my family supports me, I can do it. They help me in my well-being, because they keep me grounded and don't let me get too far away from who I know I am.

Ellis also commented on the supportive role of her friends:

Friends are an important part of your life because they are the ones that support you and your friends are the ones who take your mind off of everything else. If problems are going on with your family or school or with your sport, friends are the ones who take you away from that world for a little bit.

Also, Teddy and Lexie explained that these relational roles made them feel better:

I do feel a lot better when I talk to them [family]. Just keeping that relationship with them impacts how I'm feeling for the day. Also for campus outreach and going to church, that really does help me. Doing those things helps me to slow down and just sit for a second and reflect on the things that have happened that week. So when I don't do those things, I feel really rushed.

In times when I'm set into one thing that I'm overloading myself with, it would be better if I tried harder to expand what I'm thinking about during that time, so if I talk to my family more or talk to my friends more. Then with wanting to explore my faith, I'm wanting to explore that this year. [...] Faith, family, and friends – whenever I pursue any of those I usually feel more settled, so I think just working all around to ground myself a little more in those would be helpful.

In fact, several of the athletes discussed wanting to give more time and energy to their friend and family roles. Even though the athletes were not able to devote as much time as they wanted to these relational roles, they often ranked these roles as higher than both their athlete and student roles. Given the opportunity, it is likely the athletes would incur even greater benefits by spending more time in these roles given the high salience of these roles to their identity.



Furthermore, some of the athletes felt additional roles provided emotional protection from negative experiences. In particular, Izzie and Adele described how their additional roles provided protection from the negative impact of a difficult volleyball season on their mood:

Volleyball is such a huge part of my life and it is so important to me. But there's also so much more to my life now, which has been exciting. When I was little, I wanted to be a big volleyball player and be a volleyball coach. Now, I'm looking forward to going to grad school, and volleyball being good or bad doesn't dictate my overall happiness as much anymore. When volleyball's going really well, I'm very happy and if it's doing poorly, it doesn't make me depressed.

It's really good that I had people again outside of volleyball and my family because volleyball wasn't going as well. Last year, if we had lost and had such a rough season as we did this year, I would've been much more negatively affected by it and affected my mood. Since I had so many other things going on this year, I was focused on other things and it wasn't as detrimental to my mood.

In comparison to the athletes mentioned earlier who sustained negative impacts on their well-being due to lack of playing time, poor performance, or the prospect of life without volleyball, these athletes had additional roles which acted as a buffer from negative volleyball experiences.

In addition, the athletes felt their additional roles provided an outlet from stress.

Interestingly, art seemed to play a special role for several of the athletes in providing a relief from stress. Cristina described drawing and painting as a “release.” Similarly, Izzie liked “to do art to decompress.” Josephine, who was heavily involved in art and even had a solo art exhibit during the semester to display her pottery pieces, explained, “Pottery is important to who I am because that's my release. I know whenever I get stressed, I can go do pottery, so that's also a

good release for me.” While these athletes found solace in their artist role, other athletes found it in choir, spiritual organizations, family, or friends.

Also, some of the athletes had a non-teammate roommate at some point during college who acted as an outlet from their athlete role, adding a roommate role to their role set. The athletes noted that they could not talk about their day with a teammate roommate since they already know the stories. Arizona used to live with her teammate, but switched to a non-athlete because “your whole day it's volleyball all the time and you're constantly with your teammates, and it's nice to just come home and have something different from that.” Addison roomed with her teammates her first- and second-year, but, since then, she had roomed with non-teammates. She explained, “We spend so much time together that when you come back to your room, kind of having a little bit of distance and separation, getting to talk about different things; it's kind of nice.” The associate head coach believed that Teddy was a “happy person” because “she doesn't live with any of her teammates. She has a network outside of volleyball and has gotten that college experience.” While the athletes who lived with their teammates simply extended their athlete role into their living environment, the athletes who lived with a non-teammate held a distinct and separate roommate role. This roommate role was an addition to their role set and provided a much needed outlet from their athlete role contributing to the benefit of holding multiple roles.

Moreover, the coaches noticed the benefits incurred by the athletes who had additional roles. The head coach felt that the athletes who had at least one other salient role outside of athlete and student greatly benefited from having an outlet, while those who were only focused on their athlete and student roles were stressed and not playing well. She said:

I think the kids that really do their best here and really make the most of their opportunities are those kids that have some other outlet, that it's not just volleyball and school. If it's in choir, then there's volleyball, school, and choir. [Josephine's] doing art. [Teddy] has another group of friends outside of volleyball. It's the kids that don't have that, I don't think that's always good. It's one of those cyclical things where if volleyball is not going well, then they're stressed out so much about it, then they're not playing well and it just sort of continues to funnel into it.

Thus, both the athletes and coaches attributed a variety of benefits to the addition of roles to the athletes' role sets.

**Need for alone time.** In addition to the benefits provided by the athletes having additional roles and experiences, the athletes also desired and needed alone time. The athletes were often frustrated during preseason because there was no opportunity for separation from the team or alone time in the dorms. Teddy discussed the need for balance between team time and alone time:

It's really nice to be so close to one another in the same dorm and be able to go a couple steps out the door to hang out with someone. But it's also nice to have our own space that we can go back into for the night.

Addison noted, "I try and have some me time after practices are over. I'm very introverted, so I need to recharge in order to survive preseason when you're constantly around the same people." So, she used her day off "as time away from the team to recharge." The athletes' need for alone time continued during season. Adele felt the need to "recharge" by being alone saying, "I need to be alone to kind of get my head around me. I get to de-stress. I don't have to talk about volleyball. I don't have to acknowledge it's a huge part of my life." Catherine noted that even just

“having that space to myself is gonna be heaven on earth, because it's a getaway. I can turn the lights off. I can just close my eyes. I can recollect.” Therefore, it was crucial that these athletes found time to escape from their athlete role and be alone.

*Role engulfment and role accumulation discussion (RQ2a and RQ2b).* In discussing their athlete role into which they were socialized, some displayed signs of role engulfment or becoming “unidimensional” individuals (Adler & Adler, 1991; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). These athletes failed to engage in meaningful exploration of other roles and made sacrifices to existing roles in order to ease the tension with their athlete role, thereby allowing their athlete role to become overwhelmingly central and critical to their identity. As a result, the athletes described various impacts on their college experience and well-being.

For the most part, the athletes’ highly salient athlete role (predicated on the importance of being an athlete to their identity and their commitment to being an athlete) led to negative outcomes. Some of the athletes (such as Miranda) experienced social isolation (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Brewer et al., 1993; Simiyu, 2010). Others (such as Meredith) were unable to foresee their lives without volleyball and plan for their post-college futures (Adler & Adler, 1991; Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000; Murphy et al., 1996; Sparkes, 1998). Even though there are very few post-collegiate opportunities for continued participation in volleyball, a couple of these athletes still had or were on the path to impaired acquisition of career decision-making skills. Moreover, the athletes with exclusive athlete identities were more vulnerable to experiencing emotional difficulties (Grove, Lavalley, & Gordon, 1997; Simiyu, 2010). Some (such as Lexie and Miranda) reported being sad, worried, miserable, or heartbroken, which, in some cases, verged on mental health conditions such as depression. Further, athletes (such as Callie and Ellis) experienced anxiety when not training due to injury (Coen & Ogles, 1993; Simiyu, 2010).

Overall, the present findings in concert with the extant literature indicate overcommitment to the athlete role can lead to and can restrict the development of a multidimensional self-concept and limit exploration of external interests (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993; Simiyu, 2010).

On the other hand, some of the athletes who held additional roles discussed the benefits of additional roles. The present study provides further support that it is healthy for college athletes to pursue other roles outside of athletics. In keeping with the identity accumulation hypothesis (Thoits, 1983), the athletes who possessed numerous roles had a positive outlet for their stress and were not anticipating a significant loss of identity upon their exit from sport. At the very least, it seemed to be healthy for the athletes to possess one additional salient role in addition to their athlete and student roles to provide a triangulation of salient roles. That is, the athletes who had their athlete and student roles as well as one other role in which to invest their time truly seemed to have better mental well-being. This third role (e.g., artist, musician, roommate) provided an outlet for stress relief and kept them from overanalyzing their athletic performance. The findings also indicate that athletes need dedicated alone time. So, practitioners may also need to support athletes to have time alone in order to adjust to, recover from, and cope with the demands of college athletics, academics, and additional pursuits.

While the present findings support the literature in terms of the outcomes associated with role engulfment and role accumulation, they also extend role theory and our understanding of how athletes become engulfed by unpacking how and from what roles they disengage. Upon entry into college, the athletes seemed to eliminate other roles all at once. While the athletes' familial roles seemed to have a symbolic importance to their identity, the actual time they spent engaging in those roles was limited, if not, nonexistent. Further, their friend role seemed to narrow and shrink down to an inner circle of teammates and some other athlete friends. The

athletes may have perceived their relationships with other athletes helped to maintain their athlete role (Callero, 1985; Stephan & Brewer, 2007). In addition to a collapse of their relational roles outside of the team, the athletes disengaged with any previously held extracurricular roles. It is important to note that the athletes not only disengaged with certain roles, but purposefully did not explore other roles or add roles, or at the very least, postponed such exploration or addition until later in their college career. So, these additional role opportunities were still available even if they did not take advantage of initial opportunities to meet other people on campus and get involved in other organizations, and some athletes did seek these opportunities later in their college career. Looking ahead to their final year of college and volleyball, some were unsure of and worried about their next steps after graduation.

Interestingly, some of the athletes may have been primed for role engulfment before starting college as they already had a quite limited role set before college. The findings of the present study support the socialization literature (Chao, 2012; Jablin, 2001), indicating that athletes are socialized into the norms of their athlete role beginning during childhood and adolescence. Given that some of these athletes started playing volleyball when they were under ten years old and all of them played during their adolescence (in high school and elite club programs), these athletes had already been taught how to be an athlete. They began to specialize in one sport (eliminating involvement in other sports), and put all of their time and energy into being the best volleyball player (eliminating involvement in roles that interfered with activities encompassing their athlete role), while maintaining their student role in order to make good enough grades to get into college. Thus, these athletes may have been primed for role engulfment or were perhaps more likely to become engulfed since they began college with an already limited role set. In order to lessen the prospect of role engulfment among college athletes, researchers

need to investigate role development and management among athletes during their childhood and adolescence, when they first start learning about what it means to be an athlete and what that means for their other roles.

Moreover, the present findings support those of Anderson and Dixon (2019), as the athletes who felt in control of their roles, whether singular or multiple, were satisfied with their experience and content with their roles. Yet, the athletes who voluntarily were engulfed in their athlete role assumed that this was a part of the “sacrifice” of college athletics (Hughes & Coakley, 1991). This acceptance of a sacrificial narrative in which it is normal or typical for college athletes to strictly focus on their athlete role, and give time to their student role in order to fulfill their athlete role, acted as the first step toward eventual role engulfment. So, it remains somewhat unclear if the athletes truly acted voluntarily or if their socialization into what it meant to be a college athlete dictated their steps toward role engulfment. In other words, it may not be enough to have choice and control over one’s roles especially if that choice leads to role engulfment. Instead, the number of roles may be more important to the athletes’ holistic development and well-being. So, athletes who hold a narrow role set and experience resultant negative impacts on their college experience and well-being need to be explicitly encouraged and guided toward role accumulation.

### **Role Management (RQ3)**

Given the athletes’ socialization and the outcomes of their role experiences, the athletes managed their roles by choosing to maintain a limited role set or expand their role sets. The associate head coach explained his perspective on the role landscape of the team:

It's split into three categories. Category one is that there's players that would identify themselves as a volleyball player first. That is a huge part of who they are and what they

are. I feel like there are players that would be like, "Yes, volleyball is who I am." Then there's the opposite side of the spectrum where if you took volleyball away from some of these girls, they would still have a sense of purpose and a goal. Then I think that you have the 50/50 split in the middle that some would be lost without volleyball but then again would still be successful.

After conducting the interviews with the athletes and coaches, observing some of the athletes who had different role sets, and reviewing their survey data, three different role profiles emerged among the athletes. There were athletes who would say "volleyball is who I am," athletes who were the "ideal student-athlete", and others who would say "volleyball is one of many roles." Below, I describe the characteristics of these three different role profiles and the impact of these profiles on the athletes' role sets and experiences.

**Volleyball is who I am.** As explained in the previous quote from the associate head coach, some of the athletes adopted a highly salient athlete role and placed their athlete role at the center of their identity. These athletes included Catherine (first-year), Maggie (junior), April (senior), and Meredith (fifth-year). Catherine said, "It's very important to me, because I want to be able to pursue a volleyball career after college and I would like to be able to go play overseas." Maggie said, "I feel like all I really do here is play volleyball and do school." April had played volleyball since she was ten years old. She explained, "One of the first things I said was that I'm a volleyball player. So it's extremely important to who I am." Meredith even ranked her athlete role as first and explained, "I mainly put athlete number one because it is just a main part of who I am, what I love to do. I love to be active. Being active is definitely what makes me happy." Therefore, these athletes identified as a volleyball player first and prioritized volleyball over everything.



Interestingly, if these athletes acquired other roles, those roles supported their image and identity as an athlete. For instance, Meredith had been a part of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee every year. She said, “It’s kind of nice because it has brought me really close with other athletes from other teams.” Thus, their decisions regarding other roles still revolved around their athlete role. Moreover, these athletes also fulfilled their student role for the sake of their athlete role. Catherine said, “That’s [academics] the one thing that’s gonna keep me playing volleyball. [...] If I can’t keep up my academics, I can’t stay and play volleyball, so that is my main priority.” Also, Maggie said:

I’m doing sociology and anthropology. I came and wanted to do psychology, and then I took classes, and I was like, “This is super hard and I’m not really trying to struggle and fail and get not eligible and kicked out.” So, I went the easier route.

Maggie also discussed how she eliminated extracurricular roles when she discovered that they jeopardized her eligibility and athlete role. She said, “I’m not a member of a sorority or a campus organization. I was my freshman year, but I struggled a lot. Extracurricular activities just add more into what I don’t need, more pressure on my grades.” These athletes assigned different standards to their athlete and student roles by allowing leniency in their student role but not in the athlete role. April explained, “Athletics are mandatory; I go to those. Academics are also mandatory, but sometimes if it’s an assignment or reading I can get away with not doing, because I have practice, I’ll find myself putting that to the back burner.” Even though these athletes were socialized to prioritize their student role over all other roles including their athlete role, and their behavior appeared to follow as such, their motivations to do so, in fact, indicated that they prioritized their athlete role over their student role.

Furthermore, these decisions to prioritize athletics cost them their ability to explore other roles. While Catherine encountered conflict with the upperclassmen during the Spring semester because she was not cooperating with the “we are one” message by having other friends and interests, her behavior changed during the Fall semester. Instead, she complied with the “we are one” message and decided to focus on her athlete and student roles. She said, “I want to get a good foundation here with my school and volleyball and be comfortable with all of that, and then maybe my junior year, start reaching out to organizations and getting my name out there.” Maggie wanted to join the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and Fellowship of Christian Athletes, but felt, “It’s just probably not good for me right now because I really am just volleyball and school.” Meredith stopped playing the piano for volleyball and hoped to “start back up again after volleyball.”

Their lack of role accumulation also impacted their ability to explore potential career paths and make plans for their post-college futures. For instance, Meredith described, “When I was here, I was focused on volleyball.” She went on to describe the significant impact of her prioritized athlete role on her career readiness upon exiting college:

I mean coming into it, I knew that my main reason for being here was for volleyball. Yes, school is important, but mentally I was here for volleyball. So, there wasn't really a huge conflict [between my athlete and student roles]. So, I've had a hard time with deciding and figuring out what I really want to do.

Also, April was nervous about her transition out of her athlete role saying, “I’m nervous for after this year, after I graduate, and I’m not an athlete anymore.” The younger athletes who adopted this role profile may ultimately encounter this same lack of career readiness upon graduation.

Although these athletes were engulfed in their athlete roles leading them to make concessions to their student role and fail to add other roles, they were highly satisfied with their college and athlete experience, especially when they were playing and playing well. Maggie started playing when she was in fifth grade and was highly competitive; in turn, she was highly satisfied when she was a part of the starting lineup and playing well. She said, “I can work hard in school, but my hard work in volleyball is more satisfying to me.” When she reflected on her first-year, she explained, “I started the whole year. That was just great. I was getting better. I loved the atmosphere. I’m somebody who gets super hyped and I’m very competitive. We just kept getting better and better. That was fun.” Meredith returned for her fifth-year after medical redshirting her senior year. She said, “I just thought when I didn’t play at all last year, I wanted to leave knowing I played four complete seasons.” Yet, their athlete role also generated feelings of stress. For example, April explained, “I stress over being an athlete too much. I want to be the best, but sometimes I think I get so in my head about it.” Catherine even transferred to another university upon not being satisfied with her athlete role. Overall, the centrality of their athlete role to their identity generated both feelings of distress and satisfaction depending on whether their athlete role met their expectations and goals. So, it was not the athlete role, per se, but the alignment between their expectations and experience in the athlete role that contributed to their satisfaction and well-being.

While these four athletes held limited role sets and displayed signs of being engulfed in their athlete role, their decision to prioritize their athlete role was voluntary and thus, the athletes were still satisfied with their role sets. In turn, the athletes re-negotiated the terms of their student role and chose not to explore other roles. Yet, those who kept this role profile encountered significant stress with their athlete role encountered difficulties and those that held this profile

through their senior or fifth-year were left with questions as to their next step after college and discovering who they were once they were not an athlete.

**Ideal student-athlete.** In comparison to the aforementioned athletes who made decisions about their student role based upon their athlete role, the ideal student-athletes placed an equal importance on their athlete and student roles. This label of “ideal” is not a reflection of my evaluation of these athletes, but rather, the value placed upon “academics are the priority” by the athletes, coaches, athletic department personnel, and others. While there were situationally-specific times in which either their athlete or student role was more important than the other (i.e., athlete role more important when in practice; student role more important when studying for a test), the athletes worked to do their best in both roles. There were eleven athletes who held the “ideal student-athlete” role profile, making up the majority of the team: Callie, Amelia, and Erica (first-years), Cristina, Lexie, Teddy, and Ellis (sophomores), Arizona and Miranda (juniors), Adele (senior), and Addison (fifth-year).

Arizona light-heartedly explained what it meant to be the ideal student-athlete when she said, “People are always like ‘what do you do?’ I’m like ‘school and volleyball.’ They’re like, ‘What hobbies do you do for fun?’ ‘School and volleyball.’” Erica noted:

It’s a lot just what it is. I could probably handle it [adding a role]. I just don’t want to put myself in a situation that would make me have to do more, because right now, I’m balancing it well. I don’t want to add something on.

Like Arizona and Erica, who did not have any hobbies or additional roles outside of being a student-athlete, these athletes were worried that adding roles would disrupt the balance they were working to achieve between their student and athlete roles.

In order to maintain this balance, these athletes had tremendous support from their teammates, coaches, and professors. As mentioned earlier, one of the primary messages sent by and to the athletes was that academics were the priority. So, the head coach allowed athletes to miss volleyball activities in order to meet school commitments, such as class, meetings with professors, and extra credit opportunities. Even though academics were the priority, the professors also understood that the athletes had significant demands on their time. So, the professors understood when the athletes had to miss class in order to meet volleyball commitments, such as travel for games. Thus, the coaches provided support for the athletes' student role and the professors understood, but did not necessarily provide support, their athlete role.

While the athletes received support for their athlete and student roles, they did not feel support for additional roles. In turn, the athletes sacrificed existing roles or failed to add roles in order to maintain the balance between their student and athlete roles. Miranda made sacrifices to her social life in order to be successful in her athlete role:

I wish I did freshman year different, because I would have talked to more people. I was so caught up in wanting to play, wanting to do well, wanting to be on coach's good side, have a connection with my setter off the court, because I knew that was going to get me stuff on the court.

So, the athletes eliminated existing roles and limited exploration of other roles.

In addition to sacrificing or not adding roles, the athletes engaged in role deferment by postponing role experiences to later times in their college career or till after college. Callie recounted conversations with her teammates in which they indicated when it was appropriate to engage in certain roles. "I've talked to some of the other girls and they said there's a time for

everything and in the spring it's more of the social aspect, because in the season you want to be focused on volleyball.” Similarly, the head coach encouraged the first-year athletes to focus strictly on their student and athlete roles saying, “Right now, it's fall and they know freshmen year GPA follows you the rest of your career. So I try to emphasize that right now, you don't have a ton of time for other stuff.”

Since the fall semester was meant for being the ideal student-athlete, the head coach noted the spring semester was looked to as the athletes’ opportunity to “expand their academic role, to expand their social role, to expand their role outside volleyball.” Lexie wanted to get more involved with on-campus groups, but stated, “I feel like next spring, I'll be focused more on that and making that a part of my life.” Amelia said, “I'm going to have to wait a while before I actually get to have a decent social life, until like season's over.” Moreover, the month of January during their interim semester or spring semester of the athletes’ senior year was their opportune time to study abroad. Arizona explained:

People study abroad in January, which is our lifting month. We don't really practice that much in January. So that is the best time to go abroad just because it's only a month. It's just lifting, not much volleyball. But they do let us do that. Also if you need to go abroad for your major, which would be Spanish or a foreign language, you have to go abroad for those majors for a full semester and you can't get out of that. So, the coaches want you to do it your senior year because you won't be missing anything.

Even if the athletes were considering exploring or adding other roles, they put off such exploration or accumulation until the next semester, next year, or after college.

These “ideal student-athletes” experienced variable outcomes with both positive (e.g., happiness, satisfaction, strong academic performance) and negative (e.g., inability to engage in

desired roles, lack of sleep) outcomes. Callie, for instance, expressed satisfaction with her athlete and student roles, and therefore, her life. She said:

I'm just very happy with my life. I'm just satisfied with everything that I'm doing. I'm excited to see where it takes me in my life. Even though I'm not playing, I'm extremely satisfied with who I am and being an athlete, what that means to me and what it makes me proud of. I'm double majoring in Spanish and International Affairs and I'm going to minor in business, and those are all things that make me really excited.

Yet, she also felt as though she was not as involved in her religious roles as she would like to be, which included being worried about not being able to continue her mission work. Another first-year, Erica, was highly identified as an athlete and a part of the team, but she confessed to being too focused on volleyball, and as a result, she was not spending enough time with her family and her sleep suffered. Yet, she did not wish to change her roles. In an ideal world, she said, "I think this is how I would like it. I think sometimes it gets like scrambled, as sometimes I too focused on volleyball and not on my family, or like focused on school and not spending time with my family, but I think it's what I want in life." These two first-years offer examples of the variable outcomes experienced by the ideal student-athletes.

**Volleyball is one of many roles.** As the majority of the team represented the ideal student-athlete with a few more athletes who largely identified as an athlete, there were only two athletes who embodied a role profile in which volleyball and student were just two of their many roles. These athletes were Izzie (junior) and Josephine (senior). Izzie truly enjoyed being involved in many different on-campus activities and was proud to be more than an athlete. Izzie described her extensive role set:

I'm definitely more known for volleyball here, but I still have the opportunity to do a bunch of different stuff. I'm in the math club. I try to make sure I'm going to all the sporting events. I'm in some of the math and biology honor societies. I'm probably more involved in the student stuff and the sport event stuff than I did my freshman year. People know that I go to stuff now.

Josephine explained, "Outside of volleyball, I'm probably in the art building. I'm kind of artistic. That's my other hobby." Josephine described the steps she took to expand her role set:

I started joining all of the black [organizations]. People [in the organization] will be like, "I hate when people ask me what sport do I play? Like I'm here for school." And I never really thought of that as a thing. It never really got brought to my attention that it could be a negative thing. [...] I was just trying to search for things that made me happy. These last couple of years, I've definitely battled mentally and I wanted to kind of grow instead of just moseying along and being okay with not being truly happy.

Both Izzie and Josephine took the initiative to add roles to their role set.

By expanding their role sets, the athletes felt as though they were helping to fulfill various aspects of their self. By joining academic clubs and interning in the research laboratory during the summer, Izzie was able to express more of her student role. She said, "I kind of found my thing in it and now I love it. I love going to class, I'm probably the biggest nerd on the team. I self-identify proudly." She also explained, "The busier I am the better usually. If I have too much free time, I literally go stir crazy." So, she felt better being involved in so many different activities. Overall, she was highly satisfied with her college experience – "I'm so genuinely excited every time I get to come back [to school]. I love it here." Without such role experimentation and role accumulation, Izzie may not have furthered her academic studies and



future career development. She may have gone crazy with too much free time. She may have not been as satisfied with her college experience. Instead, she was able to add significant experiences to her academic resume, stay calm and feel better, and feel satisfied with her experience.

Also, Josephine described the benefits she had incurred by joining campus organizations related to her racial identity and artist roles. She said:

My freshman year, I thought I was going to hate it here because of the way things looked volleyball-wise and socially. But once I started talking to more people and started breaking out of my little volleyball circle, it got better.

By joining certain on-campus organizations, Josephine was able to interact with other Black students. These interactions gave her the opportunity to better understand their experiences and in turn, gain a new perspective on her own experiences and become “truly happy.” She also joined the pottery club and began taking art classes, which led to her own solo exhibit. She said, “Being in college has definitely expanded my artist side.” Without such role experimentation and role accumulation, Josephine may have never had interactions with other minority individuals that prompted her to reflect upon her racial identity and how being Black and biracial impacted her life. She may have never fully developed her love of and talent for art. She may have continued to feel unsatisfied with her college experience. Instead, she learned more about her racial identity, expanded her artist role and was able to put together her own solo exhibit of her work, and became satisfied with her experience.

Yet, these athletes did not always hold this type of role profile. In high school, these athletes held rather limited role sets. Izzie noted that she limited her roles to just student and athlete in high school:

I didn't do much in high school because I was a two-sport athlete. I went to school in downtown Chicago but lived kind of far away and then I trained three times a week on top of that. So most of my time was school and volleyball in high school. So, my focus, goals, and expectations were to excel in volleyball and school.

Also, Josephine noted that she limited her involvement in her art and student roles in high school. She said, "In high school, I took athletics a little more seriously, so I didn't really do after-school programs with [art] anymore." She also dropped all of her honors classes going into her junior year in high school. She explained, "In high school I just dropped all of my honors and AP classes. I told my parents, 'I just really want to kind of focus in on sports,' so I did that." This limited role set continued into her first year in college, but she recalled how she evolved by joining campus organizations and extending her social circle after her first year:

Freshman year, I just was struggling so hard academically. I didn't really do any clubs or extra stuff. But I've kind of gotten back to the point where I feel like I learned how to work the system and what I can do and how much effort I can put into something, so I can free up some time for pottery club and Women of Color, or social life. But that was a struggle for a while. But I think once I got kind of comfortable, I kind of got more comfortable going into the next year.

Despite her role expansion, Josephine discussed that she still gives more time to volleyball than art because, "They're paying for my school; that's why I'm here." In a sense, she felt as though she owed it to her athlete role to place limitations on her other roles. Yet, these two athletes evolved as they got older and began to seek out additional experiences and roles. The associate head coach explained this age progression, "As they get older, they get more involved because they understand time management and what they can and can't do. When they're younger, they

probably observed some of the older girls doing that.” Thus, these athletes progressed toward taking steps contrary to the norm in an effort to expand their role sets.

A few of the “ideal student-athletes” were taking steps toward assuming this “volleyball is one of many roles” profile. For example, Arizona explained her extensive childhood experiences with choir, which regretfully came to a brief end when she went to college, but was soon incorporated back into her life:

I've done choir since I was really young. I made state twice and then I was in my high school choir, and then I stopped senior year because I couldn't fit in the class load. And then freshman year I didn't take it. You just kind of miss it, when you have something in your life constantly and then it's gone. It's not a huge deal, but I'd say it's like a stress reliever and it's something that I'm used to and it's comforting to have. I definitely hopped back into it sophomore year and then this year.

Further, the previously mentioned athletes who discussed the benefits of additional roles may not have seen an opportunity to give more time and energy to those roles, but may have wanted to engage more in such roles.

Based upon these examples, the assistant coach felt as though the athletes were given and taking advantage of the opportunities afforded to them by their college experience:

I don't really see them abandoning. I feel like they pick up more. There are no limitations on them. I think we have maybe two girls in a sorority. [One] does choir, [one] does lab. There is a bunch of extra things. [The head coach] definitely stresses to them, "If you want to do something, make sure it doesn't interfere with school. Make sure it doesn't interfere with volleyball. If you can make time for it, then do it." They definitely know that they have that freedom. If they really want to do something, go ahead and do it.

However, it was only a small minority of the team that had sought out such opportunities and those who did had waited until later in college to do so.

*Role management discussion (RQ3).* Based upon their role experiences and role outcomes, the athletes underwent a learning and sense making process whereby they managed their athlete role and role set. Some placed a high importance on their athlete role and very little importance on all other roles (i.e., Volleyball is Who I Am). As a result, their on- and off-court performance in their athlete role dictated their satisfaction and well-being; overall, these athletes did not want to make changes to their lives except to be more successful in that role (e.g., conference champions). Some placed an equally high importance on their athlete and student roles, and very little importance on all other roles (i.e., Ideal Student-Athlete). As a result, these athletes gave their full effort toward doing well in the classroom and on the court. While they may have found success and satisfaction in those domains, they also desired to be more involved in certain additional roles and experienced various negative impacts on their well-being. Some placed importance on their athlete and student roles as well as at least one other role, such as artist, member of campus organization, or athletics fan club member (i.e., Volleyball is One of Many Roles). As a result, these athletes were highly satisfied with their experience, felt as though they were not being held back from anything or any role, and truly happy.

While the athletes did not explicitly speak to their decision making process, each athlete likely assessed their role as an athlete to determine whether it was too salient, how it aligned with their priorities, and whether they felt held back from fulfilling other roles in addition to their athlete role. Some athletes assessed their athlete role and were pleased that it was highly salient which aligned with their priorities to be the best volleyball player and did not leave them feeling held back from other adding other roles. These athletes were representative of the “Volleyball is

Who I Am” profile. These athletes had up until college given their high school and maybe even middle school years to volleyball, and continued to give their college years to volleyball. These athletes wanted to be highly successful on the court and thus, funneled all decisions concerning other roles through whether or not it would benefit or detract from their athlete role. Will my major require a lot of time in labs or studying that may keep me from volleyball commitments? Will my grades impact my eligibility and playing time? Will studying abroad put me behind the rest of the team in terms of my volleyball training and development? Will going out with my friends keep me from resting for practices and games? While the answers to some of these internal questions may have kept the athletes from getting into bad situations concerning alcohol or drugs, or kept them passing their class so that they remained eligible to play, these athletes certainly neglected other aspects of life in order to fulfill the role of an athlete. This situation set up these athletes for a difficult transition to life after college and life after volleyball, and potentially an identity crisis. So, how can we proactively and preventatively help athletes find other role outlets so as to aid in their transition away from sport when the time comes?

The answer to this question may lie in the efforts of a select few of the athletes who were actively expanding their role sets. Those athletes progressively added roles and experiences over time. The first and second year athletes had relatively narrow role sets as these athletes were socialized to sacrifice and defer roles and be strongly associated with their athlete role in their early years of college. Yet, a couple of the third and fourth year athletes had begun to expand their role sets with an increased investment in academic and social roles. These findings are similar to that of Miller and Kerr (2003) who determined athletes underwent a two-stage identity formation during their college athletic career (Chen, Snyder, & Magner, 2010; Lally & Kerr, 2005; Wiechman & Williams, 1997). During the first stage, athletes over-identified with their

athlete role and maintained a singular focus on athletics. Yet, during the second stage, athletes increasingly invested in their academic and/or social roles. While the athletes in the Miller and Kerr (2003) and Chen and colleagues (2010) studies deferred their role experimentation till their fourth and fifth years of college athletic participation, some of the athletes in the present study deferred such experiences until their last year or last semester and only a few of the athletes had truly adopted a role set with many roles. Thus, the increased athletics demands of Division I college athletics, factored in with the pressure and control of an athletic scholarship, exacerbated this deferred role experimentation by pushing it closer to the end of the athletes' college career.

For example, Josephine was unhappy, dissatisfied with her experience, and felt as though she was not connecting with or expressing her true self until she began to expand her role set during the last couple years of college. She joined campus organizations, took art classes, attended parties and visited friends at other universities, and planned to study abroad for an entire semester. In turn, she experienced self-expression, artistic skill development, happiness, and fun. She also did not talk about being panicked or afraid of what would happen to her identity once she graduated and was no longer an athlete. While a few athletes, like Josephine, were able to invest more in their academic, social, and extracurricular roles before their inevitable exit from their athlete role, the athletes may have been even better off if they were able to develop these other roles sooner.

Moreover, the athletes negotiated between their athletic, academic, and social domains. This was an on-going negotiation, day to day, and even hour to hour, in which increased investment in one domain led to limited exploration of roles in the other two domains (Miller & Kerr, 2003). The "Volleyball is Who I Am" athletes invested largely in their athlete role, which limited their exploration of their student, social, and extracurricular roles. The "Ideal Student-

Athlete” invested largely in both their athlete and student roles, which limited their exploration of their social and extracurricular roles. However, the present findings provide support for Lally and Kerr (2005) by explicitly stating that athletes do not have to discount their athlete role in order to invest more in their student role as made evident by the “ideal student-athletes.”

These athletes looked to their student role as an outlet from their athlete role, albeit the only outlet, and placed their aspirations for the future in their academic studies and career development. While the athletic identity and role conflict literatures have warned of potential conflicts between the athlete and student roles of college athletes (Adler & Adler, 1991; Settles, Sellers, & Damas, 2002), and in fact, academic support staffs have arisen within athletic departments with the sole purpose of assisting athletes with managing this conflict, the present findings indicate that the exact opposite can be a reality. The athletes in this study rarely discussed experiencing conflict between their roles, and when they did, it was minimal and not sustained over long periods of time. Thus, the “ideal student-athletes” provide examples of success cases of athletes who, at the very least, were able to successfully navigate the competing demands of their athlete and student roles.

The vast majority of the team succeeded in both athletics and academics upon explicit direction from the individuals in their life, including their teammates, coaches, athletic department personnel, faculty members, and parents. These individuals repeatedly communicated to the athletes that academics were the priority. It is important to note the athletes were not supported by an academic staff in the athletics department to help them choose classes, learn how to study, or remind them of upcoming assignments, which speaks even more to so to their commitment to their student role. Yet, the athletes did have support from the head coach who acted in leu of official departmental academic support. Thus, coaches and managers can

communicate to athletes that investment in both athletics and academics is possible without impacting performance in one or the other, and provide support to echo such communications.

Furthermore, athletes do not have to discount their athlete and student roles in order to invest more in their social or extracurricular roles as made as made evident by the “volleyball is one of many roles” athletes. It is encouraging that some of the athletes took control of whether to remain narrow or expand their role set, which was not necessarily aided or restricted by the coaches (Thoits, 2003). Izzie was highly involved in additional roles prior to college and did not want to lose those roles. As a very high-energy person, she needed to be constantly on the go in order to expel that energy. It was a sense of pride for her to be known for more than volleyball, which motivated her to add and maintain those roles. Josephine also took active control over her experience and chose to expand her role set upon feeling dissatisfied with her college experience and being limited to just her athlete and student roles. Teddy joined a campus outreach organization and Arizona joined the choir; in doing so, they expanded their friend group and established an outlet for the stresses of college athletics. Yet, there were still others, such as Lexie and Miranda, who had not yet established such an outlet within a narrow role set, leading to emotional distress when their athlete role was not going well. Although athletes can enact their own agency and be proactive when managing their role as an athlete and their larger role set outside of athletics (Thoits, 2003), some athletes still may be unsure of whether an expanded role set is plausible or possible. Therefore, coaches and managers should encourage athletes to investment in additional roles beyond being a “student-athlete” is possible if they so desire.

While the athletes acknowledged and experienced the benefits of holding additional roles, it may not be ideal, warranted, or desired for all athletes to be in the “Volleyball is One of Many Roles” profile. Some of the athletes were highly satisfied with their role sets, no matter how



limited. Yet, it is also likely that these athletes may not have experienced or had time to reflect upon the negative “side effects” of such a limited role set at that point in their career, especially the first and second year athletes. Rather than trying to figure out how we can get *more* athletes into the “Volleyball is One of Many Roles” profile and *sooner* in their college career, we should try to find ways to support athletes of different role profiles to encourage awareness and self-reflection among athletes, and mitigate against potential negative consequences. The present study contributes to this conversation by providing a classification of athlete role profiles which will aid managers in recognizing the signs and symptoms of role engulfment, so managers can be more apt to address the specific needs of these athletes to support both their present and future.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **Practical Implications**

The degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role has received increased attention from scholars and an investigation into such identification has been of interest among practitioners concerned that athletes may encounter identity problems in association with sport injury or sport career termination. Based upon this extant literature, interventions directed toward the sources of such an identity could allow the anticipation and prevention of problems when the sport career ends abruptly. The present study contributes to this conversation and the implementation of such interventions by allowing coaches and athletes to see the collective impact of their messages on the behavior of individuals within their organization. Thus, the present study informs policy and practice for the ideal socialization of athletes into their roles and better integrating college athletes into the breadth of the higher education experience so as to mitigate against problems associated with sport exit.

In particular, the present findings reveal the limitations of an engulfed athlete experience in regard to their interactions, self-discovery, and development as well as the serious negative consequences for their well-being. Thus, athletes can explore and expand their role set outside of their athlete and student roles. In addition to expressing a message of “we are one,” coaches and athletes should also communicate the importance of “individuality.” In order to apply such practical recommendations, it is important to explore the expectation of sacrifice and the underlying assumption that more is better which are prevalent in the socialization of college athletes leading to role engulfment.

The culture of college athletics is rooted in an expectation of sacrifice. As outlined by Hughes and Coakley (1991), college athletes are socialized into knowing and living out the sport ethic or what it means to be a real athlete:

Throughout their lives, athletes have heard again and again of the need to be dedicated, to set goals, to persevere until goals are achieved, to define adversity as a challenge, and to be willing to make sacrifices and subjugate other experiences associated with “growing up” all for the sake of their quest to become all they can be in sport. (p. 308)

Hughes and Coakley (1991) suggested four beliefs are commonly accepted as what it means to be an athlete: (a) making sacrifices for The Game, (b) striving for distinction, (c) accepting risks and playing through pain, and (d) refusing to accept limits in the pursuit of possibilities. “Real athletes must love The Game above all else and prove it by subordinating other interests for the sake of an exclusive commitment to their sport” (Hughes & Coakley, 1991, p. 309). The normalization of this expectation of sacrifice is not only accepted by athletes, but by most people in sport, including owners, coaches, trainers, sport commentators, journalists, fans, and sponsors. Moreover, these norms are often internalized and used as a way to not only evaluate oneself, but also others, as a “real athlete.”

In the present study, the athletes sacrificed for the game and for the betterment of their team by putting the team and its success before themselves. Further, the coaches accepted and promoted this expectation of sacrifice. The athletes accepted these norms without stipulations and were unquestionably committed to living by the value system framed by the sport ethic. The present study reveals that this expectation of sacrifice is communicated through the “we are one” message. So, researchers and practitioners must begin to break down these norms and this message in order to implement change. We can target the specific agents outlined in this study

who communicated this message. In doing so, we can change the message from one of sacrifice to one of role expansion; athletes can still place importance on their athlete role without making sacrifices to their student role or additional roles.

Moreover, coaches and athletes often assume that more is better. Such as, if athletes spend more time with their teammates, then they will perform better. Or, if athletes are more strongly identified with their athlete role, then they will perform better. Yet, more is not always better (Anderson & Dixon, 2019; Wise, 2014). Instead, athletes may need less time with their teammates or may need to be less identified with their athlete role to perform well and develop as a holistic person. In response to this call for individual growth, athletic department personnel and coaches may consider implementing more programs for inter-student interactions, but the present findings indicate it is important to not implement more control over the athletes' lives. The athletes discussed the need for alone time, with a specific desire to have time away from their teammates.

Further, the present findings indicate coaches need to give athletes agency in exploring their own opportunities for individual growth. The coaches in the present study played an important and influential role in the athletes' development, but focused on providing encouragement and helping to facilitate experiences that were led by the athlete. During individual meetings between the head coach and an athlete, the coach asked about different domains in the athlete's life (e.g., training room, classes, roommate, family) to gauge the athlete's needs. Then, the head coach was able to address specific areas in which the athlete needed advice or direction. In the same way, coaches can encourage athletes to adopt a new role or foster an existing role early on in their college career with the aim of making positive contributions to the athlete's experience, development, and well-being. Overall, it is critical

coaches buy-in that success can be achieved without implementing more control and in fact, less control may be more successful.

In fact, the findings of the present study support the call for more concertive control within college athletics in which the control shifts to the athletes themselves (Tompkins and Cheney, 1985) and more simple control from the coaches, with less bureaucratic control in which athletes are subject to the rewards and punishments based upon compliance with systemic rules from organizations such as the athletic department or NCAA (Barker, 1993; Edwards, 1981). Given the extent to which college athletics controls an athlete's time, actions, social circles (Simiyu, 2010), future studies should continue to explore how the dynamics of power and control contribute to athletes' role development. For instance, technological control emerges from the organization's physical technology (Barker, 1993). So, how might communication technologies, such as cell phones, social media platforms, television, newspaper, or radio, contribute to the surveillance, control, and role socialization of athletes? How do video recordings of games and practices, and analysis software enable new forms of scrutiny and expand the time commitment and accessibility of athletes? Given the rapid growth in technological advancements in the world, and particularly in sport, an exploration of these forms of technological control provide an interesting avenue for which to assess the additional ways in which athletes are controlled by people and their surroundings.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The present study builds on the limited research that has adopted a discursive approach to research in sport (Cosh, LeCouteur, Crabb, & Kettler, 2013). Typically, the role theory conceptualization of athlete identity has implied that identities are static and unchanging, and, therefore, overlooks the possibility that identity can be dynamic and changing (Davies & Harré,

1990). In the present study, discourse tracing was instrumental in unpacking the individual experiences nested within team environments and the messages these individuals were sending and receiving over time. That is, role identities were viewed as being created and produced in and through discursive practices (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998), building a more integrated understanding of processes and outcomes toward role development that unfold over time in teams or organizations. Thus, the current exploration of identity among athletes extends the work of McGannon and Spence (2010) who argued for studying and conceptualizing “the self” and identity as situated in language in order to understand behaviour and actions and, in doing so, builds on existing athlete identity research and further develops athlete identity theory.

While current role theory can identify the negative ramifications of role engulfment, the literature gives little guidance on how to avoid role engulfment or how to manage it. Stephan and Brewer (2007) noted the athletic identity research provides “limited insights for the specific factors and mechanisms involved in its development, maintenance, and change” (p. 68). The present study adds to this understanding of development and maintenance of roles, including athletic identity. In addressing how to avoid and manage role engulfment, the present study illustrates how organizations can prioritize roles without engulfing athletes into singular roles. In today’s changing work environment in which workers want freedom and flexibility, managers need to develop ways to build identification and conformity without suffocating members of the organization. Specifically, practitioners should lessen the “we are one” message by allowing for individuality. The older athletes in the present study were unsure of what to do when their typical socialization practices were resisted by an uncompliant newcomer. She caused a disruption to their system by striving for individuality rather than compliance with conformity. In response, the team attempted to adapt to her needs and have flexible expectations as to what it meant to be

a good team member. For instance, they allowed her to come and go as she pleased from team social functions, although typically, it was frowned upon for team members to not be with the team on the weekends at parties. Thus, the present findings underscore the necessity of flexibility and adaptability in the socialization process on the part of socialization agents as opposed to fixed socialization processes that rigidly define and restrict roles.

Existing socialization theory must expand to examine the mechanisms behind such flexibility and adaptability. Why do organizational members resist socialization practices? How do organizational members change or adapt their socialization practices to accommodate resistant members? What practices are flexible and what practices are not? This study contributes to this advancing conversation, but remains limited by a single case. Comparative studies would help unpack the processes and outcomes between people in various settings. Thus, future studies should utilize additional cases to answer these questions to expand role theory.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The present study has several boundaries which provide fruitful directives for future studies. One, the present study explored role development and management among college athletes, which leaves unanswered questions regarding in what ways other athletes develop and manage their roles. How are professional and Olympic athletes socialized into their roles? How are athletes in elite training centers socialized? What impact does the additional layer of confinement to a specific training site have on their role development and management? Thus, future studies should seek to add nuance and depth to the present findings by exploring additional elite sport contexts.

Two, the present study explored role development and management among only female athletes, which leaves questions unanswered regarding how male athletes may differ. Do male

athletes send and receive similar messages? Do coaches of male athletes offer the same kinds of role support? While the present study does not indicate that there may be differences between male and female athletes in terms of how their roles are developed and managed, and the outcomes of those roles, the focus of the present study on female athletes may be a limitation and may fail to address additional nuances in role development and management based on gender. Thus, future studies may explore role socialization among male athletes. Yet, the scope to include or focus on male athletes may be, itself, limited.

Three, the present study explored role development and management among only volleyball athletes, which leaves questions unanswered regarding the impact of type of team or team size on such processes. How are athletes of individual sports socialized into their roles? Are they permitted more freedom or individuality? How does team size, with sports such as football, or gender make-up, with co-ed sports such as swimming, impact role development? Thus, future studies may also consider examining role development in other sports.

Four, the present study was unable to fully explore the ways in which racial and sexual identity are developed or constrained through role socialization, development, and management processes. While the athletes in the present study did not address their sexual identity, one athlete (Josephine) discussed the impact of her role development and management on her ability to explore and better understand her racial identity. Thus, future studies might explore how athletes come to understand and explore their own racial and sexual identity through role development and management, and how socialization practices may enhance or limit an athlete's ability to develop and understand these aspects of their identity.

Finally, the present study explored role development and management using discourse analysis. The use of discourse analysis with a single case provided an in-depth look at *how*



various levels of discourse play a role in the creation and transformation over time of role socialization messages. Future studies should continue to utilize discursive approaches and methods in sport management to further our understanding of socialization and role identity.

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – ATHLETES – PRE-SEASON

#### **Opening**

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.

#### **Role Expectations**

2. Before you arrived on campus, what did you expect from your college experience in terms of how you would spend your time and what you would get out of your college experience?
  - a. What about sport?
  - b. What about academics?
  - c. What about your social life?
3. What communication (e.g., messages, conversations, emails) made you feel that way?
  - a. What about communication from your coach or athletic department personnel?
  - b. What about communication from professors or academic personnel?
  - c. What about communication from your teammates/classmates?
  - d. What about communication from your parents or peers?
  - e. What about communication from your high school or club coach?

#### **Role Experiences**

4. In the questionnaire, you were asked to indicate the roles you presently hold. Tell me a little bit about your current roles.
5. How have your roles impacted your well-being?
  - a. Do you find that when you're really involved/uninvolved with certain roles that you feel better/worse about your life?

6. Are there ways that you wish your roles would change?
  - a. What roles would you like to add or give more time?
  - b. What roles would you like to eliminate or give less time?
7. How has college impacted your roles?
  - a. How has college limited your roles?
  - b. How has college expanded your roles?
8. What messages or conversations make you feel that way?
  - a. Who is communicating these messages to you?
9. How have your experiences aligned with your expectations? How were they different?
10. How have your roles changed since your freshman year?

### **Role Satisfaction**

11. In the questionnaire, you were asked to indicate your level of satisfaction with each of your roles. Tell me/us a little bit about why you are satisfied or dissatisfied with some of these roles.
12. How have these role experiences impacted your satisfaction with your college experience?
13. What changes in these roles would increase your satisfaction with your college experience?

### **Role Salience**

14. In the questionnaire, you were asked to rank your roles how prominent, significant, and important each one is to your identity. Tell me/us a little about how and why you ranked them this way.
15. In an ideal world, how would you like your role identities to be ranked?
  - a. Why? What difference would this new ranking make on your life?
  - b. How would your life look different?



## **Role Conflict**

16. Do you ever experience conflict between your roles?

- a. Is there conflict between your athlete role and student role?
- b. Is there conflict between your athlete role and family/friend role?
- c. Is there conflict between your student role and family/friend role?

## **Role Management**

17. How have you managed your roles?

- a. Who are the people you felt you've had to have conversations with?
  - a. Have you negotiated with your coach?
- b. Have you added roles?
- c. Have you abandoned roles?

18. Can you give a specific example of how you have managed your roles?

- a. Who was involved in that process?

19. Why have you or have you not managed your roles to fit what you want?

- a. What message or conversations made you feel that way?

20. Let's talk about the supports that help you manage your roles and barriers to managing your roles.

- a. What helps you manage your roles?
- b. Who helps you manage your roles?
- c. What keeps you from managing your roles?

## **Closing**

21. Is there anything you would like to add about your roles or your college experience?

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – ATHLETES – MID-SEASON AND POST-SEASON

#### **Opening**

1. Tell me/us a little bit about your semester so far.
2. How do you feel about your performance this season?
  - a. How have your roles impacted your performance?
  - b. How have your roles impacted your well-being?

#### **Role Experiences**

3. How have your roles changed since the beginning of the semester?
4. Are there ways that you wish your roles would change?
  - a. What roles would you like to add or give more time?
  - b. What roles would you like to eliminate or give less time?
5. How has college impacted your roles?
  - a. How has college limited your roles?
  - b. How has college expanded your roles?
6. What message or conversations make you feel that way?
  - a. Who is communicating these messages to you?
7. How have your experiences aligned with your expectations? How are they different?

#### **Role Satisfaction**

8. In the questionnaire, you were asked to indicate your level of satisfaction with each of your roles. Tell me/us a little bit about why you are satisfied or dissatisfied with some of these roles.

- a. How has your satisfaction with your roles changed since the last time we talked?
9. How have these role experiences impacted your satisfaction with your college experience?
10. What changes in these roles would increase your satisfaction with your college experience?

### **Role Salience**

11. In the questionnaire, you were asked to rank your roles how prominent, significant, and important each one is to your identity. Tell me/us a little about how and why you ranked them this way.

- a. How has the ranking of your roles changed since the last time we talked?
12. In an ideal world, how would you like your role identities to be ranked?
- a. Why? What difference would this new ranking make on your life?
  - b. How would your life look different?

### **Role Conflict**

13. How have you experienced conflict between your roles this semester?
- a. Is there conflict between your athlete role and student role?
  - b. Is there conflict between your athlete role and family/friend role?
  - c. Is there conflict between your student role and family/friend role?

### **Role Management**

14. How have you managed your roles this semester?
- a. Who are the people you felt you've had to have conversations with?
    - i. Have you negotiated with your coach?
  - b. Have you added roles?
  - c. Have you abandoned roles?
15. Can you give a specific example of how you have managed your roles this semester?

- a. Who was involved in that process?
16. Why have you or have you not managed your roles to fit what you want?
- a. What message or conversations made you feel that way?
17. Let's talk about the supports that help you manage your roles and barriers to managing your roles.
- a. What helps you manage your roles?
  - b. Who helps you manage your roles?
  - c. What keeps you from managing your roles?

**Closing**

18. Is there anything you would like to add about your roles or your college experience?

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – COACHES – PRE-SEASON

#### **Opening**

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and your role as a Wofford volleyball coach.
2. How do you feel about the team's performance so far this season?
3. How do you feel about the team's cohesion so far this season?

#### **Role Expectations**

4. What interactions do you have with the athletes before they arrive on campus their first year?
5. Before the athletes arrive on campus, what do you tell them to expect from their college experience in terms of how they will spend their time and what they will get from their college experience?
  - a. What about sport?
  - b. What about academics?
  - c. What about their social life?

#### **Role Experiences**

6. In what ways do you think the athlete's experiences meet their expectations?
7. In what ways do you think the athlete's experiences do not meet their expectations?
8. What messages or conversations do you have with the athletes concerning their roles?
  - a. What about their student role or other roles outside of athletics?
9. What policies or rules do you have with the team concerning what they can do and cannot do outside of athletics?
  - a. Do you have policies or rules about how the players spend their time?

- b. Do you have policies or rules about what the players can be involved in?

### **Role Satisfaction**

10. How do you gauge the athlete's satisfaction with their athlete role?

- a. What about their student role or other roles outside of athletics?

### **Role Salience**

11. Where do you want the athletes to place their priorities?

- a. How might these priorities shift at different points in the year?

12. Where do the athletes place their priorities?

- a. How do their priorities shift at different points in the year?

### **Role Conflict**

13. What conflicts do you see between the athlete's roles?

- a. How do you help them resolve those conflicts?

### **Role Management**

14. How do you help the athletes manage their roles?

15. Can you give a specific example of how you have helped an athlete manage their roles this semester?

- a. Who initiated that process?
- b. Did it involve adding or subtracting roles, or changing the expectations attached to those roles?

16. What other supports do you direct athletes to in order to help them manage their roles?

### **Role Identity**

17. What is your picture of an ideal athlete?

- a. What do you perceive as under-commitment?

b. What do you perceive as over-commitment?

**Closing**

18. Is there anything you would like to add about your role or the team?

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – COACHES – POST-SEASON

#### **Role Satisfaction**

1. What sense do you have about the athlete's satisfaction with their roles this semester?
  - a. Athlete? School? Outside of sport?
  - b. How do you gauge their satisfaction?
  - c. How do you go about improving their satisfaction with their roles?
    - i. Can you provide an example from this semester?

#### **Role Salience**

2. Does this team put enough emphasis on volleyball?
3. How much do you think the team agrees about their commitment to and importance of volleyball in their life? Do all of the women on the team have the same priorities?
  - a. Who is distracted from volleyball? What is distracting them?
    - i. How does that impact their performance, team's performance, chemistry?
  - b. Who is too consumed in volleyball?
    - i. How does that impact their performance, team's performance, chemistry?
  - c. Is there any difference between the seniors and freshman?
  - d. Is that a source of tension for the team that some don't focus enough on volleyball and some are super focused?
    - i. How are you managing that tension? How does the team manage it?
    - ii. How does that tension impact performance or chemistry?
    - iii. What conversations have you had with them about that?



- iv. What are they telling each other? Have they had conversations about that?

### **Role Conflict and Management**

4. What do you see as an ideal balance?
  - a. Who is achieving that balance?
  - b. Who needs to give up roles?
  - c. What conversations have you had with them about that?
5. How much do you think the team agrees about how to balance their roles?
  - a. What are they telling each other? Have they had conversations about that?
  - b. Is that a source of tension?
  - c. How are you managing that tension? How does the team manage it?
6. What conflicts did you see between the athlete's roles this semester?
  - a. Why do you think that happened?
7. How did they resolve those conflicts?
  - a. How did you help them resolve those conflicts?
  - b. What other supports did you direct them to in order to help them manage their roles?
8. In what ways did the athletes manage their roles this semester? (add roles, abandon roles)
  - a. Do the athletes seem to get involved in similar activities?
  - b. Do you encourage the Freshman to focus on school and volleyball?
  - c. What about the athletes as they get older?

### **Moving Forward**

9. How do you think the athlete's expectations were met this season?
  - a. Sport? Academics? Socially?
10. What are some memorable moments for you this season?

11. What is your mindset about their roles moving into off-season?

a. How does that line up with what the athletes want?

APPENDIX E  
DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How old are you?

- Under 18
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26+

2. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How do you describe yourself? (Check all that apply.)

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino

- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian
- Biracial
- Multiracial
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What year are you in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Fifth Year Senior

5. What is your anticipated year of graduation?

- 2018
- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022

6. Did you transfer to this college or university?

- Yes
- No

7. During what year did you transfer to this college or university?

- Freshman Year
- Sophomore Year

- Junior Year
- Senior Year
- Fifth Year

8. Are you on athletic scholarship?

- Yes
- No

9. What percentage of your college expenses are covered by your athletic scholarship?

10. Are you on academic scholarship?

- Yes
- No

11. What percentage of your college expenses are covered by your academic scholarship?

APPENDIX F  
ROLE QUESTIONNAIRE

**Role Type and Role Saliency**

For each of the following roles, please indicate how important that role is to who you are. If the role does not apply to you, then please check “Not applicable to who I am.”

	Extremely not important to who I am (1)	Not important to who I am (2)	Somewhat not important to who I am (3)	Neither not important or important to who I am (4)	Somewhat important to who I am (5)	Important to who I am (6)	Extremely important to who I am (7)	Not applicable to who I am
Student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member of Academic								
Major:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
_____								
Member of Sorority:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
_____								
Member of Campus								
Organization:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
_____								

Member of Religious Body: _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member of Religious Organization: _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Athlete	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Musician	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dancer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Artist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mother	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Daughter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sibling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sister	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Niece	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cousin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spouse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wife	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Female	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transgender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member of Racial Group: _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Role Hierarchy

Please rank the following roles according to how prominent, significant, and important the role is to your overall identity as a person.

	Rank
Student	_____
Employee	_____
Member of Academic Major	_____
Member of Sorority	_____
Member of Campus	
Organization	_____
Member of Religious Body	_____
Member of Religious	
Organization	_____
Athlete	_____



Musician	_____
Dancer	_____
Artist	_____
Family Member	_____
Parent	_____
Mother	_____
Child	_____
Daughter	_____
Sibling	_____
Sister	_____
Niece	_____
Cousin	_____
Spouse	_____
Partner	_____
Wife	_____
Friend	_____
Female	_____
Transgender	_____
Member of a Racial Group	_____
Other	_____

## Role Quality

For each of the following roles, indicate how satisfied you are with that role.

	Strongly Dissatisfied (1)	Moderately Dissatisfied (2)	Slightly Dissatisfied (3)	Neutral (4)	Slightly Satisfied (5)	Moderately Satisfied (6)	Strongly Satisfied (7)
Student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member of Academic Major	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member of Sorority	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member of Campus Organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member of Religious Body	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member of Religious Organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Athlete	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Musician	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dancer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Artist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mother	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Daughter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sibling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sister	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Niece	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cousin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spouse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wife	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Female	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transgender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member of Racial Group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Well-Being**

Based upon your life at this present moment, how would you describe your overall quality of life?

Very Poor Quality (1)	Poor Quality (2)	Acceptable (3)	Good Quality (4)	Very Good Quality (5)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX G  
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Before your daughter went to college, what conversations did you have with her about what to expect from her college experience regarding volleyball, academics, social life, and any other aspects of her college experience?
2. A. In what ways do you think your daughter's experiences (volleyball, academics, social) met her expectations?  
B. In what ways do you think her experiences did not meet her expectations?
3. Thinking back, are there things you wish you would have told your daughter or wish someone would have told you about college athletics, the Wofford volleyball program, or college in general?
4. How do you think being involved in college athletics and being a member of the Wofford volleyball team has impacted your daughter as a person? In your answer, you might discuss ways that being a college athlete has expanded or limited her opportunities/experiences, or ways that being a college athlete has impacted her in other positive and negative ways.
5. Who do you think has influenced or influences your daughter in sport and in what ways?
6. Sometimes college athletes have difficulty balancing their various roles (athlete, student, friend, family member, etc.).  
A. What conflicts do you see between your daughter's roles?  
B. How do you help her manage her roles? Please give a specific example of how you have helped her manage her roles this semester. Did it involve adding or subtracting roles, or changing the expectations attached to those roles?

## APPENDIX H

### FACULTY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What conversations do you have with athletes about what to expect from their college experience regarding academics, social life, volleyball, and any other aspects of their college experience?
2. A. In what ways do you think the athlete's experiences meet their expectations?  
B. In what ways do you think the athlete's experiences do not meet their expectations?
3. A. What is your perception of current Wofford volleyball athletes?  
B. What have your experiences been with current volleyball athletes this semester?  
C. Do these volleyball athletes operate differently in the classroom compared to other students or other athletes?
4. How do you think being involved in college athletics impacts athletes as a person in positive or negative ways? In your answer, you might discuss ways that being a college athlete expands or limits their opportunities and experiences.
5. Sometimes college athletes have difficulty balancing their various roles (athlete, student, friend, family member, etc.).  
A. What conflicts do you see between the athlete's roles?  
B. How do you help the athletes manage their roles?  
C. What other supports do you direct athletes to in order to help them manage their roles?

Table 1. Additional Journal Questions

Week	Journal Questions
4 & 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. During preseason, what have you learned or taught others about what it means to be a member of the Wofford volleyball team. What does a Wofford volleyball player think, say, and do? What does a Wofford volleyball player NOT think, NOT say, and NOT do? How do you know this? Who told you?</li> <li>2. Please provide a 6-word bio of you as a student athlete.</li> </ol>
6 & 7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For the following question, please answer parts A and B. (A) So far, how have your experiences with volleyball and the team aligned with your expectations? How have your experiences with volleyball and the team differed from your expectations? (B) So far, how have your experiences outside of volleyball (academics, social life, extracurricular activities, and family) aligned with your expectations? How have your experiences outside of volleyball differed from your expectations?</li> <li>2. For the following question, please answers parts A and B. (A) What successes have you encountered so far balancing your roles? What skills or supports helped you to achieve those successes? (B) What challenges have you encountered so far balancing your roles? How have you handled those challenges? What skills or supports have helped you overcome those challenges?</li> </ol>
12	<p>For the following question, please answer parts A and B. (A) How are Wofford Volleyball players viewed and treated on campus? What are the stereotypes of Wofford Volleyball players? Please describe how other athletes, students, faculty, administrators, or staff view Wofford Volleyball players. (B) How do these perceptions or how you are treated make you feel? How do they impact how you behave (who you are friends with, what classes you take, where you place your priorities, etc.)?</p>
13	<p>Please describe your thoughts going in to the last week of season. In your answer, you might discuss your thoughts about the SoCon Tournament, your feelings about the season coming to an end, what you are looking forward to after season, how your life may change after this week, or your thoughts about this being your final season (for seniors and fifth years).</p>

Table 2. Focused Questions by Research Question

Research Question	Focused Questions
<p>RQ1: How do college athletes come to understand their roles?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does it mean to be an athlete?</li> <li>2. What does it mean to be a member of the volleyball team?</li> <li>3. How are boundaries created between the team and other people or groups on campus?</li> <li>4. How are role boundaries (re)created and enforced?</li> <li>5. How are rules enacted and enforced?</li> </ol>
<p>RQ2a: How do college athletes become engulfed in their athlete role?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What roles do athletes eliminate?</li> <li>2. When do athletes eliminate roles?</li> </ol>
<p>RQ2b: How does the number and nature of college athletes' roles impact their performance, satisfaction, and well-being?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In what ways do athletes feel their role engulfment is voluntary or obligatory?</li> <li>2. How does role engulfment impact performance, satisfaction, or well-being?</li> <li>3. How does role accumulation impact performance, satisfaction, or well-being?</li> </ol>
<p>RQ3: How do college athletes manage their roles?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What changes do athletes make to their role sets?</li> <li>2. When do such changes occur during the athletes' college career?</li> <li>3. How is resistance enacted by athletes?</li> </ol>

Figure 1. Role Identity Development and Management Model

