


Summer 2016

# Motivation, Athletic Identity, and Commitment to Sport in Division I Varsity Athletes and Collegiate Club Level Athletes: A Qualitative Analysis

Emily C. Karoblis  
*Georgia Southern University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Health Psychology Commons](#), [Social Psychology Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Karoblis, Emily C., "Motivation, Athletic Identity, and Commitment to Sport in Division I Varsity Athletes and Collegiate Club Level Athletes: A Qualitative Analysis" (2016). *Electronic Theses & Dissertations*. 1468.  
<http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/1468>

This thesis (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies (COGS) at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu).

# MOTIVATION, ATHLETIC IDENTITY, AND COMMITMENT TO SPORT IN DIVISION I VARSITY ATHLETES AND COLLEGIATE CLUB LEVEL ATHLETES: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

by

EMILY KAROBLIS

(Under the direction of Dr. Daniel Czech)

## ABSTRACT

Motivation, athletic identity, and commitment are constructs that have previously been addressed and researched in regards to their impact upon athletes. Each of these constructs has previously been addressed alongside one other construct but all three have not been addressed. In addition to this, research is lacking information regarding collegiate club sport athletes. The purpose of this study was to examine the thoughts of club level athletes and Division I Varsity level athletes as they relate to motivation, athletic identity and commitment to sport. The participants included 12 athletes, 6 at the club level and 6 at the Varsity level. For the club level athletes, themes emerged for motivation which included (1) relationships with teammates, and (2) sport improvement. The themes for commitment were (1) personal commitment, (2) love of the sport, (3) emotional connection, and (4) major part of life. There was also a singular theme found for athletic identity with club sport athletes which was (1) sport as a part of the individual. For varsity athletes the themes that were found for motivation were (1) sense of accomplishment, (2) personal drive, (3) sport improvement, and (4) others as motivators. The themes for commitment were (1) time commitment, (2) parental influence, and (3) scholarship. There was also only one theme for athletic identity found for Varsity which was (1) importance of the athlete role. From these themes, research may be conducted to further investigate Varsity and club level athletes in regards to what motivates them, why they remain committed to their sport, and how much they identify with the athlete role. This information may be beneficial for coaches, captains, and other leadership figures in relation to athletics at these levels.

KEY WORDS: Varsity, Club, Motivation, Athletic Identity, Commitment

MOTIVATION, ATHLETIC IDENTITY, AND COMMITMENT TO SPORT IN DIVISION I VARSITY  
ATHLETES AND COLLEGIATE CLUB LEVEL ATHLETES: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

by

EMILY KAROBLIS

B.S., University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, 2010

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

© 2016

EMILY KAROBLIS

All Rights Reserved

MOTIVATION, ATHLETIC IDENTITY, AND COMMITMENT TO SPORT IN DIVISION I VARSITY  
ATHLETES AND COLLEGIATE CLUB LEVEL ATHLETES: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

by

EMILY KAROBLIS

Chair: Dr. Daniel Czech

Committee: Dr. Brandonn Harris

Dr. Samuel Todd

Electronic Version Approved:

July 2016

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION .....	3
Purpose of Study .....	11
2. METHODS .....	12
Procedures .....	12
Interview Protocol .....	13
Data Analysis .....	14
3. RESULTS .....	15
Club Sports .....	17
Varsity Sports .....	23
4. DISCUSSION .....	28
5. REFERENCES .....	34
6. APPENDICES .....	36
A. Purpose Statement, Research Questions, Limitations, Delimitations, Assumptions, Definitions .....	36
B. Annotated Bibliography .....	38

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As the governing body of varsity athletics amongst Division I through Division III schools, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is an active partner in pursuing both athletic and academic success for those who are competing at the Division I, II, and III levels. The NCAA organizes national championship competitions and has many committees which are responsible for sport rules, health and safety, women in athletics, and championships. In addition to the work that they do with sport, the NCAA also provides educational assistance to athletes whether that is in the form of scholarship or grant money or the issuance of progress reports regarding the performance of the athletes in the classroom. They also provide the guidelines for the academic standards to which athletes are expected to obtain. The overarching role of the NCAA is to provide guidance with which to ensure the success of student-athletes (NCAA, 2015).

In addition to the support and direction provided by the NCAA, Division I athletes are also commonly surrounded by the support of coaches, teammates, and in many instances, the school population as well. These athletes can be “the most physically talented individuals, they have significant privileges and status, and they represent the university as a whole within regional and national competitions” (Sheldon & Watson, 2011, p. 2). From an academic standpoint, research shows that these athletes are also more often engaged in campus activities and are more likely to transfer their life skills, self-esteem, and character traits into their careers (Chen, Snyder, & Magner, 2010). In addition, athletes competing at the Division I level tend to strongly identify with their sport. This means that their sport is something they use to define themselves as individuals. This identification of the self as an athlete also tends to be stronger than the identification as a student for many because they put a lot of time into practicing and playing in addition to formulating relationships with teammates. Research by Chen and colleagues (2010) also showed that student athletes see positive effects of their involvement

including health, development, and the opportunity to develop strong relationships. Though there are many positives associated with being a Division I student-athlete, there are also a number of components which indicate that this role is filled with stress and pressures that can be detrimental to the athletes (Sheldon & Watson, 2011).

Student-athletes competing at the Division I level are not only faced with expectations within their sport and in the classroom, but there are also many psycho-social problems that were found to be associated with college athletes. Some of these complications include more" violent behavior on and off the playing field, eating disorders, poor academic performance, alcohol and performance-enhancement substance abuse, depression, burnout, hazing, gambling, and a lack of a social life" (Chen, et al., 2010, p.178). Many of these psycho-social problems may be attributed to the pressures and stresses that these student-athletes face through their participation both in sport and education. They include financial pressures, performance pressures, and time management. From a financial standpoint, student-athletes need to not only obtain but also keep scholarships. Though this seems like a positive aspect, it can be obscured by an excessive emphasis on winning and commercialization which is seen in particular by universities that obtain their revenues from corporate sponsors and commercial sources (Chen et al., 2010). Additionally, student-athletes are expected to perform at a certain level in order to maintain playing time and keep both fans and teammates engaged in the sport. This maintenance of a high level of play also relates to the scholarship because if the athletes begin to falter, they may not be able to keep the financial assistance provided by that scholarship (Chen et al., 2010). In regards to time management, athletes are expected to be in attendance for all practices and competitions which is a large time commitment. According to the NCAA (2015), athletes are allowed up to four hours of practice per day which may include sport related practice, weight training, conditioning, meetings with the team or coaches, and film review. In addition to adhering to this time commitment, these athletes are balancing an academic load as well so it is integral for them to be able to manage their time in order



to account for success in both of these areas (Chen, et al., 2010). Despite the burdens that may be placed upon these student-athletes, many continue to compete at this level and are able to adequately balance the pressures placed upon them and also remain in touch with the positive attributes that their sport has to offer.

In contrast to the higher profile status of Division I athletics, intercollegiate club athletics are not governed by the NCAA, there are no financial scholarships, the time commitment is less burdensome, and the players are solely responsible for the management of the team. College club sports are rapidly increasing in popularity and are comprised of a wide array of highly skilled athletes and teams competing in regional conferences and national championships for their sport. These sports are differentiated from Division I sports in that they are entirely run by the players. This means that the athletes are responsible for maintaining the small budget supplied to them by the school in addition to planning and implementing all of their own practices, travel and tournaments. They also take upon the obligations of recruiting and fundraising for the team. Despite all of this work associated with being a part of a club team, those involved claim that they do it because they take ownership of their team and love what they do (Pennington, 2008). The concept of club sport participation “is a return to pure amateurism and a lot closer to the original model for college athletics” (Pennington, 2008, p.2). Club sports also provide a middle ground between the intensity of Division I athletics and the more casual sporting atmosphere provided by intramural programs. Another appealing aspect is that the ability to balance academics, sport, and a personal life can be perceived as being more feasible when one competes in a club sport rather than a Division I sport as the demands placed upon the athletes do not tend to be as intense. In addition to this, the lessons that accompany running the program can be applicable towards the future of the athlete. The skills of balancing a budget, planning and organizing practices, recruitment and travel are all an integral part of making club sports work and all of this is done by the team leaders. According to Chris Alpine, the Club Sports Director at Villanova, “Being active in

the leadership of a club sport teaches a wealth of real-life lessons that college students might not learn anywhere else”( as cited in Pennington, 2008, p.3). The experience of being a club sport athlete appears to be a strong alternative to competing at the Division I level but there are difficulties associated with club sports just as there are for Division I athletes.

One of the difficulties that may arise for club teams revolves around finances. The school may not always provide enough financial assistance which can cause a variety of stressful situations for the teams. Finances can be a large struggle as the teams need to not only budget for everyone to go and compete but they must also take into account things like gas and hotel costs in addition to the cost of uniforms and any membership fees that they may need for that particular sport. When taking these aspects into consideration, teams may have the athletes pay for a portion of these costs which can be difficult for the team members to fund. In addition, the luxuries provided to the varsity athletes are typically not provided for the club athletes (Pennington, 2008). In most universities, club sport athletes do not receive locker room space and the varsity teams receive priority when it comes to the use of facilities such as court or field space. This means that it is probable that competitions and practices are at less opportune times for the club teams (Pennington, 2008). Despite these difficulties, “an estimated two million college students play competitive club sports compared with about 430,000 involved in athletics governed by the NCAA”(Pennington, 2008, p.2).

In addition to the variation in the number of athletes and the apparent differences noted previously, there have also been disparities found in the individuals participating at each of these levels of competition. For example, Griffith and Johnson (2002) stated that “Division I athletes may feel the need to participate in sports to financially support their college education” which would not ring true for club sport athletes as their sports typically cost them money rather than saving or helping with finances (p.230). Furthermore, Sheldon and Watson (2011) indicated that “varsity athletes experience more pressures and difficulties than club or recreational athletes, especially at Division I schools” (p.110).

Given that these two avenues of sport are so different from one another in their nature and operation, the athletes who choose to compete at one level versus another may also differ. This study focuses upon the thoughts that these athletes have as they relate to motivation, athletic identity, and commitment to sport. The concept of motivation will be addressed from the perspective of self-determination theory as this is what has been utilized most commonly with previous research in the area. Athletic identity and commitment to sport will be defined and addressed primarily based upon prior research.

The basic premise of self-determination theory (SDT) is that humans possess an innate need for autonomy, competence, and social relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In order to meet these needs individuals exhibit certain behaviors and activities, however, the motivation for these behaviors and activities may differ based upon the individual. There are two primary forms of motivation that are addressed within SDT which are intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. "Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.56). Intrinsic motivation occurs without reward or any type of external stimulus. Athletes who attend practices because they enjoy learning more about the sport or who want to improve their skill sets within that sport would be considered intrinsically motivated. Ryan and Deci (2000) note that though intrinsic motivation exists in individuals, not all individuals are intrinsically motivated to do the same things. Therefore, on a sport team, though some individuals may be intrinsically motivated to improve, others may not share that same motivation. In contrast to this, there is also the concept of external motivation within SDT. External motivation refers to behaviors that individuals engage in that are not for the sake of the activity but rather as a means to an end (Pelletier et al., 1995). Examples of extrinsic motivation include continuing to compete in a sport because of a scholarship or in order to receive awards or acknowledgement for one's performance. Extrinsic motivation can vary greatly to the degree with which it is autonomous. For example, an athlete who

works towards improving a skill due to the fear of repercussions from the coach is extrinsically motivated because he is doing the work in order to avoid the negative responses associated with not improving the skill. In the same fashion, an athlete who works to improve a skill because he personally believes it is valuable for him to learn as an athlete is also extrinsically motivated. Though these examples are both extrinsic in nature, one involves external control while the other involves personal endorsement. In addition to these ideas of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, the perspective provided by Deci and Ryan (1985) posits that behavior can also be amotivated. Amotivation refers to feelings of incompetence or lack of control and the athlete is not able to identify reasons for which they continue to train (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Within SDT, these three types of motivation are placed upon a continuum ranging from amotivation to extrinsic motivation, and on to intrinsic motivation. The reason for this continuum is the degree of autonomy particularly within extrinsic motivation. The reasons that individuals report in regards to feelings of motivation may not fall directly within intrinsic or extrinsic motivation but may rather be a combination of the two. The continuum allows for distinction of the types of motivation reported by individuals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In relation to sport, athletes state numerous reasons for their decision to engage in their sport of choice. According to Rintaugu and Ngetich (2012), some of these reported reasons include stress management, challenge, enjoyment, appearance, and fitness. These reasons may remain relevant with Division I and club level athletes as well but these realms of sport have not been studied in conjunction with one another at this point. Though it is understood that some type of motivation must exist in order for them to remain a part of the team, we do not yet know what those factors may be. This study will look into the types of motivation that are more prevalent amongst athletes competing at the Division I level along with the motivation exhibited by athletes competing at the club level.

According to research by Sheldon and Watson, (2011) external motivations may undermine intrinsic motivations because an athlete feels so much pressure to perform and to meet certain expectations. Due to this, their ability to function and their state of mind can suffer therefore rendering them unable to recall the intrinsic reasons for their choice to participate in sport. This may be something to consider with the Division I athletes as they are believed to experience more pressures and stressors than those competing at the club level. In addition Kilpatrick , Hebert, & Bartholomew (2005) stated that “intrinsic motivation is thought to be the primary source of energy for human behavior and its presence facilitates behavior maintenance and adherence” which was not shown to be true for extrinsic motivation (p.93). The study conducted by Kilpatrick et al. (2005) found that those who exhibited more intrinsic motivation were more committed to their sport than those who displayed more extrinsic motivation. This may be more relevant for club sport as the participants at this level do not necessarily have the same amount of feasible extrinsic motivators as those at the Division I level. Previous researchers, Kilpatrick et al., (2005) Sheldon and Watson (2011), and Chen et al., (2010) are all in support of the idea that Division I athletes exhibit a high level of extrinsic based motivation although there was no comparison between these athletes and those competing at the club level. The level at which one competes can certainly have an impact on the amount and level of motivation that is exhibited by the athletes on that team. This differentiation in Division I and club athletics may also have an influence upon the athletic identity of those on the team.

Athletic identity is defined as “the degree with which an individual identifies with the athlete role” (Griffith & Johnson, 2002, p.226). This concept is an important facet of sport participation as it influences the experiences that one may have within the sport in addition to the relationships with teammates and the pursuit of both current and future endeavors with the sport (Griffith & Johnson, 2002). Athletic identity is also a strong indicator of one’s sustainability in a sport. If one relates strongly as an athlete, they are more likely to spend more time with coaches and teammates therefore

furthering relationships with those individuals and extending the strength in their identity as an athlete (Griffith & Johnson, 2002). In addition to this, “strong athletic identity has been found to correlate with a stronger sense of self-identity, more social interactions, boosting confidence, and reports more positive athletic experiences” (Griffith & Johnson, 2002, p.226). Though the concept of a strong athletic identity may seem positive for athletes in relation to their sport, it is also important to take other roles into consideration. Those with a strong athletic identity may actually “neglect other aspects of life in order to fulfill their athlete role, which can increase the potential risk of social problems” (Chen et al., 2010, p.179). Furthermore, if there is too strong of a focus upon athletic identity, athletes may also experience both physical and psychological disadvantages due to conditions like potential overtraining or emotional disdain over the loss of being able to play. Though this concept of athletic identity needs to be something that one is able to appropriately balance, a strong but not necessarily exclusive athletic identity can provide mental and emotional benefits to the athlete (Griffith & Johnson, 2002). Athletic identity is also one of the psychological determinants of sport commitment meaning that the level to which one identifies with their athletic role is directly related to the amount of commitment one has toward their sport.

Prior research in the field of sport psychology indicates that “sport commitment is related to sport participation and persistency” and has been defined as the “psychological state representing the desire and resolve to continue participation in a particular athletic program, specific sport, or sport in general” (Hagiwara & Isogai, 2014, p.1). Commitment is an integral part of sport participation as the athletes must feel committed to their sport in order to have the desire to learn and continue to be a part of the team. In order to elicit commitment, the athletes need to find enjoyment in what they are doing and also make a personal investment in the sport meaning time, finances, or effort (Chu & Wang, 2012). Additionally, it is important that there is a social structure and atmosphere that create norms within the sport that generate feelings of obligation to return in addition to social support from others

and opportunities for benefit from the sport. These benefits can include things such as relationships with others, health and fitness benefits, and mastery of a skill (Chu & Wang, 2012). Previous research indicates that though there are a great number of factors which help to determine sport commitment, those relating to psychological factors appear to be the most important (Hagiwara & Isogai, 2014). These factors include the concept of athletic identity, in addition to the factors addressed in SDT which include autonomy, competence and social relatedness.

Previous research has looked at the constructs of athletic identity and commitment, athletic identity and motivation, and motivation and commitment as they relate to one another. There has not, however, been a study which encompasses all three of these concepts which is why they are the focus of the current study. Additionally, although the focal point of prior research only engaged two of the constructs, in many instances the third construct was also addressed. Griffith and Johnson (2002) primarily studied athletic identity and motivation within their study but also spoke in depth about the time commitment and general commitment that athletes must display towards their team and training in order to be successful. Through studying these three constructs together, more insight may be gained as to the relationship that potentially exists between motivation, athletic identity, and commitment along with a better understanding of how the athletes think of these concepts in relation to sport.

The purpose of this study is to examine the thoughts of club level athletes and Division I Varsity level athletes as they relate to motivation, athletic identity and commitment to sport. The research question for this study will be: What are the thoughts and experiences of club level and NCAA Division I athletes as they relate to motivation, athletic identity, and commitment in sports? The findings may be useful to those working in these athletic realms including coaches, team leaders, general team members and administration. Results may also assist in improving the quality of programs and increasing the involvement and physical activity levels of college student populations.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODS

#### Participants

Participants for this study were selected based upon their participation in collegiate club and varsity level sports. The accessible population that we desired to obtain was all of the Georgia Southern University club and varsity athletes. However, due to availability and willingness to be a part of the study, the participants consisted of male and female athletes on the club and varsity teams on campus totaling 12 participants. There were 6 participants at the Division 1 level and 6 from the club sports level. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 23. They were not selected based upon ethnicity or gender specifically but rather for their participation in a sport and age group. The sampling method was one of convenience due to the accessibility of the athletes at Georgia Southern University to the researcher. In order to obtain these participants, coaches or captains of each team were contacted through e mail or personal conversation to ask for their cooperation in the study. Upon agreement from these individuals, we then obtained a willing athlete on each team.

#### Procedures

After obtaining IRB approval, the researcher contacted coaches or captains of the selected teams, depending upon whether teams have a coach or not, and explained the purpose of the study in addition to asking for the participation of one or two athletes. As previously noted, the athletes were selected based upon their participation in a club or varsity sport. The researcher also explained, prior to conducting any interviews, that the purpose of this study is to investigate the use of motivation in both varsity and club sport participants in addition to exploring the differences in athletic identity and commitment between the two areas of sport. The participating athletes also received an informed consent form and were given additional information regarding the study itself.



The participants were interviewed individually and the interviews were conducted in a closed room in order to provide confidentiality for the participants. Some interviews were also conducted via Skype due to athlete accessibility. Prior to the start of the interview, the athlete were informed that their responses were being recorded for the purpose of future analysis and that they were able to stop the interview at any point if they were feeling uncomfortable or uncertain. They were also asked to provide honest responses throughout the course of the interview as their statements will remain anonymous and the researcher will not divulge the names of the participants.

### **Interview Protocol**

As the purpose of this study is to examine the thoughts of both varsity and club sport athletes as they relate to motivation, athletic identity and commitment, the athletes were interviewed. The interview was semi structured in nature as questions were already available but the researcher could also provoke further information based upon responses that are given. The questions that were used in the interview were formulated from valid and reliable surveys which include the Sport Motivation Scale (SMS), the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), and the Sport Commitment Scale (SCS). The questions consisted of the following:

1. When you think about why you practice your sport, what comes to mind?
2. When you think about why you continue to play your sport, what comes to mind?
3. When you think about your identity as an athlete, what comes to mind?

This study used a semi structured interview process. This provided the researcher with the ability to ask probing questions when deemed necessary. Using this form of interview permitted the researcher to deviate from the allotted questions in order to provoke further thoughts or responses from the athlete. It also allowed for the athlete to deliver more detailed responses and discuss their answers in real time conversation. The questions are set in an open ended fashion in order to allow the

athlete to speak and elaborate upon personal thoughts and feelings in addition to sharing experiences. Additionally, in order to ensure understanding of the statements that were provided, the researcher will complete the study by asking if there is anything that the participant would like to add or clarify regarding the given responses.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The purpose of the data analysis was to determine the meaning of the data that has been collected. In order to ensure confidentiality for each of the participants, they have already been interviewed alone and the information provided has been recorded, but only heard by the researcher. These recordings that were made will only be accessible to the researcher and the individual who gave the interview until they are erased. This is also true in regards to the transcripts and informed consent forms as they will be locked away in a file cabinet. In order to insure anonymity, the names of the participants will be switched to numbers.

In order to analyze the data, the researcher followed the process established by Czech et al. (2004). The process began by transcribing the recordings into scripts and gaining an understanding of the content provided. The scripts consist only of the precise words shared by the researcher and participant in order to keep the data as accurate as possible. Additionally, the participant was given a copy of the transcript and was asked to review and confirm the statements. The recordings and the scripts were kept in a locked file in order to ensure that only the researcher will have access to them until they are erased. After the scripts were completed, the researcher then focused the information in them by taking out the information that was significant to the purpose of the study in addition to eliminating irrelevant pieces. The elimination allowed for shorter transcripts while maintaining the meaning that the speaker intended. When this was completed, the next step for the researcher was to

group the text of the relevant statements meaning that the researcher looked to decrease clutter and reduce run on sentences and repetition.

The next step in the process was to take the grouped statements and summarize them in order to create a shortened version of the interview that retained the important words and thoughts of the participant. Within the summarized versions of the interviews, the researcher developed themes and sub-themes based upon the statements given as they related to motivation, athletic identity, and commitment for both club and varsity level athletics. After these themes and sub-themes were determined and statements from the interviews were placed into the themes, they were cross checked by the thesis chair in order to ensure that the themes were as valid as possible. When this was confirmed, the researcher then went on to use peer debriefing with three individuals in order to further confirm the analysis. In order to do this, the transcripts along with the themes and statements associated with those themes were given to other graduate students in sport and exercise psychology. These individuals then confirmed that the determined segments from the interviews match the corresponding themes.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

A brief description of each athlete interviewed is provided in Table 1. The participants who were interviewed consisted of 6 athletes at the club level and 6 athletes at the Division 1 Varsity level. The table below displays the gender, sport, and level of sport that each individual was involved with at the time of the interview.

**Table 1**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Sport Played</b>	<b>Level</b>
001C	Male	Ultimate Frisbee	Club
002C	Male	Rugby	Club
003C	Female	Track and Field	Club
004C	Female	Soccer	Club
005C	Female	Soccer	Club
006C	Male	Lacrosse	Club
001V	Female	Swimming and Diving	Varsity
002V	Male	Tennis	Varsity
003V	Female	Basketball	Varsity
004V	Female	Basketball	Varsity
005V	Male	Tennis	Varsity
006V	Female	Basketball	Varsity

The purpose of this study was to examine the thoughts of club and Division I Varsity level athletes as they relate to the concepts of motivation, athletic identity and commitment. After the interviews were conducted and transcribed, the transcriptions were analyzed to find themes for the three constructs of motivation, commitment, and athletic identity. For club sports there were two themes associated with motivation, four associated with commitment, and one with athletic identity. For the Varsity athletes, four themes arose for motivation, three for commitment, and one for athletic identity. In order for these themes to be considered significant, they needed to appear in all six of the interviews conducted for club level or for Varsity level athletes.

*CLUB SPORTS:***MOTIVATION****Theme 1: Improving Game Skills**

The first theme that arose from the collected data was that of a desire to improve sport related skills. All six of the club sport participants mentioned that they want to improve in their given sport when asked about what motivates them to play. Some of the statements that were shared included “I just want to better myself” (003C), “I practice so I can get better at the sport . . . so I can know it better” (002C), and “I just want to get better” (005C). The idea of being able to beat other teams or other individuals was presented here as well. One athlete claimed that “I want to be able to go into games and know that I can beat whoever we’re playing” (001C), while another mentioned that it was enjoyable to watch other people in competition to see what they do and try to incorporate their techniques into her own in order to improve (003C). The overarching idea that was displayed by each of these athletes is that they really want to progress in their sport. This is part of what motivates them to go to practice because they perceive practice attendance as being something that can contribute to their advancements. One athlete stated “I just want to be good so I practice so I can do that” (002C).

**Theme 2: Relationships with Teammates**

Another theme that emerged was that of the importance that club sport athletes placed upon their relationships with their teammates. Each participant noted their teammates as being a part of why they are involved in the sport. Everyone stated that friendships with teammates were very important, and claimed that much of their enjoyment in the sport and motivation to continue playing came from those individuals. The following quote from participant 003C displays this idea.

“I find that your teammates are a step up from your regular friends because your teammates, you share blood sweat and tears working on this sport you both want to perfect so my teammates motivate me.”

In addition to this feeling that teammates are such a strong motivator as friends, some even referred to their relationships with their teammates as being similar to a family member which really exemplifies the importance of these relationships. One participant stated that “I play for my brothers” (006C) and referenced his teammates as brothers for the duration of the interview. In addition to this, the familial relationship was explained further in this quote by participant 003C.

“I think of my teammates as my family, and having family at college, your home away from home, that’s always something good to have, just people you can confide in and people who are willing to help you no matter what.”

The extent of these relationships varies amongst participants, some simply stating things like “most of my friends are on the club team” (004C)” while others state things like “I don’t actually know what I’d do without those guys” (001C) to insinuate the level of attachment to their teammates. Despite the difference in the strength of feelings towards teammates, each participant stated that the people on the team are a factor in motivating them to play and be a part of the team.

## **COMMITMENT**

### **Theme 1: Major Part of Life/Past History with the Sport**

With the club sport athletes, some claimed to have been playing their sport for a long period of time, possibly even since childhood, whereas others spoke of it being a relatively new thing for them. Under either circumstance, the athletes claimed that the sport they currently play is or has always been a large part of their lives. Those who had been playing their sport prior to college provided information

on how long they have been involved in the sport which ranged from starting as a freshman in high school all the way back to having fifteen years of experience as a player. For those individuals, some of the statements that were shared were “I’ve been playing for so long, I’ve put so much time into it, so why quit now?” (004C) or “it was a huge part of my life growing up”(005C). Another athlete who found his sport upon entering college stated that “it’s a big part of who I am and what I do now” (002C). This concept of really feeling committed to the sport and having it as a large part of life ties closely to the next theme of having a personal commitment to the sport.

## **Theme 2: Personal Commitment**

One of the features of club sports that was presented by each of the athletes was the idea that there is a lot of commitment required of them due to the nature of what their sport needs. In club sports, the athletes are responsible for doing things like maintaining the budget, making their own travel plans, and generally caring for and maintaining the administrative side of operating a team. Each individual interviewed spoke of how this was a part of why they remained committed to the team. One athlete said that “I put this much time into it and I really enjoy it so I don’t want to stop” (004C) while another said “we’re not getting paid for this, we’re not on scholarship, we spend our own money and our own time of day to be the athletes that we want to be” (003C).

This idea of the sport not only being a time commitment but also a financial commitment was also present in the interviews that were done. One athlete said “I wouldn’t put this much time and money into it if I didn’t love it” (001C) and another claimed that “it’s a big time commitment so I have to have it be a pretty big part of who I am to keep going” (002C). These ideas display the idea that they feel committed because they have put so much into what they do as far as time spent both in and out of practice doing things for the team in addition the money that they put forward. One athlete describes his experience in the following quote:

“I mean, everything that we have as a team, we have to get on our own and we have to pay dues and we have to drive ourselves and take vans and stuff to our away games and tournaments and so, we do a lot of the hard work, all of the behind the scenes stuff, me and my board, we have to take care of” (006C).

This sense of ownership with the team due to the commitment required may also potentially mean that they are also committed to the team due to the feeling of ownership that they have with it.

This is an idea shared by participant 001C in the following quote:

“Us having that feeling that it’s our team and it’s in our hands makes us get better and makes us the team that we are.”

### **Theme 3: Love or Passion for the Sport**

For the club sport athletes, the word “love” was used more than once in every interview. Each athlete spoke about how much they simply love what they do and that was a part of the reason that they continue to do it. This was true for those who had been involved in their sport for a long time, “I love the sport really, I’ve played lacrosse since I was in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade so it’s really, I love the sport” (006C) and also for those who were new to the sport, “I’ve never really known how to play so that’s what made it so much more of a sport that I love and why I continue to do it” (002C). Despite how long the athlete had been involved in the sport, the concept of loving what they do was something that each one exhibited. Some athletes not only spoke of how much they love the sport itself but also alluded to how much they loved their team. “We’re still friends outside of track and that’s what I really really love about the team. I love the sport but I also really love my team” (003C). This concept of having such passion was shared as a reason that athletes remain involved with their sport. Regardless of where that love comes from, whether it is primarily for the sport or even if it is more for the people that they are with, the love for what they do is a contributing factor to the commitment level of these athletes.



#### Theme 4: Emotional Connection or Release from Reality

Though club sport athletes state that their sport is something that they love and something that they feel committed to, this is not the only obligation that these athletes have. Many spoke of the difficulty in balancing their school commitments in particular in addition to those associated with their club team. Some even brought up other factors that contribute to the difficulty and stress that they have such as relationships with others or injuries that have occurred. Despite the struggles that balancing all of these things can present, these athletes view their sport as a way of getting away or releasing from the other stressors that are in their lives. One athlete said that “it just really keeps me sane while in college because college is so stressful” (005C). This idea was exhibited in a quote by participant 001:

“I thought about quitting for a little while just because school and everything was so hard and it was not easy to balance out being on the team and having a job and having to get my school stuff done . . . but when it came down to it . . . these guys are the ones who actually keep me able to do all of that . . . I would go nuts without having Frisbee to go play and just get my mind off of it all you know?”

In addition to this concept of being a release or something that helps these athletes to get through the difficulties of what their lives present, others spoke of an emotional connection with their sport in a different manner. For example one participant shared that “it makes me feel very prideful” (003C) which helped to convey the idea that the sports that these individuals are playing are emotional for them and in some way make them feel better. The following quote really exhibits how strong the connection is to the sport:

“Well, I like that it’s . . . It’s gonna sound weird but umm . . . it almost heals . . . like if I’m feeling sad or down or whatever . . . I just go play lacrosse, it kind of just heals your mind and body and in a way that like you can’t, like medicine couldn’t do” (006C).

This shows that there is potentially somewhat of a therapeutic or healing aspect that some of these athletes associate with their sport. The responses seem to show that the sport has a way of allowing them to escape from all the other things in their lives and allows them to feel better about the stressful things that occur even if just for a few hours. Participant 005C claims that “it gets me away from everything else in this world”. In summary, these athletes have an emotional connection to their sport in a variety of ways, each of which serve a purpose to the athlete and is a part of the reason for their commitment to sport.

## **ATHLETIC IDENTITY**

### **Theme 1: Sport as a Part of the Individual**

Athletic identity is defined as the degree with which an individual identifies with the athlete role. A common statement that was prevalent with the club sport athletes was the idea of the sport being a part of who they are as people. One athlete claimed that “I think anything you do for a long period of time like that is going to become part of your identity” (005C). Each individual identified as an athlete and some claimed to strongly recognize themselves as an athlete stating things like “I definitely identify as an athlete” (002C) or “it’s just such a part of me” (004C). One athlete even spoke of the thoughts that come to mind when thinking about athletic identity being the questions of how the sport reflects who you are and how you incorporate the things from your sport into your daily life (003C). Essentially, each athlete claimed that their sport was absolutely a part of their identity. Some were more emphatic about how important their sport was to them but to each it certainly was something that they deemed to be a part of them.

## *VARSITY SPORTS:*

### **MOTIVATION:**

#### **Theme 1: Sense of Accomplishment**

The first theme that arose from the Varsity sport athletes was the idea of there being a sense of accomplishment associated with competing in their sport. For some athletes this was portrayed in the feeling of fulfilment after a win or after a successful practice. For participant 002V, he states that “the feeling of when I win is so satisfying” and participant 005V adds that “nothing is like winning a match” so these feelings of success help to motivate these two in particular to engage in their sport. In addition, other athletes think of this feeling of accomplishment more closely in relation to their skill development rather than winning. One participant states that “just practicing those skills allowed me to enhance them and make them awesome” (003V) and another says:

“I’m always trying to see how people do different things and how to teach it, how to learn about it, and it’s just such a big feeling of pride knowing that when I accomplish it, I can look back and say ‘Oh well all that hard work and all that researching I did about how to do this skill that I’m doing actually helped me.’ I like having that sense of pride and accomplishment at the end” (006V).

This concept of feelings of accomplishment or success were displayed by each of the athletes and though there were differences in how these feelings came to be, all of them found motivation through the outcome of success within their sport.

#### **Theme 2: Personal Drive or Desire to Accomplish Goals**

This theme conveys the idea of athletes aspiring to either reach their personal goals or making reference to a drive that they have within themselves. Two athletes referred specifically to goals that

they had placed for themselves in relation to becoming a higher level athlete. One said that “I knew I had to go to college if I wanted to play in the Olympics so pushing myself to go to college pushed me to go to practice every day and work my hardest” (004V) and the other said that “I set that goal when I was young that I wanted to be a professional tennis player” (002V). Both of these athletes also said that these goals are something that got them to where they currently are as athletes and continue to give them the motivation to play.

Other athletes referred to different things within themselves that provided a reason to play. There was a reference for many to a “drive” that they had within themselves to get better. When asked about what motivates them one participant responded with “mostly, my own internal, it’s like my own internal drive and my own competition with myself” (004V) while another said that “it’s just a feeling of like, like a feeling of a strong drive, like I want to be in the gym all of the time” (006V).

Though this drive or particular reasoning is not explicitly defined, these athletes each claim that there is something pushing them to keep going and pushing them to keep working to get better. The goals that were spoken of provided the drive for some while others had trouble defining precisely what it was that was driving them to play.

### **Theme 3: Sport Based Improvement**

The concept behind this theme is that the athletes report finding motivation in the idea of improving or getting better at their sport. “I like getting better at what I’m doing because I think that is something that is very important to me” (006V). Some athletes displayed desires to simply improve upon their skills for the matter of personal gains while others spoke of improving so that they could be more victorious when facing opponents. “I always try to find ways to improve my game, my record or improve my process so I can manage different ways to win more matches” (005V). The overall notion with this theme is that the athletes are motivated to improve despite potential differences in the

particular area of improvement. However, it is possible, based upon the statements that the desire to improve skills will then lead to improved performance as is seen in the interview conducted with participant 001V, “Swimming is a sport where you can keep getting stronger every day. It’s all about working on getting faster and better with your strokes”. The athlete later says “during meets, I want to make sure I’m performing really well” (001V).

#### **Theme 4: Others as Motivators**

The Varsity level athletes each spoke of either one person or a number of people who have been influential in their athletic careers. These are also the individuals who have motivated them in the past or are there continuing to motivate them currently as they compete at the collegiate level. For one athlete, her current and past coaches provided that motivation for her to continue as she learned a lot from them and felt that she had very strong coaches (003V). In contrast, another athlete was motivated by her previous coaches but it was because they had not been supportive in her opinion and were continually telling her that she would not be good enough to play at the collegiate level which then helped to push her to improve. “I knew that my time would come” she says while reflecting upon her past (004V). Others found their motivation through friends (002V), family members (001V), and outside competition (005V) (006V). Though there are different individuals motivating these athletes to do what they do, the idea that others are providing part of the motivation for these athletes is the focus of this theme.

### **COMMITMENT**

#### **Theme 1: Time Commitment**

One of the reasons that Varsity level athletes reported for being committed to their sport was because of the time they had put into it both prior to coming to college and also the time that it demanded of them in college. They each said that balancing all of the things that they needed to do was

an important and difficult factor in being an athlete. To give an idea of their requirements, one athlete said “we have meetings with three different people in one day, then we have to go to practice and weights and conditioning and then go to class on top of that” (004V). In addition to these types of requirements, some athletes reported that they put so much time into their sport even outside of college that it is just a part of what they do. “I play tennis almost every single day so for me I wake up and I think about tennis, I go to bed and it’s the same, so for me like 80-90 percent of my life is tennis” (002V). Others made reference to the amount of time they spent with their sport prior to college being a part of why they are so committed now. “Through high school you have to put all those hours into it so that you’re prepared for college” (001V). The time that these athletes are required to commit to their sport in order to remain on the team in addition to all of the time that they have put in outside of just their collegiate career seems to cause them to have a sense of commitment to the team itself.

## **Theme 2: Parental Influence**

Every Varsity level athlete interviewed reported that their parents play a role in why they continue to play their sport. The idea of making parents proud was a big factor for many of these athletes which is apparent when things like “I know that I make them proud” (001V), or “as soon as I got my scholarship . . . my mom was telling everyone” (004V) were shared. In addition to this idea of making parents proud, some athletes claimed that it was important for them to continue on not only because of the time that they personally committed to the sport but also due to the commitment that their parents had put forth as is shared in this quote by participant 002V:

“My parents have had to do a lot in the past, like give me everything I needed to play tennis as a sport and they spent a lot of money on me and that is also a part of why I want to keep playing.”

In addition to this, one athlete shared how her father got her started in the sport and “it was the biggest connection that I had with my dad” (006V) which really helped to display how important the parental influence can be. Though the particular reasoning may differ, it is clear that parents were an important part of the continuation in sport for each of these athletes.

### **Theme 3: Scholarship**

Varsity level athletes are eligible to receive a scholarship for participating in a sport for the school. All of the athletes who were interviewed in this study were scholarship athletes meaning that their time at the university is paid for due to their agreeance to compete in a sport at the Varsity level. This also means that they take on all of the responsibilities associated with being at athlete at this level. For those interviewed, this aspect of having a scholarship was a factor in why they continue to play their sport. Things like “I’m doing it so I can get a free education” (006V), “it’s also because my schooling is getting paid for” (003V), “I have the scholarship here so it’s almost like it’s paying back (my parents)” (001V) were all shared in regards to having the scholarship to play. For these athletes, the idea that their education is being paid for is one of the reasons that they continue to play their sport.

## **ATHLETIC IDENTITY**

### **Theme 1: Importance of the Athlete Role**

As has been stated previously, the Varsity athletes that were interviewed for this study obtain roles other than just that of an athlete. The intent of this question was to see how strongly they related to the role of being an athlete. Each of the athletes explained that this role was very important to them and some elaborated on the importance of the role. Participant 006V stated that “it has taken me to college, it’s actually now going to lead me to a career so I think basketball is my life” and “for me it’s really important because I’ve been playing tennis most of my life and most of my friends are tennis players as well so it’s like a lifestyle” (002V). Another participant stated that “it’s just basically life for

me” (004V). These athletes equate their sport to being such a strong part of life that they perceive it as being life for them. These statements show that for these individuals, their roles as athletes are incredibly important to them.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to examine the thoughts of club level athletes and Division I Varsity level athletes as they relate to motivation, athletic identity and commitment to sport. In order to do this, interviews were conducted with a total of 12 athletes, 6 at the Division I Varsity level and 6 at the collegiate club level. The results of the analysis of the interviews revealed a number of themes at both the club and Varsity levels under the constructs of motivation, commitment and athletic identity. Club sport athletes displayed two themes relating to motivation, four relating to commitment, and one relating to athletic identity. Varsity athletes reported four themes concerning motivation, three concerning commitment and one concerning athletic identity. Many of these themes were in conjunction with previous research while others differed slightly from what has been found in the past.

In regards to the notion of motivation, the framework for this study was self-determination theory which posits that there are both intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation. One of the motivators found in this study for Varsity level athletes was the influence of other individuals. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), this would be considered an extrinsic motivator. There were no exclusive extrinsic motivators determined with the club sport athletes and this is consistent with the research. Sheldon and Watson (2011), Kilpatrick (2005), and Chen et al. (2010) are all in agreement that Division I Varsity athletes display more extrinsic motivators. Although studies have not been conducted to decipher difference in motivation between club sport athletes and Division I athletes, the results displayed do show that there are more extrinsic motivators within the Varsity level athletes.



Another concept that arose in relation to motivation was that of looking to improve sport related skills. This was something that was present for both Varsity and club level athletes. Self-determination theory suggests that this is an intrinsic type of motivation therefore alluding to the idea that intrinsic motivators are present for both types of athletes (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is important to note however that the motive behind the desire to improve skills must also be expanded upon as this may lead to a more definitive distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as the determining factor.

In the present research, it was also found that Varsity level athletes were motivated by having a sense of accomplishment with what they do and also through what they referred to as a personal "drive". Though these facets were apparent with this study, they did not appear at all in prior research. Therefore, these may be aspects to pursue in further research.

The last theme that arose in relation to motivation was that of having strong relationships with teammates. This was something that was very prevalent with the club level athletes but did not appear to be true for Varsity level athletes. Club level athletes reported this as a reason that they were motivated in their sport. When asked to elaborate upon motivators, one club athlete responded with "I play for my teammates really" (006C). Previous literature discusses this idea of relationships with teammates as a factor in commitment claiming that the social structure that the team provides creates feelings of obligation to return (Chu & Wang, 2012). This leads to the idea that relationships with teammates are influential in one's desire to be a part of a team and also to want to continue on with that team. It is possible that these relationships can provide both motivation and commitment for athletes. One participant summarizes this idea when she says "The commitment to them (teammates), their commitment to the team, that motivates me to be committed so motivation and commitment go hand in hand" (003C).

Commitment is the desire and resolve to continue participation and in this study that concept is related to sport. At the Varsity level, one of the themes that emerged was that of the influence that parents had for the participants. The athletes spoke about how the commitment that their parents had made to them as athletes in regards to time, money and general support kept them committed to the sport itself. This is an idea that was not found or supported by previous literature. It is possible that it this may not be something that would be significant when generalized to the population, however it may be beneficial to pursue further information or literature on the subject to determine the relevance.

Additionally, the aspect of having a scholarship was largely represented both in the current study and in prior research. Within the recent study, Varsity athletes reported feelings of being committed to their sport because they knew that by doing so, their education would be funded. This is both supported and expanded upon by studies conducted by Griffith & Johnson (2002), and Chen et al. (2010). Research conducted by Griffith and Johnson (2002) found that Division I athletes may feel the need to partake in sports in order to financially support their education which is also what was found with this study. Chen et al. (2010) found that although a scholarship may elicit commitment from the athletes, there is also a negative aspect associated with this in that the financial support causes more stress for the athlete. This is because they need to perform well both in their sport and with their academics in order to maintain the scholarship. Overall the idea that an athletic scholarship is part of the reason for commitment to sport at the Division I Varsity level is supported.

Another aspect of commitment that was apparent with Varsity athletes was the amount of time that they spend doing something related to their sport. They described the hours spent going to meetings, conditioning, weight training and practices in addition to competition and training on their own outside of the season. Time commitment is something that they deemed to be a reason for staying with the sport as they have put forth so much time into becoming an athlete. Research conducted by Chen and colleagues (2010) found that Varsity level athletes have a commitment to their sport which

takes up a large amount of time and also to their academics, therefore, the ability to manage time appropriately is crucial for the success of these individuals. The time that needs to be put forth is supported as a reason for athletes staying committed to their sport at the Division I level but it is also a relevant factor with club sport athletes. For club sport athletes, it was found that their personal commitment of time, money and effort was a factor in their level of commitment to the team. In addition to this, since being a part of the sport is not a requirement and they were actually investing themselves in the sport through their commitments, they reported a sense of ownership in the team. Therefore, the results of the study allude to the idea that for club level athletes, the commitment is more than just that of time. Research has found that in order to be committed, athletes need to find enjoyment and make a personal investment such as time, finances, and effort (Chu & Wang, 2012). This concept of making a personal investment appears to be relevant for both Varsity and club level athletes. Another aspect that may contribute to the idea that club level athletes are committed for more than just time is the theme of love or passion for the sport. According to Chu and Wang, there is a need for enjoyment in sport to elicit commitment and each of the club sport athletes claimed to love what they do. The current research shows that all of the aspects needed to be committed in accordance with the research conducted by Chu and Wang (2012) are present for club sport athletes but not necessarily for Varsity athletes. In addition to this, Pennington (2008) supports the idea that club sport athletes show a love or passion for what they do. This theme of loving what they do, in addition to having a personal commitment to the team which included financial aspects, and the theme of desiring to improve skills or put in effort. Varsity level sports had themes of a time commitment and wanting to improve themselves. This shows that club level athletes display all that was determined to be committed while Varsity athletes do not show quite as much in this area. According to other research, more commitment equates to more intrinsic motivation than extrinsic (Kilpatrick, 2005). Therefore, if having the four elements of commitment fulfilled leads to being more committed, club sport athletes would then also

display more intrinsic motivation than extrinsic which is also supported by research conducted by Sheldon and Watson (2001). This research found that Varsity level athletes respond better to reward related or extrinsic motivation while club or recreational athletes respond better to intrinsic motivation.

Another theme in club sports that was supported by the research was that of an emotional connection or release from reality that the athletes felt while engaged in their sport. Club sport athletes found their sport to be almost therapeutic in nature and viewed it as a time to forget about all of the stressors that the rest of life was presenting to them. Research upholds the idea that athletes practice for the purpose of stress management (Rintaugu & Ngetich, 2012).

In relation to the construct of commitment, one of the themes that also appeared with the club sport athletes was that of the role that the sport plays in the life of the athlete. The participants each spoke about how their sport had always played a large role in their lives and still was or how it was a new thing but was still a large part of life. This concept is not one that was found with previous literature. This idea does however tie closely in to the construct of athletic identity. For club sport athletes, research has not yet been conducted on athletic identity though the current research suggests that the degree to which these athletes relate to their sport is strong. Participants claimed that their sport is a part of who they are, one even stating that "it kind of helps me define me because I play so much" (001C). For Varsity athletes, it was found in this study and also in previous research that they relate strongly to their sport as well and use it as a defining aspect of themselves as people (Chen et al. 2010).

In regards to future studies on this subject, there are some alterations that may be beneficial for future researchers. As the participants were a convenience sample and approval was needed from coaches in order to pursue the athletes, there are not as many sports represented as would have been preferred. This was particularly difficult at the Varsity level and resulted in only three total sports being represented. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize the findings of this study to sports that may not have

been involved with the research. In addition to this, it may also be beneficial to elaborate upon the construct of athletic identity. When asked about this, many athletes at both levels were uncertain about how to respond. Although the researcher did help to explain the concept, this may have taken away from the authenticity of the responses that were given. Overall, this was a difficult construct for the athletes to comprehend without prior knowledge. It would be advantageous for future research on this construct to elaborate upon the specifics of athletic identity.

In conclusion, of the fifteen total themes that were found within this study, five were not found in previous research and the other ten were supported by prior findings. The outcomes of this research can help coaches, sport psychology consultants, and team leaders to understand the thoughts and feelings that their athletes may be having. Though there may be some discrepancies between what motivates individuals, what causes them to be committed, and how strongly they identify with the athlete role, these findings do provide guidance for the three constructs. Although this study provided support to previous literature and could potentially give rise to new studies, research is still needed to determine more about the generalizability of these findings.

## REFERENCES

- Chen, S., Snyder, S., & Magner, M. (2010). The effects of sport participation on student-athletes' and non-athlete students' social life and identity. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 3, 176-193.
- Chu, A.Y., & Wang, C.H. (2012). Differences in level of sport commitment among college dance sport competitors. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 40 (5), 755-766.
- Curry, T.J., & Weiss, O. (1989). Sport identity and motivation for sport participation: A comparison between American college athletes and Austrian student sport club members. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 6(3), 257-269.
- Deci E.L., & Ryan R.M. (1985). *Intrinsic Motivation and Self Determination in Human Behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Denomme, D.A. (1990). Sport club participation: Factors related to member's propensity to adhere. Retrieved from EBSCO Host. (SPH 264950).
- Griffith, K. A., & Johnson, K. A. (2002). Athletic identity and life roles of Division I and Division III collegiate athletes. *Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 5, 225-231.
- Hagiwara, G., & Isogai, H. (2014). Relationships between athletic identity and sport commitment linked to sport involvement. *ICSSPE Bulletin (17285909)*, (67).
- Halbrook, M., Blom, L.C., Hurley, K., Bell, R.J., & Holden, J.E. (2012). Relationships among motivation, gender, and cohesion in a sample of collegiate athletes. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 35(1), 61-78
- Kilpatrick, M., Hebert, E., & Bartholomew, J. (2005). College students' motivation for physical activity: Differentiating men's and women's motives for sport participation and exercise. *Journal of American College Health*. 54(2), 87-95.
- Kondric, M., Sindik, J., Furjan-Mandic, G., & Schiefler, B. (2013). Participation motivation and student's physical activity among sport students in three countries. *Journal of Sports Science & Medicine*, 12(1), 10-18.
- Pelletier, L.G., Fortier, M.S., Vallerand, R.J., Tuson, K.M., Briere, N.M., & Blais, M.R. (1995). Toward a New Measure of Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation in Sports: The Sport Motivation Scale. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 17, 35-53.
- Pennington, B. (2008). Rise of College Club Teams Creates a Whole New Level of Success. *The New York Times*, B11. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/02/sports/02club.html>.
- Rintaugu, E.G., & Ngetich, E.D.K. (2012). Motivational gender differences in sport and exercise participation among university sport science students. *Journal of Physical Education & Sport*, 12(2), 180-188.
- Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 54-67.

Sheldon, K., & Watson, A. (2001). Coach's autonomy support is especially important for varsity compared to club and recreational athletes. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 6(1), 109-125.

## APPENDIX A

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to examine the thoughts of club level athletes and Division I Varsity level athletes as they relate to motivation, athletic identity and commitment to sport.

### **Research Question**

What are the thoughts and experiences of club level and NCAA Division I athletes as they relate to motivation, athletic identity, and commitment in sports?

### **Limitations**

There are a few limitations to take into consideration regarding this study. The first is that the sample is small and all participants are from the same university. Therefore the results may not be generalizable to the entire population. In addition to this, there was only one interview conducted between the interviewer and the participant. Additional interviews may have given the researcher more in depth information to consider and potentially helped the researcher to follow up on questions that needed clarification.

### **Delimitations**

The primary delimitation of this study is the fact that the study focuses only upon Division I and club level athletes. This means that not all collegiate level athletes are taken into account and it is possible that the opinions and experiences of these athletes may be different.

### **Assumptions**

In this study we assume that the participants fully comprehend the questions that are being asked. Additionally, we presume that participants are not only willing and able to provide responses but also that those responses are as honest as possible.



**Definitions**

Extrinsic Motivation: behaviors that individuals engage in that are not for the sake of the activity but rather as a means to an end

Intrinsic Motivation: refers to engaging in an activity purely for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from doing the activity

Athletic Identity: the degree with which an individual identifies with the athlete role

Sport Commitment: psychological state representing the desire and resolve to continue participation in a particular athletic program, specific sport, or sport in general

## APPENDIX B

Chen, S., Snyder, S., & Magner, M. (2010). The effects of sport participation on student-athletes' and non-athlete students' social life and identity. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 3, 176-193.

This study looked to assess the effect of athletics on both student-athletes and general students at the Division I level. In addition to this, commitment to sport and athletic identity were researched as well. In order to do this, four instruments were utilized to help develop surveys for the students. The results of this study showed that student-athletes were proud to have the title, and had a healthy and positive mentality about their athletic involvement. The non-athletes assessed were those who were involved in intramural sports or those who had played sports in high school so that they had some form of relationship to sport. Many of those individuals reported missing their sport and being a part of the team. Athletes appeared to have a very strong commitment to their sport and strongly identified as an athlete. The concepts of commitment and athletic identity in addition to the concept of researching Division I athletes are all applicable towards the current study.

Chu, A.Y., & Wang, C.H. (2012). Differences in level of sport commitment among college dance sport competitors. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 40 (5), 755-766.

In this study, sport commitment was researched in its relation to college dance sport competitors. Researchers used the Sport Commitment Model and the potential influences upon sport commitment to conduct the study. Participants were found at a national dance sport competition and completed a survey. The responses of the survey were analyzed to see if the levels of participation, experience and participation methods related to the determinants of sport commitment. It was found based upon these results that the effects of sport experience were significant for all of the aspects of sport commitment. The concepts displayed in this study in regards to the theoretical basis and the results regarding the relationship between experience and sport commitment are relevant to the current study's interest in these aspects.

Curry, T.J., & Weiss, O. (1989). Sport identity and motivation for sport participation: A comparison between American college athletes and Austrian student sport club members. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 6(3), 257-269.

This research studies the types of motivation for participation in sport between college and club athletes which is a very similar direction to the current proposal. The idea behind this study was to research the sociological basis of motivation for sport as Austrian club sport and American collegiate sport are so different in competitive nature. A questionnaire was handed out to American college athletes and Austrian students who were members of sport clubs. The results of this study displayed that motivation for participation is positively related to the individual's identification as an athlete. This is also positively correlated with competitive and fitness motivation but not with social motivation. The purpose of using this study is that it looks at differences in motivation between club and collegiate sport which is very similar to the purpose of the proposed study.

Griffith, K. A., & Johnson, K. A. (2002). Athletic identity and life roles of Division I and Division III collegiate athletes. *Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 5, 225-231.

Athletic identity and self-concept as they relate to Division I and Division III athletes are the focal points of this research. Based upon prior literature, one of the hypotheses is that Division I athletes will display stronger athletic identity than their Division III counterparts although the results of the research showed the opposite. Speculations from the authors indicate that this reasoning may be due to the fact that the Division III program surveyed was very successful therefore causing a positive environment on the team. This is relevant to the current research in that the survey utilized was the AIMS and it was directed towards Division I athletes, both of which will be used with this study.

Hagiwara, G., & Isogai, H. (2014). Relationships between athletic identity and sport commitment linked to sport involvement. *ICSSPE Bulletin (17285909)*, (67).

The idea behind this research was to further understanding of the relationship between athletic identity and sport commitment as it relates to actual involvement in athletics. The scales used in this study included the AIMS, SCS, and the FIT index each measuring a different construct. In the analysis, athletic identity and sport commitment were compared based upon athletic levels. Athletic identity was found to positively impact sport commitment which then impacted actual behavior. The concepts of athletic identity and sport commitment and their relationships are involved with the current research.

Kilpatrick, M., Hebert, E., & Bartholomew, J. (2005). College students' motivation for physical activity: Differentiating men's and women's motives for sport participation and exercise. *Journal of American College Health*. 54(2), 87-95.

Although the focus of most research on physical activity revolves around the concept of exercise, this research looks more extensively into the motivation associated with sport participation as it compares to that of exercise participation. Results showed that motivations for exercise were more centered on physical appearance or health related reasons whereas motives for sport were more for enjoyment and competition. The findings indicate that sport is more closely linked to intrinsic motivation while exercise was more linked to extrinsic motivation. The study also utilized self-determination theory and related the basis of the theory to the findings of the research. This study furthers information regarding sport and motivation and also employs self-determination theory, all of which are relevant to the current research.

Kondric, M., Sindik, J., Furjan-Mandic, G., & Schiefler, B. (2013). Participation motivation and student's physical activity among sport students in three countries. *Journal of Sports Science & Medicine*, 12(1), 10-18.

The main purpose of this study was to look into the differences in motivation among sport participants in three countries with the intent of using the results as a basis for further studies. Participants were involved in table tennis lessons and received the Participation Motivation Questionnaire which asked the individuals to respond to questions relating to their motivation on a Likert type scale. The results of the questionnaires were split into six categories including sport action with friends, popularity, fitness and health, social status, sports events, and relaxation through sports. In relation to these categories, there were differences seen between both gender and country but no significant differences in age. This research relates directly to

the proposed research as both address concepts of motivation and the concepts presented may assist with discovering the domains that may be utilized in the current study.

Pelletier, L.G., Fortier, M.S., Vallerand, R.J., Tuson, K.M., Briere, N.M., & Blais, M.R. (1995). Toward a New Measure of Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation in Sports: The Sport Motivation Scale. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 17*, 35-53.

This paper discussed the transcription of the Sport Motivation Scale from French to English and looked to ensure that the validity of the scale remained intact. Three types of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are discussed in detail along with the concept of amotivation. In addition to these concepts, the determinants of motivation are also discussed in order to exemplify the necessity for research and understanding in this area as it relates to athletics. After the measure was translated, a sample of athletes took the SMS to look into the internal consistency of the SMS and assess the structure. The hope was that the results of the study were similar to the results of these tests when the measure was still in French therefore validating the reliability of the translation. The results discovered through the use of the English scale showed that the translation of the scale was successful due to the outcomes being very similar though not exactly the same as the scale in French. An additional study was also conducted in order to test the temporal stability of the SMS. A different group of athletes took the SMS on two separate occasions and the results of the first and second assessments were compared. The results of this showed similar responses in both therefore supporting the internal validity of the scale. These studies are relevant because the SMS is being utilized in the current study therefore it is crucial to ensure the validity of the measure.

Rintaugu, E.G., & Ngetich, E.D.K. (2012). Motivational gender differences in sport and exercise participation among university sport science students. *Journal of Physical Education & Sport, 12*(2), 180-188.

This study looked into the sport and exercise habits of sport science students at the undergraduate level. The purpose of the study was to look at gender differences which impact motivation to participate in sports and exercise. Questionnaires were given to sport science students for data collection. Data analysis showed no significant differences between males and females in choice of activities but in regards to motivation it was found that women tend to be more intrinsically motivated to participate in sport or exercise whereas males are more extrinsically motivated towards these activities. One of the underlying implications of this study is that sport and exercise adherence is more likely to occur when one is intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated. As in this study, the current study utilizes SDT as the theoretical framework and is looking into the concepts of motivation in college students.

Sheldon, K., & Watson, A. (2001). Coach's autonomy support is especially important for varsity compared to club and recreational athletes. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 6(1), 109-125.

This study looks primarily at the idea of extrinsic motivation in the form of a coach. It is believed based upon previous literature that elite athletes face more stress and pressure than athletes who are at the club or recreational level. The research employed the use of surveys which asked about the motivation for participation, team structure, experience on the team, and coaching style for each participant. The objective was to see coach's autonomy support was more important in varsity level sports than it is in club or recreational sport and this concept was supported by the results. Analysis of the responses also showed that varsity level athletes showed more extrinsic and reward related motivation than club or recreational participants as those participants respond more positively to intrinsic motivation. The relation to the current study is the concept of motivation and its relation to both club and varsity level athletes.