Spring 2024

What Does It Mean To Be The GOAT: A Narrative Study On Retired White Male Elite Individual Sport Athletes?

Tyler Behrmann

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THE GOAT: A NARRATIVE STUDY ON RETIRED

WHITE MALE ELITE INDIVIDUAL SPORT ATHLETES?

by

TYLER BEHRMANN

(Under the Direction of Megan Byrd)

ABSTRACT

The greatest of all time (GOAT) is a topic commonly discussed in sports today (Lundberg & Rosenberg, 2020). Despite this increased use of the term, there is a lack of research on the topic of the GOAT which could serve to benefit individuals in performance domains. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory study was to investigate characteristics that describe a GOAT and the impact these characteristics of the GOAT have on individuals. Two participants were included in this study. The participants were white male, retired, and individual sport athletes who competed in multiple World Championships. Participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and narrative inquiry to analyze the data and create stories. Narrative inquiry uses thematic and narrative analysis to analyze the data (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Thematic analysis was used to find themes related to the data to uncover characteristics. Narrative analysis was used to determine the stories presented by the participants and explore the impact related to each subtheme. The themes found include drives, qualities, and values. The findings include qualities of self-belief, resiliency, and consistency as well as values of self-direction and humility. The impact of striving to be the GOAT was perceived to have both adaptive (e.g., "bootstrap mentality", effort, healthier living) and maladaptive (e.g., performance pressure, depression, relationship issues) influences on performance and wellbeing.

INDEX WORDS: Greatest of all time, Values, Identity, Narrative analysis

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THE GOAT: A NARRATIVE STUDY ON RETIRED

WHITE MALE ELITE INDIVIDUAL SPORT ATHLETES?

by

TYLER BEHRMANN

B.S., Kennesaw State University, 2021

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THE GOAT: A NARRATIVE STUDY ON RETIRED

WHITE MALE ELITE INDIVIDUAL SPORT ATHLETES?

by

TYLER BEHRMANN

Major Professor:		Megan Byrd
Committee:		Brandonn Harris
		Amy Rundio

Electronic Version Approved:

May 2024

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my family.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude and acknowledge the individuals who have been instrumental in guiding and inspiring me through my academic career thus far. A myriad of deserving individuals from cherished family and friends to dedicated supervisors and mentors, have played crucial roles in shaping this project. Special appreciation goes to my esteemed thesis committee, whose expertise proved invaluable in synthesizing my ideas onto paper, my Master's program cohort, who acted not only as part of my cheering section but also as intellectually stimulating collaborators, and to Georgia Southern University, which provided the stage where I could follow my passion. Finally, I must thank the participants for their willingness to share their experiences and the time they gave.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The greatest of all time (GOAT) is a term used by fans, media, and other athletes to note the single best player to ever compete within a sport and is relative to the individual, often based on personal preference (Bundy et al., 2020). The idea of the "greatest of all time" was not used by fans until relatively recently in the history of sport (Lundberg & Rosenberg, 2020). While a "goat" in sport previously meant a player who made a mistake, the acronym GOAT (greatest of all time), was given its new meaning by popular culture. Boxer Muhammad Ali was the first to start the usage of the term by calling himself the greatest of all time and was picked up by L.L. Cool J in 2000 with his music album titled 'G.O.A.T.' (Lundberg & Rosenberg, 2020). From there the term grew as fans argued as to who is the greatest of all time. One particularly prevalent comparison is between National Basketball Association (NBA) players Michael Jordan and LeBron James (Fatahian, 2021).

Athletes' desire to be the best may lead to their success as an athlete or commitment to their sport (Giacobbi et al., 2002; Iñigo et al., 2015; Mallett & Hanrahan, 2004). In desiring to be the best, one might hold the GOAT as a role model. Assuming the GOAT is viewed as a role model, the behaviors demonstrated by an individual who is considered the GOAT would be modeled by athletes striving to be like the GOAT (Ueno et al., 2017). Role models, such as athletes who are the GOAT, provide a "narrative map" or an example that athletes use to link aspects of the role models' identity to their own (Ronkainen et al., 2019). This narrative map may then lead an athlete to follow in the footsteps of these role models and display similar behaviors. In other words, behaviors and values demonstrated by role models, such as

individuals who are the GOAT, would therefore lead to athletes striving to be like the GOAT to follow those behaviors and values.

In determining what individual is the GOAT, multiple factors go beyond competition statistics and accolades to include qualitative data, such as the impact the athlete had on the sport and the level of competition (Albouza et al., 2016; Bundy et al., 2020). This means that factors determining what individual is the GOAT include factors outside of sport as well as those isolated to a sport context such as performance. The characteristics that go beyond competitive statistics such as those described are what an individual who desires to be the GOAT will try to emulate (Bardi et al., 2014). These characteristics common to people's perceptions of the GOAT create a prototype that describes a social identity; particularly GOAT identity (Hogg et al., 1995). What it means to be the GOAT, such as the values and behaviors relating to a GOAT identity, is an unexplored topic. Research on GOAT identity would help to uncover what values athletes aspiring to be the GOAT are integrating into their senses of self and the impact it has on an individual (Ueno et al., 2017). This could uncover potential ways to enhance performance in sport or determine discrepancies in an athlete's sport identities. The discrepancy between this identity and other identities would create conflict within the individual which has been shown to lead to decreased well-being (Killeya-Jones, 2005). What stems from this research may then benefit those within sport and performance contexts (i.e., areas with a discussion of an individual who is the GOAT) by determining what conflicts arise and how individuals have dealt with them. The GOAT identity will be explored by considering research on senses of self, social identities, values, and development as these are components of a social identity, such as the GOAT identity, over the course of an athlete's career.

Identity

Identity, which may contain many other social identities, is an all-encompassing concept for describing an individual which resembles one's sense of self (Berkman et al., 2017). The difference in sense of self is that it is a perception of who someone is from the eyes of that individual as opposed to identity which is related to one's social persona or who someone is from the eyes of others. Higgins (1987) categorized one's sense of self into real, ideal, and ought self, which relates to identity in that it is the way that an individual is perceived. The real self is one's "representation of the attributes that they believe they actually possess" (Higgins, p.320). As an individual strives for improvements to the real self, there are desired senses of self that represent the self-conceived improvements. This real self then acts as a starting point for the desired change in the way one interacts with the world.

The ideal self describes the self an individual prefers to emulate and believes they have the ability to become. Although it is possible to become this self, it is unlikely due to the unforeseeable events that take place that cause an outcome to be less than ideal. Despite the difficulty in reaching this ideal self, people are motivated to reach this sense of self in a way that can be sustained over the course of their lives (Bybee et al., 1997). Becoming the GOAT could be a part of one's ideal self. Many individuals may truly be or have a chance to become the GOAT if events play out in their favor. Although lofty, this possibility of becoming the GOAT in an individual's respective domain makes becoming the GOAT a part of one's ideal self.

There may be individuals whose potential is not high enough to be the GOAT; for them, the desire to be the GOAT would fall under what Bybee and colleagues (1997) termed the "fantasy self." Similar to the ideal self, the fantasy self is a version of the self that is preferred over the real self. Contrary to the ideal self, individuals do not possess the same motivation to

actively pursue the fantasy sense of self because they have low belief in their ability to achieve the outcomes. Therefore, those who desire to be the GOAT but do not have a belief in their ability to achieve this outcome (i.e., have a fantasy self), are unlikely to pursue becoming the GOAT and as a result would be unlikely to integrate and model aspects of the GOAT identity. This suggests that to hold a strong GOAT identity, one must believe in their abilities to perform well enough to be the GOAT. Although the debate of who is the GOAT is a partly subjective topic, elite athletes, such as Olympians or World Championship athletes, may become the GOAT if all factors relating to performance play out in their favor, and as such, are expected to view the GOAT as a portion of the ideal self.

The final sense of self discussed by researchers such as Higgins and colleagues (1987) is the ought self, which is what an individual believes they should do according to social or cultural standards. The primary driver of motivation in the ought self is a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Higher importance on the ought self is linked to increased achievement striving and performance (Bybee et al., 1997). For high-performing athletes, achievement is a major motivational driver (e.g., Albouza et al., 2016) and the connections to ought self demonstrate that an athlete may aspire towards their ought self. Therefore, the qualities displayed under the ought self may not be entirely separate from the ideal self which is supported by the literature (e.g., Higgins et al., 1987). In an athletic population, not only could they be striving for an ideal self, but they may also be striving to balance this with an ought self. Another way to put this is that there could be characteristics of the ought self that are socially created which have an impact on the way one strives to become their ideal self.

Striving for this balance of ought and ideal self can bring internal conflict. Tsang (2000) explored sport-related identity in her Olympic experience through an autobiographical narrative

inquiry which described a conflict between what ought to be done and what she would prefer to do. In a story on shaving legs, there is a conflict between a desire to not shave legs to reject common feminine values and peer pressure that demonstrates a value of conformity. This is summarized by the quote "This is a story of abiding laws: of not "standing out," especially as deviant. Conformity is the rule." (p. 49). A reflection on the experience was that they demonstrated a shift of power that can occur by orienting to a bigger cause. Power originally was held in the hands of peers who pressured the author to conform. Tapping into a larger purpose, in a way that demonstrates self-transcendent values, was what protected against the influence of peer pressure or possibly organizational pressure.

Like the story from Tsang (2000), the GOAT in a given sport may also attempt to balance the ought and ideal self. By studying the GOAT identity, one can get a better understanding of the inequalities in the selves and internal conflict in holding this identity. Exploring the impact of balancing these two selves has on the GOAT could help describe how others who hold a GOAT identity go about handling potential inequalities leading to internal conflict. Other conflicts can occur within a person such as those created by various social identities.

Social Identities

Identity, which is often synonymous with one's sense of self, can be broken down into various role-dependent social identities such as athletic identity (Tajifel, 1978). Descriptions of a social identity are determined by a prototype which is a subjective grouping of characteristics that work to define a social identity (Hogg et al., 1995). Social identities are used to describe the way an individual incorporates a certain role into their thoughts and behaviors (Berkman et al., 2017). Examples of social identities include athletic identity which would be one's identity in a sporting context although this excludes one's identity in other contexts (Brewer et al., 1993). The

concept of a social identity, such as a GOAT identity, would be related to socially constructed characteristics believed to be representative of the GOAT (Hammell, 2006).

Sport-Related Identities

Horton and Mack (2000) investigated the importance of athletic identity and its relationship to social, behavioral, physiological, and performance outcomes. Two hundred thirty-six marathon runners with a mean age of 40.81 years old completed questionnaires on athlete identity (Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS); Brewer et al., 1993), life roles (Life Roles Inventory; Stryker & Serpe, 1994), training effects on identity (Training Affects Assessment [adapted from Coen & Ogles, 1993; Hackney et al., 1990; Ziegler, 1991]), sport commitment (Sport Commitment Scale; Scanlan, 1993), and athlete performance. Based on the participant's scores on the AIMS, athletes were split into groups of either low athletic identity or high athletic identity to compare the groups.

The researchers found that those with a high athletic identity had a weak but positive relationship with marathon performance. In addition, compared to low athletic identity, positive psychological and physical running experience outcomes were found; these included: adaptive body image, increased self-confidence, decreased anxiety, increased running enjoyment, and commitment to training. Regarding training, previous research had suggested that there were negative training consequences (e.g., social isolation, decreased time from family and friends) with having a high athletic identity. This study found evidence of these consequences as well, but also found an overall positive social effect which included an expanded social network by including other runners. Also, athletic identity scores, regardless of high or low, did not have a significant difference on the Life Roles Inventory, meaning other life roles such as a family member, academic, personal involvement, and extracurricular were equally important to both

groups. This means that the athletes were able to engage in other life roles which also contradicts the negative consequences found in previous studies. This discrepancy in findings were interpreted as possibly due to the age of the participants. Therefore, the career stage in which an individual is at is important to consider in researching social identities. Another takeaway from these findings is that if elite athletes can hold life roles inside and outside of sport, one should consider both these contexts when researching the characteristics of a social identity like GOAT identity.

Athletes do have various social identities within sport in addition to their athletic identity; one of these is jock identity (Miller, 2009), but simply playing a sport does not make an individual perceive themselves to be a jock (Miller et al., 2005). Jock identity is suggested to be a publicly, as opposed to privately for athlete identity, identified athletic role that proposes an adolescent who is "popular" (Miller et al., 2005). The differences in Jock identity compared to athletic identity are believed to be based on the hegemonic masculine nature of the jock identity (Miller & Hoffman, 2009). While there is no operational definition that distinguishes a jock identity from other identities within sport, an individual's perceptions of the salience of one's jock identity is used which often takes the form of a Likert scale (e.g., Miller, 2009; Miller & Hoffman, 2009). In one of these studies investigating jock identity, Miller (2009) found that among those who considered themselves jocks (high jock identity), a strong majority (93%) considered themselves athletes (had a high athletic identity) as well. The reverse did not hold true as only some of the individuals (30%) who considered themselves athletes also saw themselves as jocks. This shows that jock identity is distinct from athlete identity. In comparison to athletic identity, jock identity may have a negative connotation among some individuals as on a Likert scale 32% of participants strongly disagree that they possessed a jock identity (Miller,

2009). Part of the negative connotations may come from the perception of the jock identity being associated with a hegemonic masculine identity (e.g., Miller, 2009; Miller & Hoffman, 2009). Miller (2009) provided evidence towards this by finding that those with a high jock identity tended to also demonstrate conformity to masculine norms as well as for the subscale's playboy, winning, and risk. Athlete identity had the opposite effect for all but winning norms. This is important to note as for both identities, winning is important. Despite the emphasis on winning, there are different psychological outcomes of having a high jock identity or not. This difference brings up the possibility for variation in the outcomes of other identities.

There is a gender difference found by Miller (2009) as males tended to have a higher jock identity compared to females. It is important to note that athletic identity also was held less on average in females than males. Although, while female scores for athletic identity were more neutral (which may be viewed as one not having an opinion), female scores on jock identity demonstrated that this identity was not salient among this group. In addition to the prevalence among different genders, a high jock identity was related to ego orientation for only males. This means that males with a high jock identity were more likely to have goals that emphasized comparison to others, but not females. This further leads to the influence gender has on sport-related identities. Being that males on average are more likely to hold high athletic identity and jock identity, one researching sport-related identities would benefit from considering gender as a variable. For an exploration of a GOAT identity in a sport context, males, in comparison to females, would be expected to be more likely have a GOAT identity that they prescribe to.

Previous research has suggested the exploration of the outcomes of behaviors related to the sport-related identities one holds (Miller et al., 2006). Studies have investigated the correlations between a high jock identity and maladaptive behaviors. In these studies, a high jock

identity was related to increased suicide attempts (Miller & Hoffman, 2009), sexual risk-taking (Miller et. al., 2005), and nonfamily violence (Miller et al., 2006). The relationship to these outcomes can be different from athletic identity. For example, the relationship to suicide attempts and depression scores were lower in those with a high athletic identity compared to those with a high jock identity (Miller & Hoffman, 2009). The findings demonstrate the need to explore various sport-related identities such as a GOAT identity. A GOAT identity in sport could have an impact on individuals or their behavior that is maladaptive such as jock identity or adaptive such as demonstrated in athletic identity.

Sport-related identities, such as athletic and jock identity, may have an impact on the behaviors one demonstrates in and out of sport. For a GOAT identity, the behaviors one perceives as related to a GOAT identity would be expected to act out these behaviors. As stated before, it is believed that objective measures of sport-related identities are not enough to have a holistic understanding of sport-related identities held by an individual. This means that subjective measures would be a better tool for exploring sport-related identities such as GOAT identity. In exploring how an athlete integrates an athletic identity into their sense of self, Carless and Douglas (2013) used a narrative approach to analyze interviews and focus groups from 21 professional and elite athletes. From the responses, three stories emerged which described the way the athletes' athletic identity interacted with sport culture. The stories included athletes living the part of the athlete story, resisting the part of the athlete, and playing the part of the athlete. This study further demonstrates that a high athletic identity can be held without the need to give up other identities such as social identities (e.g., family, friends, work, school). It is also apparent from the variations between the stories, that there is a relationship to these identities as they become integrated into a sense of self. If this is the case, an identity such as a GOAT

identity would theoretically also have a relationship with the self. Elite athletes could vary on how they integrate various portions of the GOAT identity into their sense of self within and outside of sport.

As narrative studies such as Carless and Douglas (2013) and Tsang (2000) have demonstrated, there is a relationship between the characteristics of the athletic identity. Specifically, Tsang (2000) brings up the value of conformity as a value held by someone who is an Olympic athlete. Values are factors determining identity (Berkman et al., 2017). While determining values themselves may not allow for a holistic understanding of an individual's relationship to their GOAT identity, using values as categorizations for behaviors may help in the exploration of the identity more generally. In working to describe the values and characteristics of a GOAT identity and values are a more abstract construct that would allow for more broad exploration and categorization of qualitative data (Berkman et al., 2017).

Values

A value can be thought of as simply something desirable or it can be part of a fundamental driving force behind the way a person interacts with the world (Berkman et al., 2017). A value can be defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5).

While there are values frameworks specifically for sport contexts (e.g., Lee & Cockman, 1995), the relationship between the GOAT identity and values may occur inside or outside of sport. Schwartz's (1992) values theory contains a set of values that are universal to various cultures. The values associated with this theory help to standardize the work related to values. The original theory contains 10 values of self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement,

power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism (see Appendix A for definitions). The theory was updated by Schwartz and colleagues (2012) which contains 19 values (see Appendix C for a visual representation of the theory). Of these 19, many are subdivisions of the original 10, and only two, face and humility, are new values.

The circumplex model within Schwartz's theory (see Appendix B) splits these major values into four categories based on similarities between them (Schwartz, 1992; Witte et al., 2020). Each of these categories is a theme that represents goals present within the contained values. There is a difference in goals, and these create conflict between two sets of categories that present opposite goals. One of the two conflicts between categories is openness to change versus conservation, which predicts how resistant an individual is to change of experiences with conservation being more resistant to change. The other is self-transcendence versus self-enhancement which determines if an individual is self- or others-focused (Schwartz, 1992). Self-focused values fall under self–enhancement while others-focused would be considered self-transcendent values. If one considers the self-oriented aspects of sport (i.e., competence, competitiveness, and achievement), self-transcendence versus self-enhancement is particularly relevant to sport research.

The self-transcendence category contains universalism, benevolence, conformity, security, tradition values, and humility values (Schwartz et al., 2012; Schwartz, 1992). Transcendent values are prosocially oriented, meaning that the desired goal is primarily focused on individuals other than the self (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 2010). This would mean that an athlete is strongly concerned for others in a way that promotes good sportsmanship and respect for opponents during a competition.

Self-enhancement values include achievement, power, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, and face (Schwartz et al., 2012; Schwartz 1992). In contrast to the self-transcendence category, the self-enhancement category is influenced primarily by desires leading to a pro-self orientation (Schwartz, 2010). Of these values, achievement is of particular importance as it relates to rewards that will bring social notoriety. For fans attempting to label the GOAT, high achievement within sport such as winning a competition and receiving awards and accolades appears to be essential to becoming the GOAT (Higgins, 2018). The drive towards achievements within a sport may then be associated with the desire to become the GOAT within that sport.

There are expectations of these value categories that lead to behavioral outcomes that appear incongruent. For example, an athlete may have a desire to win a gold medal to make a better life for their family. The desire to win a gold medal holds achievement values while the underlying value is benevolence. This is important to consider when exploring values. Simply recognizing the behavioral outcomes may not be enough to get a full understanding of the motivating factors in play. To get a better understanding of a GOAT identity, which contains various examples of behaviors, a holistic approach is needed to explore the values behind certain behaviors. Qualitative methods, such as narrative inquiry, would ideally have a better chance of identifying incongruencies between behaviors and values related to elite athletes who are striving to be the GOAT.

Athlete Values

Although Schwartz's theory has been tested in various cultures, elite athletes are a unique population in competitive sport and deserve exploration of the various values held by these individuals (e.g., Schwartz, 1992). In support of competitive athletes holding both self-enhancement and self-transcendence values, Albouza et al. (2016) explored values within sport

by conducting semi-structured interviews with 20 adolescent boxers and categorized the responses into one of the 10 values in Schwartz's theory. All 20 athletes in this sample demonstrated all 10 values, including those under the category of self-transcendence (Albouza et al., 2016). As Schwartz's theory suggests, despite representing all of the values, the preferences among values may differ between different populations (Schwartz, 1992). There was a higher preference for self-enhancement values that relate to achievement, power, and hedonism. This could be due to the focus of the study on values within the sport; self-transcendent values were seen to take a more general form that may extend beyond the sport. Of self-transcendent values, when responding to the value of a boxer, one participant stated "A person of trust, faithful, who takes his word. Like Superman. Because he's someone who helps people" (p. 108). Being "someone who helps people" would be under the self-transcendence category of values. If athletes such as the boxers in this study experience self-transcendent values as well as self-enhancement values, elite athletes may perceive a GOAT identity to contain values associated with both categories as well. The importance of exploring the GOAT identity inside and outside of sport is also made relevant from this study as the presence of self-transcendent values may occur primarily outside of sport.

Although athletes demonstrate these values, these may be values imposed by social forces. Athletes may feel they need or 'ought' to demonstrate behaviors that might contrast with what is directly valued by them. These values and behaviors are those that would combine into one's ought self. Teetzel (2012) researched the idea of Olympism which is an ever-changing idealistic set of values that individuals would demonstrate. The paper reviewed past literature on Olympism and found three themes prevalent within different conceptions of the term, including fairness, equality, and ethical behavior. The values supported by sport organizations depicting an

ever-changing ideal of Olympism may include high standards that represent strong self-transcendence values. This Olympism ideal supported by sport organizations is present in Olympic athletes as demonstrated by the themes of self-transcendent values generated from interviews (Gould et al., 2002). Assuming elite athletic role models demonstrate Olympism, the behaviors integrated into one's GOAT identity could reflect the self-transcendent values within the ideal of Olympism.

Although Olympic athletes have been found to hold self-transcendent values, values more commonly reported are those demonstrating self-enhancement values (e.g., Albouza et al., 2016; Cruz et al., 1995). The self-transcendent values of Olympism being socially prescribed and different from the more commonly found self-enhancement values in Olympic athletes could be integrated as part of the ought self. Similarly to Tsang (2000), individuals could feel pressured to act in a way that represents Olympism. In doing this, an individual's ought self could conflict with values related to the ideal self. This difference between values would be seen as an internal conflict for an individual. Therefore, it would be valuable to distinguish the ought self from the ideal self as one describes the GOAT identity. As noted before, there is a need for qualitative data on this subject as the implementation of self-enhancement values within one's ideal self into behaviors could still be seen as values that represent Olympism and therefore work as an ethical driver. This would in turn mean that the discrepancy between the ideal self and ought self would be less.

The salience of both self-transcendent and self-enhancement values demonstrates a need to more holistically gauge the values associated with the GOAT. A higher salience of self-enhancement values could be reflecting an athlete only within a narrow sport context. This fails to encapsulate a full understanding of the values within an identity such as GOAT identity. By

incorporating values and behaviors outside of sport competition in addition to inside it, one can better understand the values and behaviors potentially being integrated into an individual's GOAT identity.

Development of Identity

Age and developmental stages play a role in the importance of values and therefore identity (Albouza et al., 2016; Rokeach, 1973). The values held may remain similar for different ages, but the importance of each value may be different (Silfver et al., 2008). This means that throughout one's life what we consider important changes as we develop. Although there are age- and development-related influences, these are not directly linear (Dhar et al., 2021). This suggests that there may be important transformations at different developmental stages that affect one's association with a GOAT identity.

Developmental Models

Many models can be used to explain the stages of identity development, such as Baillie and Danish (1992), Bloom (1985), Erikson (1959), and Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002). Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) studied the psychological characteristics of elite athletes who have won at least two gold medals in Olympic and/or World Championship competitions. They developed a model based on the work of Côté and Hay (2002) on athlete developmental stages both of which extend previous developmental models (e.g., Bloom, 1985). The stages within the study include sampling, specialization, investment, and maintenance. The sampling stage is when an athlete takes on many different sports to find what they enjoy. Being that this stage tends to occur at a younger age, and an athlete's family has a large influence on this stage (Boyatzis et al., 2000). Specialization is a period where attention is given to a particular sport. With this, increased time and importance are given to the selected sport. The investment stage is

described as a period when even more time is given to a selected sport where one's life orients around being an athlete. This time towards the sport is multifaceted including physical, mental, technical, and tactical training. Finally, the maintenance phase occurs as an athlete has made it to the elite arena and is working to stay at this level. Transitioning out of sport is a stage not discussed in the model. Previous research has used narrative inquiry to determine serious mental health concerns (e.g., depression, suicide attempts) for individuals following this transition (Douglas & Carless, 2009). Including the stages with the altered sport development model (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002) along with the additional transition out of sport would require an athlete who has progressed through all these stages. By doing this, one would have a better understanding of the GOAT over the course of a sport career.

At each stage in the study described above, participants described a significant effect was found that caused a transformation. Transformations are a reconceptualization of the self and they occur due to a need to adapt to new situations or extraordinary experiences (Mezirow, 1978; Rundio et al., 2020). Transformation, such as competing in an Olympic or World Championship event, would ideally cause a shift in the way one views oneself which may influence the values an individual holds.

Olympic athletes desire to be the best (Mallett & Hanrahan, 2004). Being that Olympic athletes compete against the highest-performing competitors to determine who is the best in a sport worldwide, it is assumed that Olympic athletes also desire to be the GOAT. Although it may not be a distinct goal of the individuals, the possibility for its occurrence would put becoming the GOAT under the ideal self under the description of the ideal self proposed by Higgins (1987). To emulate this ideal self, an athlete may integrate values relating to the identity of the GOAT. Values are an important factor in identity that can be used to describe the

motivation underlying behaviors. Through values, one can better represent a GOAT identity. Due to the broad nature of Schwartz's values theory, values inside as well as outside a sport context can be explored. These values describing a GOAT identity may influence the individual's sense of self. It is unexplored what impact a GOAT identity has on an individual and how this impact developed. The perceived GOAT identity may change over time as values are fluid and change over time possibly in stages relating to an athlete's career. Other social identities (e.g., athletic identity, jock identity) have been researched, but no prior research has been done on the identity related to the GOAT. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the identity of the GOAT through its characteristics of values and the impact the identity has on the individual. In this pursuit, this research is attempting to answer the questions (a) what characteristics describe the GOAT identity, and (b) what impact does this identity have on retired white male elite individual sport athletes.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

"I run to be known as the greatest runner, the greatest of all time. I could not eat or sleep for a week after I lost in the 1992 Olympics. I have to win or die" (Daum, 2018). The opening quote by Noureddine Morceli, a retired Olympic middle-distance runner from Algeria, depicts a lofty goal that is motivating him to bring his best effort day in and day out. It is arguable if Noureddine Morceli is the greatest middle-distance runner of all time, but he has achieved a high level of success while having this goal. Other athletes have expressed similar aspirations if not stated as directly as Morceli. For example, 28-time Olympic medalist Michael Phelps is one athlete considered to be the greatest of all time in his sport. In answering a question about what drives him, he said "I just want to do things no one else has done," (Casey, 2008). These quotes reflect the concept of the greatest of all time (GOAT) within a given sport or the best athlete within their sport compared with all others who have played the sport. This is an unexplored topic within academic research and deserves attention since the GOAT is a title some athletes, such as those quoted above, are striving for. As they strive to be the GOAT, it is unclear what values athletes are incorporating into their senses of self. In reviewing the history of the topic, identity, values, and how value and identity develop over time will be discussed as they relate to being the GOAT within sport.

Factors Determining The GOAT

In determining who is the greatest of all time, accomplishments, player statistics, and impact inside and outside the athlete's respective sport are all factors to consider (Bundy et al., 2020). All these factors are made more undefinable by the differences in the time period the sport is played which changes the parts of the sport like technology and difficulty of opponents

(Fatahian, 2021). Academic research has utilized a systematic review of internet searches on top GOAT prospects and used popularity as a strategy for determining the GOAT (Imam, 2017). Beyond athletic statistics and popularity, a more philosophical approach brings out factors such as the desire for self-improvement, the creativity of sport movements, and the impact on the sport (Higgins, 2018) which are used to determine who is the GOAT. These other factors demonstrate that there is more to the title than simply having high achievements within the sport.

The GOAT As A Role Model

Regardless of the debates of fans, there is still an acknowledgment of an elite of the elite by other athletes. The athletes who are the elite of the elite are seen as role models to other individuals and the behaviors the athletes demonstrate have an impact on the behaviors of those individuals (Ueno et al., 2017). Role models can mean those who inspire others (Morgenroth et al., 2015). In adolescent athletes, role models include athletic heroes (Rokainen et al., 2019) who may be the GOAT in their respective sport. These athletic heroes, or individuals who are the GOAT, exhibit traits that work as standards for behavior (Boyatzis & Dhar, 2022). Role models, such as athletes who are the GOAT, provide a "narrative map" or an example that athletes use to link aspects of the role models' identity to their own (Ronkainen et al., 2019). This narrative map may then lead an athlete to follow in the footsteps of these role models and display similar behaviors. In other words, behaviors and values demonstrated by role models, such as individuals who are the GOAT, would therefore lead to athletes striving to be like the GOAT to follow those behaviors and values.

Rokainen and colleagues (2019) explored the type of role models and narrative maps held by 18 (10 female) Finnish adolescent athletes (17-18 years of age) from a variety of sports. After interviewing each individual, the authors used narrative analysis to pull themes from first the

individual's story, and then themes in the context of other participants' stories. They next used a structural narrative analysis to determine the specifics of the data (i.e., plot, narrative of data) to pull out the individual experiences related to each theme. The finding identified 25 role models. Fifteen were abstract athletic heroes such as Olympians or world championship athletes, nine were family members, and one was a coach. The findings determined that many of the role models were male and even mothers were not specifically listed but instead lumped together with fathers together referred to as parents. Following the common sport narrative, athletic heroes were described to be successful from their self-determination and less from support from outside forces. For the athletic heroes, no specific narrative map was given to setbacks. Setbacks or negative emotions were not included in descriptions of athletic heroes. These role models were held with a noncomplex idealistic image of someone who is successful. Athletic heroes surprisingly went against the common performance narrative by suggesting these role models were liked because they did not take sport too seriously. Also, many individuals had a wide-ranging narrative map that went beyond sport. This study suggests that while role models may not provide a specific plan to overcome setbacks, these individuals operate as a narrative map that encapsulate a variety of preferred behaviors for desired outcomes.

As an aspiring athlete follows the narrative map of the GOAT, it is important to consider that the GOAT demonstrates behaviors inside as well as outside of sport which could then be viewed by athletes as a part of the narrative map. The mix of various behaviors associated with a role model or a "narrative map" can form an identity that describes what it means to be the GOAT to that individual (Belic et al., 2021). Of the behaviors associated with the identity, others oriented behaviors could be included such as engaging in activism (Magrath, 2021). Elite athletes demonstrate others oriented traits, but not all of them do so all the time (Caliskan &

Ozer, 2021). Despite the impact elite athlete behaviors have on others, top elite athletes such as Muhammad Ali, who has been known to have a positive social impact, may "exhibit narcissistic behaviors and signs such as grandiosity, preoccupation with power, a strong need for admiration and attention, and exaggerated feelings about themselves" (Caliskan & Ozer, 2021, p. 2). As these athlete role models demonstrate these self-focused behaviors, there is not a full understanding of the traits that following athletes are attempting to mirror.

These athletic heroes could be individuals who symbolize the GOAT within their respective sports. Recognizing aspects of the GOAT identity, such as the related values, over time will lead to the crystallization of that identity (Belic et al., 2021) and as a result indirectly crystallize the values associated. This means that the value-related behaviors will remain more resistant to change over time. Due to the integration and crystallization of certain values, it is important to shed light on the GOAT identity and the behaviors individuals striving to be the GOAT are following.

Social Identities

Social identities are used to describe the way an individual incorporates a certain role into their thoughts and behaviors (Berkman et al., 2017). A social identity is determined by a prototype which is a subjective grouping of characteristics that define a construct or in this case a specific social identity (Hogg et al., 1995). The GOAT identity can be described as a social identity. Research has suggested it is important to investigate the behaviors related to one's identity related to sport (Miller et al., 2006). An individual can have multiple social identities (Horton & Mack, 2000). One better-researched example is athletic identity. Horton and Mack (2000) investigated the importance of athletic identity and its relationship to social, behavioral, physiological, and performance outcomes. Two hundred thirty-six marathon runners with a mean

age of 40.81 years old completed questionnaires on athlete identity (Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS); Brewer et al., 1993), life roles (Life Roles Inventory; Stryker & Serpe, 1994), training effects on identity (Training Affects Assessment [adapted from Coen & Ogles, 1993; Hackney et al., 1990; Ziegler, 1991]), sport commitment (Sport Commitment Scale; Scanlan, 1993), and athlete performance. From the results of the athletic identity questionnaire, athletes were split into groups (i.e., low or high athletic identity) based on their level of identifying as an athlete. Participants who scored in the 33rd percentile or lower were put into the 'low' group and those with a score in the 67th percentile or higher were in the 'high' group. The researchers found that those with a high athletic identity had a weak but positive relationship with marathon performance. High athletic identity individuals tended to have improved training effects and negative consequences related to their athletic identity. Compared to low athletic identity, positive psychological and physical running experience outcomes were found; these included: adaptive body image, increased self-confidence, decreased anxiety, increased running enjoyment, and commitment to training. Regarding training, previous research had suggested that there were negative training consequences (e.g., social isolation, decreased time from family and friends) with having a high athletic identity. This study found evidence of these consequences as well, but also found an overall positive social effect which included an expanded social network by including other runners. Also, athletic identity scores, regardless of high or low, did not have a significant difference on the Life Roles Inventory, meaning other life roles such as a family member, academic, personal involvement, and extracurricular were equally important to both groups. This means that the athletes were able to engage in other life roles which also contradicts the negative consequences found in previous studies. Also, runners with a high athletic identity can hold other identities associated with these other life roles. This

discrepancy in findings which were interpreted as possibly due to the age of the participants. Therefore, the career stage in which an individual is at is important to consider in researching social identities. Another takeaway from these findings is that if elite athletes can hold life role inside and outside of sport, one should consider both these contexts when researching the characteristics of a social identity like GOAT identity. Other social identities were found that included relationships with an expanded network of friends. Interestingly, these friends were primarily runners as non-running relationships suffered as athletic identity increased. Non-running relationships were a part of the "negative social outcomes such as increased social isolation, decreased time with family and or non-running friends, and decreased social activity" (p. 113). These results demonstrate a need to understand the way one chooses to interact with the athletic identity and integrate it with other identities.

In exploring the integration of social identities, Killeya-Jones (2005) explored the psychological outcomes of discrepancies in roles between social identities. They had 40 male college football players take an anxiety scale (Spielberg et al., 1983), a depression scale (Radloff, 1975), a self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1979), satisfaction self-assessment, and an identity collection instrument. They found that greater role discrepancy was related to greater psychological maladjustment (i.e., lower self-esteem, higher depression). Less discrepancy between roles was linked to positive well-being, higher life satisfaction, and adjustment (i.e., higher self-esteem, lower depression). Anxiety was not specifically addressed in these results. Greater convergence of social identities (i.e., academic, athletic) was related with greater satisfaction. One takeaway from this study is that the impact of felt discrepancies in social identities can be related to negative psychological variables and the reverse (i.e., convergence) could lead to positive psychological variables. This promotes the need to study various social

identities and the discrepancies or convergence between them. Another takeaway is that sport-related social identities relate to identities and psychological variables outside of sport as well. This study found a relationship between role discrepancies in social identities and psychological well-being or maladjustment, but there are also correlations between performance within sport and school.

Lu et al. (2018) explored social identities within different contexts. For example, looking at athletic identity while in a classroom setting where a student's identity would be more prominent. A sample of 703 university student-athletes from a variety of colleges were tested on identity salience (Brewer et al., 1993), identity conflict (by Likert scale and open-ended question), academic performance (by looking at GPA and ranking of school), and athletic performance (by determining if they were considered a top performer on their team and athletic ranking). Participants experienced relatively high levels of identity conflict (M = 3.65, SD = 1.00). Student-athletes who earned higher GPAs were more likely to have stronger student identity salience and those who were top athletic performers had higher athlete identity salience. This means that identity salience was related to success in the context related to that identity. Another finding was that those who held a highly salient athletic or student identity had more conflicts. Qualitative responses described struggles of needing to fulfill the roles associated with each identity (e.g., choosing homework over sleeping). The qualitative responses give more insight into what the potential causes of discrepancies in social identities may be.

Athletes interact with their athletic identity in different ways. A study by Carless and Douglas (2013) conducted interviews and focus groups with 21 professional and elite athletes from a variety of sports to explore the narrative of these individuals' experiences with athletic identity and its influence by culture. Responses were analyzed using a narrative method and

three themes were identified which included athletes living the part of the athlete story, resisting the part of the athlete, and playing the part of the athlete. Athlete accounts of living the part of the athlete included being totally focused on one's sport. This could be considered as having a strongly integrated high athletic identity. With these accounts, there was the inclusion of a scenario where an athlete was forced to consider the importance they placed on sport. In this scenario, an individual was urged by coaches to come to practice after having a miscarriage. This caused another athlete on the team to view the culture of the sport in a way that discourages the inclusion of outside portions of the self such as one's place with family and friends. Resisting the part of the athlete was demonstrated as participating in sport for more of the purpose of enjoyment. Center to this relationship with the athletic identity was the importance held within areas outside of sport. Examples of these could be school, work, and social life. These many times were held as more if not as important than sport training. Finally, playing the part of the athlete was described as demonstrating a high athletic identity, but only in sport contexts. Outside of sport, the lives of the athletes were multidimensional possibly including school, work, and social life aspects. This is distinct in the way the athlete would reject the sport culture in that the rejection would occur outside of sport in a way that is covert to the relationships within a sport context. This study further demonstrates that a high athletic identity can be held without the need to give up other identities such as social identities (e.g., family, friends, work, and or school), and the importance of qualitative research on social identities. It is also apparent that there is a relationship to these identities as they become integrated into a perceived self.

The previously described studies (i.e., Carless & Douglas, 2013; Horton & Mack, 2000; Killeya- Jones, 2005; Lu et al., 2018) point out discrepancies between identities within sport (i.e., athletic identity) and outside of sport (i.e., student identity). There can also be multiple social

identities within sport itself. One of these would be jock identity (Miller & Hoffman, 2009).).

Jock identity is suggested to be a publicly, as opposed to privately for athlete identity, identified

athletic role that proposes an adolescent who is "popular" (Miller et al., 2005). The differences in

Jock identity compared to athletic identity are believed to be based on the hegemonic masculine

nature of the jock identity (Miller & Hoffman, 2009).   Miller (2009) explored the

differences between two sport identities (i.e., athletic identity and jock identity). The study

consisted of 581 undergraduate students (251 female) who filled out a questionnaire that tested

the sport identities (using a Likert scale), goal orientation in sport (TEOSQ; Duda, 1989), sport

popularity (using a Likert scale), how much someone prescribed to masculine norms

(Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003; Smiler, 2006)), and

demographic questions. For the sport identity scales specifically, the data was analyzed by

putting individuals into groups based on having a high (score equal to or greater than 3.5) or low

sport identity (score equal to or lower than 3.0). The results found that 32% strongly disagreed

(scored a 1) with possessing a jock identity. This shows that there is a sizable group that strongly

views this identity as not reflective of themselves. Of the individuals who considered themselves

jocks, a strong majority (93%) considered themselves athletes as well. The reverse did not hold

true as only some of the individuals (30%) who considered themselves athletes also saw

themselves as jocks. This again shows that jock identity is distinct from athletic identity.

Regarding the demographic data, males tended to score higher on the jock identity-

related questions of the scale (M=2.47, SD=1.15) than females (M=1.85, SD=0.97). Considering

a score of 3 is neutral, this suggests that on average, the jock identity is slightly low among male

individuals and even more among females. Females were also more likely to score lower on the

athlete identity-related questions (M=2.83, SD=1.25) compared to males (M=3.58, SD=1.08).

While these results can be viewed as females identifying less with both athletic and jock identities, the jock identity still had lower averages for each gender. For females, the score is notably low.

The low jock identity prevalence and difference in gender might be due to the characteristics of the jock identity. Higher scores (3.5 or more) on the jock identity scale were significantly and positively associated with conformity to masculine norms as well as for the subscales playboy, winning, and risk. This means that individuals with a high jock identity may also engage in behaviors that depict hegemonic masculinity. Athlete identity had the opposite effect for all but winning norms and was negatively associated with playboy norms. This is important to note as for both identities, winning is important. In addition to masculine conformity, a high jock identity was related to ego orientation for only males. This means that those with a jock identity were more likely to have goals that emphasized comparison to others.

Other studies have investigated the outcomes of jock behavior (e.g., Miller et al., 2005; Miller et al., 2006). For example, Miller and colleagues (2005) looked to explore the relationship between jock identity and sexual risk behavior in different genders and races. Family cohesion (FACES III scale; Olson et al., 1985), physical activity, age (14-19 years), frequency of dating, and socioeconomic status were also included as controls. Other than for family cohesion, all measures were determined by self-report. For sexual risk, 4 self-report measures of sexual risk were used including overall lifetime number of sex partners, lifetime frequency of sexual intercourse, frequency of intercourse in the past 12 months, and age of first sexual intercourse. In determining the prevalence of jock identity among participants, 50% of males and 23% of females saw themselves as jocks, and 37% of white compared to 22% of African American

respondents. Multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to determine the relationship between demographic categories (gender and race) and sexual risk behavior.

Overall, jock identity was related to higher sexual risk behavior. Although the prevalence of jock identity was lower in females, the relationship to sexual risk behavior was the same for females as well. This means that although there are potentially small nuances in the gender differences in the connection between jock identity and sexual risk behavior, it is not found to be the case in more quantitative measures. This points to the potential for maladaptive behaviors such as sexual risk behavior being related to other sport identities such as GOAT identity.

Racial groups were similar in the relationship between jock identity and sexual risk behavior. Although, while the jock identity was related to sexual risk behavior for White and African Americans, the authors noted that African American individuals had higher scores on sexual risk behavior. In other differences, a significant difference was found between the dating prevalence as well. While dating prevalence was lower in African American jocks than non-jocks, dating was higher in White jocks compared to non-jocks of the same race. This points to an important cultural nuance that underlines jock identity and outcomes such as sexual risk behavior. Although holding a jock identity was related to sexual risk behaviors, there is a need to understand the cultural context of these experiences.

Miller and colleagues (2006) investigated the relationship between jock identity and maladaptive behaviors such as binge drinking and adolescent violence. Six hundred ninety-nine adolescents over six waves of participants (13-16 at the beginning of the study) for a longitudinal study between the years 1989 and 1996. The participants were interviewed and were given a self-administered questionnaire for sensitive questions. Family violence, nonfamily violence, and

alcohol use were determined by scales. Responses were coded and categorized based on prevalence.

Similarly to other studies (e.g., Miller, 2009; Miller et al., 2005) more males (47%) than females (20%) considered themselves to be a jock. Jocks were also more often White (37%) than black (22%). Jocks compared to non-jocks had significantly more incidents of nonfamily violence ($p<0.001$). No difference between these groups was found for family violence. The authors proposed that this result was due to the characteristics of jock identity. Specifically, demonstrating masculinity was considered an important characteristic of jock identity. The reason for no more family violence among jock identity was suggested to be the lack of opportunity to demonstrate masculinity this way. In other words, showing violence towards others, but not family was thought to be related to demonstrating masculinity and the jock identity.

Binge drinking was larger on average among jock identity (M=6.84) than non-jocks (M=4.98) but this was not shown to be significant. What was interesting about binge drinking among jock identities was that while non-jocks had a mediating effect of binge drinking and family violence, yet jocks did not. Binge drinking was not shown to lead to more family violence among those considered jocks. The authors suggest that binge drinking might just be a part of what one does as a jock and is done in a way that does not include family violence. Being that the GOAT identity can be considered as another sport-related identity, characteristics related to the jock identity may be also present in a GOAT identity. It is shown in this study that characteristics related to one's identity can then manifest into behaviors demonstrated by the individual who holds that identity. While these behaviors (i.e., nonfamily violence, binge

drinking) may be negative, there are also correlations of jock identity to other negative outcomes that should be considered.

Miller and Hoffman (2009) explored the relationship between depression and suicide attempts for both athletic and jock identities. Seven-hundred ninety-one undergraduate students took a questionnaire containing questions exploring depression (Radloff 1991), suicide attempts, sport identities, perception of sport identities, and demographic questions (e.g., gender). Of the participants, 285 had participated in sports within the last year and most of these were in a team sport context. The perception of sport identities was included due to there not being an operational definition of the identities. The researchers compared the perceptions of the participants of the jock and athletic identity to the jock/athlete characteristics inventory. This worked to increase the validity of the salience of jock and athletic identities. As expected, athletic identity was negatively associated with depression and suicide attempts and appeared to mediate the effects of sport participation with depression and suicide attempts. While jock identity did not significantly predict depression scores, it was positively correlated with suicide attempts. In gender-specific equations, males had a significant decrease in depression scores, but not females. This gender difference was believed to be due to the hegemonic masculine nature of the jock identity and the characteristics that describe it.

Outcomes such as depression and suicide could relate to other social identities within sport such as a GOAT identity. The authors believed that objective measures of athletic participation cannot robustly explain the commitment to the sport-related identity. This means that subjective measures would be a better tool for exploring sport-related identities such as GOAT identity.

Sense Of Self

The term identity can be used to describe more than simply social identities such as athletic identity (Berkman et al., 2017). The various social identities an individual holds are integrated to describe one comprehensive identity (Berkman et al., 2017). Identity is similar yet conceptually separate from self (Hammell, 2006). The self is a concept representing an individual's perception of their entire being while identity is how the individual is represented to others. This is an important distinction as the identity of the GOAT would be the way individuals, such as those striving to become the GOAT, would perceive these individuals. The perceived self of the GOAT would be a more personal view of themselves. The term identity, as used by Berkman and colleagues (2017), refers to the "Me" by William James (1890) and includes many components that are made within the work on self. With a slight distinction, identity and self both include the compilation of various identities and core values (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006). With these similarities, some categorizations of the self, such as ideal, fantasy, and ought can be used to demonstrate the desired identity.

Living up to the best possible self has been a theme in individual philosophies since ancient times as it relates to philosophical topics such as well-being (Dhar, 2021). There is a perceived real self that people believe most accurately represents themselves (Higgins, 1987), but there are also lofty senses of self. Some of these include the ideal self, fantasy self, and ought self. The first of these types is the ideal self which is the self we have the ability to achieve (Bybee et al., 1997). Stated another way, it is the way a person would prefer to perceive and interact with the environment. This preference for behavior would act as a motivator in a relevant situation (Boyatzis & Dhar, 2022). For example, if an individual views helping others as part of whom they strive to become, they are more likely to be willing to help a teammate who appears

frustrated after a difficult athletic performance. Despite having the ability to achieve this ideal scenario, some believe it is impossible to achieve because the ideal self coincides with perfection (Parsons et al., 1968). Still, there are a select few real-life examples of athletes who achieve success at a level inching ever so close to being the "best". These athletes could be considered the GOAT in the eyes of their fans.

Bybee and colleagues (1997) describe other types of self such as fantasy self-image, which includes things we would like to happen but do not truly believe can be achieved. This is a very subjective idea although an example could include someone who wants to win an Olympic gold medal in a sprinting event and a marathon. The likelihood of both events occurring, let alone one, is highly unrealistic in the current world we live in. The fantasy self as a concept has some similarities to the ideal self in the idealistic aspects of the possible self. What is lacking in the fantasy self is the belief that it can be achieved with reasonable effort. People would like to experience this fantasy self-image but do not truly believe they can. From the previous example, an individual may want to win an Olympic gold medal in both a marathon and sprinting event although they do not truly believe it is achievable. The difference plays out in a way that the fantasy self-image may not cause an individual to put in the work to achieve this self (Bybee et al., 1997). Individuals holding a fantasy belief of becoming the GOAT could potentially not be as motivated to put time and effort towards this goal and theoretically not embody the same traits as role models who are the GOAT. With this lack of motivation, there may be a lesser degree to which aspects of the GOAT identity are integrated into their own real self. By the meaning of the World Championship events such as the Olympics, a group of individuals who are constantly pursuing being the best are Olympic and World Championship level athletes.

A final type of self listed is the ought self-image, which contains perceptions of responsibilities or obligations a person has (Higgins, 1987). Bybee and colleagues (1997) had 81 undergraduates describe the top traits for the ought self-image (in addition to the ideal and fantasy self-images) and found socially focused terms of altruism and trusting were given to this type of self. These terms demonstrate that the orientation of the ought self is on others. It was also linked with higher achievement striving and a slight increase in academic performance (Bybee et al., 1997). From these results, the ought self is a more socially oriented category of self. This may come into conflict with the ideal self if the ideal self involves more pro-self aspirations. Conflict between the ought and ideal self also has been shown to lead to poor mental health which may take the form of depression and anxiety disorders (Higgins, 1987).

In determining the adaptiveness of the selves, a follow-up study by Bybee and colleagues (1997) took surveys from 74 undergraduates which included the list of the top traits from the last study and rated their personality characteristics and state anxiety. The ideal self (r=.25, p<.05) and fantasy self (r=.29, p<.01) had a weak positive correlation with state anxiety; none were correlated with trait anxiety. The ideal self was moderately correlated with self-consciousness (r=.34, p<.01). Despite the correlation with state anxiety, there is not enough to suggest that the ideal self is maladaptive. The fantasy self on the other hand was clearly viewed as negative as it related with depression (r=.24, p<.05), hostility (r=.45, p<.001), and was negatively correlated with dutifulness (r=-.38, p<.001) and values (r=-.30, p<.01). This suggests high importance placed on the fantasy self is maladaptive. In defining the construct, the negative correlation with dutifulness supports the belief that the fantasy self does not provide a strong motivation toward a goal. An important note is that the fantasy self was also negatively correlated with many of the traits under the category agreeableness including altruism (r=-.33, p<.01), trust (r=-.33, p<.001),

straightforwardness (r=-.43, p<.0001), and compliance (r=-.47, p<.0001). Participants with high importance on the ought self had a strong correlation with characteristics of warmth (r=.52, p<.0001) and positive emotions (r=.61, p<.0001). Many of the same traits within the agreeableness category (altruism, trust, and straightforwardness) had a positive correlation with the ought self that mirrored those found in the fantasy self. The researcher's interpretation of the results was that the ought self was the most adaptive form of self-image. This may be due to a higher importance on the ought self may mean that it is more symmetrical with an individual's ideal self. This possibly takes away from a potential conflict between the selves.

The ideal self "contained self-centered aspirations, specifically, wanting to be autonomous, popular, successful in career, and intelligent" (pg. 49). This serves as evidence that a desire to be the GOAT would be a part of the ideal self as being the GOAT would demonstrate the qualities listed. There was pressure to achieve these desired outcomes and it would be expected that the desire to be the GOAT would also bring pressure.

In addition to the potential pressures associated with a desire to be the GOAT, there may also be seminaries in behaviors that depict values. While values were included as not having a significant correlation with a high importance of an ideal or ought self, there were examples of concepts that represent values such as prosocial behaviors and achievement oriented. This could be due to a lack of defining what values are.

Values

The categorizations of the self help to begin to determine what determines an individual's behavior, however, there are a variety of factors that impact the choice of behavior (Berkman et al., 2017). Berkman and colleagues (2017) described identity as a "relatively stable mental representation of personal and intrapersonal values, priorities, roles, and so forth, sometimes

called the self-concept" (p.79). In this definition, values are directly listed as part of identity. Like the ideal self, the Schwartz values model describes a preferred personal or social quality (Silfver et al., 2008). In describing values, one may simultaneously be describing the ideal self. Despite being a part of identity, values are more abstract than identity (Berkman et al., 2017). This abstract nature of values would allow for a broader categorization of behaviors associated with a GOAT identity.

Defining Values

A value can be thought of as simply something desirable, like valuing one item over another, or it can be part of a fundamental driving force behind the way a person interacts with the world (Berkman et al., 2017). A value has been defined by Rokeach (1973) as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (p. 5). This definition accounts for many of the important factors to consider for defining the concept in research by including values as a characteristic, something desirable, and that it influences attitudes and or behavior (Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 395 as cited in Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). In this way, values are moral standards that motivate an individual while working as a decision-making guide (Rokeach, 1973). These moral standards are what would guide an athlete towards the behaviors they demonstrate on and off the field.

Values described here are considered core values (Schwartz et al., 2012) and as such are considered a truism or a guide that holds consistency for all situations and are carried out to its fullest (Mario et al., 2001). An example of this is benevolence or doing good for others. This would be a guide for all situations while also requiring its entirety to be fulfilled. In following our values, another way of putting it is that we cannot do part-good to others.

Values can manifest in different ways and as a result, values are more abstract than social norms or culture (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). Reflecting this, Rokeach's (1973) list of assumptions regarding values include:

> The total number of values that a person possesses is relatively small; all men everywhere possess the same values in different degrees; values are organized into values systems; the antecedents of human values can be traced to culture, society and its institutions, and personality; the consequences of human values will be manifested in virtually all phenomena that social scientists might consider worth investigating and understanding. (p. 3)

In this list of assumptions, one can also begin to see values coming from various places yet falling under a set of categories common to many individuals. These assumptions serve as the building blocks for value theories to emerge.

Schwartz Value Theories

While value frameworks used for sport encapsulate the values associated with participation within a sport context (e.g., Lee & Cockman, 1995; Simmons & Dickinson, 1986), they fail to incorporate values associated outside the sport. In the exploration of the identity of the GOAT, a more general values framework such as Schwartz's values could provide a more holistic view of this unexplored area.

Schwartz (1992) 10 Values Theory. Schwartz's values theory contains a more universal set of values than held in past research (e.g., Rokeach, 1973) and has led to the standardization of values in later research. There are also assumptions specific to Schwartz's value theory which include: "values are beliefs linked inextricably to affect," "values refer to desirable goals that motivate action", "values transcend specific actions and situations", "values serve as standards",

the ranked order of values reflects priorities, and multiple values determine behaviors (Schwartz, 2010, p. 222-223). The assumptions of this theory describe how values affect behaviors depicting more practical aspects by focusing on how values interact with other constructs. This is different than Rokeach's list which focuses on the construct itself. Both lists are important in describing the presence and impact of values.

The values in the original 10-values framework (Schwartz, 1992) are self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism (see Appendix A for definitions). There has been a more recent revision of Schwartz's values theory leading to a total of 19 values (Schwartz et al., 2012). Despite the revision, many studies have supported the framework and assumptions of the original theory that included 10 values (e.g., Witte et al., 2020; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Oishi et al., 1998). The 19 values theory adds face and humility and subdivides many of the original 10 values into sub-categories to get a total of 19 values (see Appendix C for visual). Being so similar to the revision suggests it would be acceptable to utilize the results from studies that used the 10-value version (Schwartz et al., 2012; Witte et al., 2020).

Schwartz et al. (2012) 19 Values Theory. Although the revised 19 values version of Schwartz's theory can be condensed into the ten original values it is not without purpose. Schwartz and colleagues (2012) worked to more discretely define the original 10 values which work within broader contexts. In testing the refined version, 2150 adults and 3909 university students submitted a questionnaire with questions that differentiated between the theorized 19 values. The model that stemmed from this contains the inclusion of two different values while the remainder works more as sub-classifications of other values (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). While the sub-classifications (see Appendix C) serve to only further define the currently presented

values, the newly added values are important to consider. The two include humility and face (Schwartz et al., 2012; Ponizovskiy et al., 2019) (see Appendix A for definitions). These two may relate to values associated with common behaviors within sport. For example, humility values could be related to behaviors of good sportsmanship, while face values may connect with a sport celebrity image. Considering the connection to sport, humility and face values should be considered when exploring the identity of the GOAT.

Value Categories

Values can also be grouped into general categories based on similar motives leading to similar evaluations and behaviors (Schwartz et al., 2012). Called the circumplex model values within Schwartz's theory can be formed into a circle (as seen in Appendix B). The closer values are to a circle, the more similar they are in the behaviors they tend to manifest (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 2010). Due to this similarity, there is a grouping of values into four categories, openness to change, conservation, self-transcendence, and self-enhancement. Each category reflects the opposite of another category. These opposing categories, positioned on the opposing side of the circle within the circumplex model, create two continuums: openness to change versus conservation and self-transcendence versus self-enhancement (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 2010). Openness to change vs. conservation is the degree to which an individual values tradition and their willingness to tolerate changes to what is safe (Schwartz, 1992). While the openness to change vs. conservation continuum may help explain political ideologies (Schwartz, 2010), the self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement would ideally be more applicable to sport. The question then becomes if the desire to be the GOAT is primarily a self-transcendent or self-enhancement goal.

Self-Transcendence. The self-transcendence category of the circumplex model contains universalism, benevolence, conformity, security, tradition values, and humility values (Schwartz et al., 2012; Schwartz, 1992). These are perceived as generally more positive (Belic et al., 2021), and are more likely to elicit prosocial behaviors that positively correlate with perceived happiness and perception from others as being trustworthy, fair, and helpful (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 2010). Being prosocially oriented, transcendent values promote behaviors that are primarily focused on individuals other than the self (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 2010). This would mean that an athlete is strongly concerned for others in a way that promotes good sportsmanship and respect to opponents during competition.

There are situations where the activation of a certain category does not elicit a response as would be predicted by the circumplex model (Schwartz, 2010). For the self-transcendent category, this would mean the associated values could also promote behaviors that are in opposition to prosocial behaviors (Schwartz, 1992). For example, an individual may enact a benevolence value by doing something nice for one person while the result in turn harms another. The reason behind a benevolence value may be to help other, but as shown, the result of enacting a benevolence value could vary. Within each category, values can lead to similar behaviors and efforts given, but for different reasons (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 2010). For example, universalism values could motivate an athlete to emphasize a more accepting team culture for the desire to have equality for everyone, while conformity values could promote the same behavior, but for the desire of fitting into a group's norms.

Self-Enhancement Values. Another category of values, self-enhancement, includes those values directed toward the self and include power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, as well as face (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2012). These values promote

behaviors that are focused on self-interests and are primarily ego-based (Schwartz, 2010). Even if the values within this category are commonly found within research to have negative outcomes such as being correlated with doping behaviors (Ring et al., 2020), they are a normal part of the human experience (Schwartz, 2010; Schwartz, 1992). In the sporting realm, these values are what motivate an athlete to strive toward greatness.

Achievement Values. An undeniable part of becoming a successful elite athlete is the achievements that accompany it. Winning an Olympic gold medal is one of these. It brings notoriety and social recognition which is something to be valued. Achievement values would ideally be an important part of the set of values associated with the GOAT identity.

Achievement values in Schwartz's theory are in stark contrast to achievement in theories such as McClelland's theory of needs (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953). In Schwartz's theory, achievement values are more about gaining social acceptance while McClelland's theory of needs utilizes achievement motivation to describe motivation towards a self-determined standard. Achievement in this theory is important in the realm of sport and does relate to another value being self-direction (Schwartz, 1992; Belic et al., 2021).

An important distinction in the self-enhancement category is between achievement and power values. Both are ego-based and have an element of social acceptance emphasized by the need for belonging (Schwartz, 1992; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). An interesting way to differentiate the two is the former is about proving oneself to others while the latter is centered on proving oneself above others (Schwartz, 1992). In addition to this, power is primarily construed negatively (Belic et al., 2021). A GOAT is expected to hold both values. While a GOAT by definition must prove themselves as better than their competition, suggesting a value

of power, they also would acquire social notoriety through achievements suggesting a value of achievement. his does not leave out the possibly for a value of achievement.

      Values In-Between Categories. In splitting the circle of values into categories within the circumplex model, some values are similar to more than one category. Humility (conservation and self-transcendence), face (conservation and self-enhancement), and hedonism (openness to change and self-enhancement) are all between categories (see Appendix C). These values would be a part of both categories. While these values are in two categories, none of them are in categories that are in a continuum with one another. This means that a value is not in both self-transcendence and self-enhancement categories which are categories that contradict. In addition to this, it does not affect whether a value is more personally or socially focused (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). These values within multiple categories only serve to account for the important nuances of those values. A nuance of face values is to maintain a public image (conservation) while also working towards improving the public image (self-enhancement). For an athlete, face values may come in the form of an approach towards a better public image by engaging in charitable acts or as conservation away from negative public images by refraining from unsportsmanlike behavior.

Measuring Values

      A popular approach for determining values within a culture is an averaging approach (Witte et al., 2020). This has participants rank the values in an order they find most relevant. These ranks are then averaged to determine which values are most common within a given culture. While it is helpful for determining which values are important within a culture, Witte and colleagues (2020) suggested an averaging approach may find difficulty in creating a sample profile of someone within these cultures. An averaging approach makes the mistake of forgetting

values within the circumplex model are on a continuum. So values that work against one another may be both ranked highly when in reality they are representing split profiles. The solution is to look at individuals as a whole. They tested another method, the distribution method, for ranking values utilizing data from individuals from 20 different European countries who had their values assessed by the Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ). Gollen and Witte's (2014) distribution method, predicts individual values based on profiles created from the most prevalent individual value systems, or individual ranked value sets (Rokeach, 1973), within a culture. The results suggest that there are different profiles that resemble the circumplex model within Schwartz's values theory containing self-enhancement versus self-transcendence and openness versus conservation (Witte et al., 2020). The natural creation of profiles based on the circumplex model supports the model itself. From the results, the authors suggested that the distribution model be used when determining larger group values.

Values Into Behaviors

Multiple values can be activated at a single time. While it is normal, these values can be conflicting such as if they are from categories on different ends of a continuum (e.g., self-transcendence versus self-enhancement). The resulting actions are congruent with some values and incongruent with others (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 2010). This discrepancy can create a conflict within a person that could be realized as a moral dilemma (Schwartz, 1992). For an Olympian, this could be conflict in socializing and helping fellow Olympians before a competition. While desiring to help others, eliciting benevolence values, may be important to the athlete, it may conflict with the desire to retain an advantage over others in order to win a competition. Schwartz's values theory assumes that in times when there is a conflict, pursuing one value takes available resources away from pursuing another (Schwartz, 2010). In the

example given, an Olympic athlete who would feel the need to invest as much effort into their performance may also feel socializing with others takes away the available time and energy towards this goal.

Value Instantiating Beliefs. The behavioral outcome of conflicting values is a result of the importance of each value (Schwartz, 1992). Mixing of values is situation-specific as values are combined uniquely in different situations to determine an overall attitude and behavior through their collective relative importance (Schwartz, 2010). This shows there is an attitudinal and behavioral impact to the individual for values being activated. Value instantiating beliefs (VIBs) help connect value effects to attitudinal effects on behavior within a specific context (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). An important piece to this is that there is contextual relevance associated with values. As an event activates different values, attitudes form toward the given situation (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). In these specific situations, attitudes give importance to each value (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). It is not the values that change, but the attitude resulting from the interplay of values that change in various situations. This function of values and the accompanying attitudes are the deciding factors in the VIB.

VIBs help determine the strength and direction of the connection between values and a specific situation (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). For behavior, a person could be pulled by various values but hold only one VIB (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). Moving forward in research, looking into values through the resulting attitude towards particular situations is not enough to get a complete picture of the conflict between values. A deeper investigation of the conflicting values creating that attitude is important.

There are some cognitive determinants of VIBs. A couple discussed by Ponizoskiy et al. (2019) noted typicality and salience. Typicality is how closely a situation matches the

prototypical example of a value (Ponizoskiy et al., 2019). Increased typicality of a value makes

the value more present in an individual's mind (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). An athlete may hold

the value of universalism important due to a situation where they witnessed a role model

engaging in activism. When a situation arises where the athlete has an opportunity to engage in

activism, this universalism value will be more active.

Salience is how prevalent a situation is and high salience makes a value more important

(Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). For an Olympic athlete who just watched a video or engaged in a

discussion on the difficulty of winning an Olympic gold medal, they would have self-

enhancement values activated to prepare themselves for the upcoming difficult task.

Reason Salience. Although values serve as universal guides, the resulting behavior may

vary (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). The effect of values on behavior is lacking in strength and as

such, there are other confounding variables more specific to the situation that have a larger

impact on behavior (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). It is thought that these situational variables could

drown out the effect of values on behavior (Maio et al., 2001). A study by Maio and colleagues

(2001), had 177 undergraduate psychology students participate in a study examining reasons for

behaving in a way that matches equality values. One group called the reasons salience group,

listed out the reasons for behaving a certain way that matched equality values, including if these

values were either pro-equality or anti-equality. Another group, called value salience group, did

tasks that related with equality values to prime the equality-related values. The final group was a

control that did neither of these tasks. Contemplating reasons for a value ($M = 4.08$) had a

significant impact on the related behavior ($F(2, 164) = 5.72$, $p<.01$) in comparison to the value

salience ($M = 7.02$) or the control group ($M = 6.75$). This means that reasons for displaying a

certain value are important determinants of behavior. The findings from this study would appear to reject the importance of the favorability of values.

An important point for further study was that the attitude regarding the value of equality could have been a confounding variable. In a follow-up study by Maio and colleagues (2001), helpfulness as a value was studied in 58 psychology students, similar to equality in the previous study. Attitudes towards these values were also included. The results from this study found that the reasons salience ($M = 1.74$; $SD= 0.46$) did not increase attitudes of values compared to values salience ($M = 1.84$; $SD = 0.59$) ($t(55) = 0.69$, *ns.*) (2001). This finding means that exploring reasons for a specific behavior had an effect on behavior separate from the attitudes towards that behavior. The finding also supports the idea that values have a greater effect on behavior when there is a specific link between a value and the desired behavior.

In sum, these findings support the idea that values have affective support, but not necessarily cognitive support (Maio et al., 2001). An athlete may have emotion, and may even recognize that emotion, behind a specific value-related behavior, but that value will still not be as effective as one connected with a reason. In order to behave in a way that fits with behavior, it is suggested to actively link reasons with value-fitting behavior. Through this link, a stronger effect can occur that then influences behavior. Research exploring identity and values may benefit from determining the reason for a behavior. The attitudinal aspect of a value related behavior would still be important to determine as one could have a better understanding of an individual's experience and of a social identity such as a GOAT identity.

It is important to note that typicality and salience do not change the general thought of what is 'right' or the attitude towards a value (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). For an athlete, desiring to emulate values associated with a top athlete in their sport such as the GOAT, values will be

more likely to manifest into behaviors if there is typicality and salience of that value. Specifically utilizing salience, values that may be less desirable in nature, potentially those relating to the ought self, if reinforced by reasons, would have stronger behavioral manifestations.

Values and Culture

Socialization can alter the ideal self (Boyatzis & Dhar, 2022). Being that becoming the GOAT could be included in the ideal self, socialization is important to investigate. The importance of socialization can further be seen in the effect culture has on values. Socialization within a specific culture has also been shown to interact with individual values (e.g., Belic et al., 2021; Boyatzis et al., 2000; Molden et al., 2017; Smolicz, 1981). A part of the impact socialization has may be described through culture. Cultural factors such as if the culture is described by individualism versus collectivism, and religion have an effect on values (Smolicz, 1981). Values may not be able to be considered without culture. Value transmission, acquisition, and internalization occur as individuals adapt to the everyday customs, practices, norms, and scripts they encounter (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). Socialization then helps give importance to values by individuals filtering their experiences with their cultural background. The values associated with the GOAT identity that are deemed desirable by individuals could potentially be influenced by culture.

Universality of Values

A body of research has found Schwartz's values theory to be universal (Schwartz 2010). Research suggests that values hold not only in various cultures but in ages as well (Schwartz et al., 2012; Albouza et al., 2016). The universality of the values is assumed because they play on biology, coordinated social interaction, and group survival (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz, 2010). The 10 values within Schwartz's (1992) classic study were tested using groups consisting

of individuals from 20 different countries with 13 different languages. Participants from each tested country included 200 grade school (4th-10th grade) teachers and supplemented with university undergraduate students. Groups took a survey consisting of 56 sub-values organized into 11 value categories; spirituality was dropped from the list following the results of the study. The survey had a nine-point scale rating each of the sub-values. This also included a score of "-1" which depicted that a sub value as against their held values. The results found all 10 values within at least 90% of all tested groups.

Despite there being an infinite number of individual values, these selected values within Schwartz's values theory are most common among different cultures (Albouza et al., 2016). Individuals can rank these common values in a hierarchy of relative importance (Schwartz, 1992). Values ranked higher in the hierarchy are more important to an individual and would ideally lead to behaviors relating to the value. This higher level of importance may also lead to increased emotional weight in events associated with these values (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This would suggest that there is an emotional connection to the behaviors possibly in the form of attitudes. There is a general consensus on what values are desirable, but how desirable the resulting behaviors are more context specific (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). It is not just the context of the moment that matters, but historically how these values are manifested in culture is also important (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). Even though the findings found the presence of values, there is still a need to investigate the variations of value systems utilizing the hierarchies.

Importance Of Values. Various research on Schwartz's Value theory, including the study noted above, has incorporated data from studies from at least 81 countries (Schwartz, 2010). Although the 10 values are found in many different cultures, this does not tell anything about the relative importance of each of these values between these various cultures. To answer

this, a study by Schwartz and Bardi (2001), found evidence for the 10 values version of the values theory after gathering data from 63 nations. In ranking the 10 values, benevolence was commonly rated as the most important. Self-direction and universalism were the next most important. These values are within the self-transcendence category with the exception of self-direction. It is important to note that self-direction was ranked inconsistently between cultures. Other values associated with the self-transcendence category were surprisingly all rated in the bottom half of the rankings. A possible interpretation is that there is a value in pursuits of individuality that emphasize autonomy which may vary in importance in different cultures. This also shows the importance of benevolence and universalism values. Another point brought up by the researchers is that African countries tended to rank the level of importance of values differently than other countries (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). So even though the values themselves may be able to be generalized, the importance of all values cannot be generalized across all cultures. In sum, Self-transcendence values such as benevolence still show a clear importance in various cultures and are preferred as opposed to self-enhancement.

Concern For Generalizability. There are doubts within research as to whether Schwartz's 10 values theory can generate information that can be generalized to cultures universally (Belic et al., 2021). A point brought up by Belic and colleagues (2021), is the theory does not include values that are not found within all cultures with similar meaning. One example of this is the removal of spirituality from the original set of values after there was a variation in the meaning of spirituality (Schwartz, 1992). Even if a value has a similar meaning and is very relevant to many different cultures, if it is not closing in on universality, it will not be represented within Schwartz's theory. This means values that are important to the group but are not universal, may not be included. The exclusion of group-specific values would be of concern

when testing specific groups such as elite athletes. Being that elite sport is a unique population, the values associated may go unnoticed while utilizing this more general theory.

In addition to this concern for universality, in the study described above by Witte and colleagues (2020), 30% of individuals could not fit into the value profiles, based on the value circumplex model, developed utilizing the distribution method. This represents that there are some exceptions to the universality of the categories within the circumplex model. For testing, this means that about a third of individuals ranked values in a way that did not fit into either category as would be predicted.

Gender Differences. There are gender differences found in values as well. Schwartz and Rubel (2005) took data from studies that included participants (N= 77,528) from 70 countries. The total data was split into four different studies separated by utilizing different tests such as the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ, Schwartz et al., 2001) and Schwartz Values Survey (SVS, Schwartz, 1992) and different populations (e.g., student, adult). The results from each of the four studies were combined and overall found men to rate higher importance for self-enhancement values (e.g. power, achievement) and women to demonstrate more self-transcendent values (e.g., universalism, benevolence). More sex differences were found in adult samples compared to student samples. There was a discussion of these findings possibly due to the roles in which women take as adults. This would therefore create the possibility of not needing to include gender as a criterion for demographic data that needs to be controlled in studies exploring values in populations with similar roles such as being an athlete. The findings from combining all the studies still found significance for gender differences so it is still an important factor to consider. Even if a set of values are assumed to be similar between genders, the experiences that developed these experiences may still be different.

Although a broad and individualistic concept such as values has errors quantitatively, this theory can be used as a framework for qualitative research. Ranking values were still found to be an empirically relevant way to gauge individual values.

Belonging Needs And Values

A driving force behind the implementation of values comes from the need of belonging (Boyatiz et al., 2000; Schwartz, 1992). This can be seen in a study by Druand-Bush (2002) where 10 Olympic athletes who have won at least two gold medals (in either the Olympics and/or World championship). This group noted the importance of staying connected during the time of the Olympics. This connection can come from family, friends, and coaches, but it has a more fundamental basis. There is a human need for belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and the values within Schwartz's values theory are theorized to reflect this (e.g., Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, 2010; Boyatzis et al., 2000). Self-transcendence values are thought to be held important because they promote inclusion into a group satisfying the need for belonging (Schwartz, 1992). Even self-enhancement values, such as power and achievement, relate to belonging and it also has the potential to outdo competitiveness issues (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Individuals need to belong, and self-enhancement values could create a way for them to create a stronger social image by working on themselves. Being that high-level athletes are highly competitive (e.g., Deaner et al., 2011; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002), taking a deeper look at belonging is warranted.

Self-Image Versus Compassion Goals

From belonging comes two different types of goals (Crocker, et al., 2009). One is self-image goals that involve being perceived positively in order to gain inclusion, acceptance, and status (Crocker et al., 2009). The other is compassion goals which involve creating deep and

long-lasting relationships with others (Crocker et al., 2009). In a study by Crocker and Canevello (2008), 199 college freshmen (122 female) were tested to determine the effect of goals on trust and social support. Trust, using a portion of the Eating Disorders Inventory (Garner, Olmstead, & Polivy, 1983), and social support, using the Multidimensional Survey of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, & Zimet, 1988), were tested at the beginning and end of the semester (i.e., pretest; posttest) and goals (i.e, goal types; goal related emotions) were assessed 10 times throughout on a weekly basis. At the pretest point in the study participants were also assessed on spiritual transcendence (Spiritual Transcendence Scale; Piedmont, 1999), narcissism (Narcissistic Personality Inventory; Raskin & Terry, 1988), psychological entitlement (Psychological Entitlement Scale; Campbell et al., 2004), self-consciousness (The Self-Consciousness Scale; Fenigstein et al., 1975), self-compassion (Neff, 2003), attachment anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark, and Shaver, 1998), big five (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), and social desirability (Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale; Crowne & Marlowe, 1964).

Self-image goals also correlated with compassion goals (r=.53; p<.001) which suggest people hold a mix of both types of goals. As put by the authors "controlling for self-image goals, compassionate goals were associated with high spiritual transcendence (both universality and connection), low zero-sum beliefs, high self-compassion (especially mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity)" (p. 562). This suggests that compassion goals relate to prosocial behaviors synonymous with self-transcendent values. "Compassion goals predicted the social support from pretest to posttest" (p.562) meaning those with more compassion goals received more social support. This suggests that by having prosocial goals, one more likely to have support from others which may work as a positive reinforcement.

People need close, supportive relationships with others who genuinely care about their well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Crocker and Canevello (2008) found those with compassionate goals and give support to others are suggested to have their support reciprocated. The authors believed this social support could lead to the association it has with physiological and psychological health.

Self-image goals were related to "higher zero-sum beliefs, lower self-compassion (significant for all subscales except common humanity), higher public self-consciousness and social anxiety, increased attachment insecurity (both anxiety and avoidance), and greater psychological entitlement" (p. 562). This suggests that self-image goals relate to increasingly negative relationship experiences. This would be a concern for individuals who desire to be the GOAT as by definition there can only be one GOAT suggesting a zero-sum belief (Fredricks, 2018). One could offset the potential negative outcomes of self-image goals by increasing compassion goals as compassion goals also predicted decreases in feelings of being afraid and confused if the individual was not already low in self-image goals Although support is found for high compassionate goals, the authors believe one should be aware that adding high self-image goals could lead recipients of support to perceive that support as superficial. Being that behaviors demonstrating a desire for belonging could take starkly opposing forms of self-image goals or compassion goals, a deeper understanding of the link between values and belonging is required.

There is a paradox to the definition of belonging that places an emphasis on the self or on others. It is explained by noting when each part of belonging is most adaptive. When an individual is first looking to gain entry into a group, there is a need for a suitable self-image (Crocker et al., 2009). This would ideally benefit from focusing on goals that develop the image

that others perceive. Once in a group and connections have been made, compassionate goals help deepen the relationship (Crocker & Canevello, 2008).

Perspectives

These belonging goals are connected to either egosystem perspectives or ecosystem perspectives (Crocker et al., 2009). These perspectives are broader than self-image and compassionate goals. For an egosystem belief, it is necessary to focus on the self, in a way that is at odds with others, in order to achieve a more desirable outcome (Crocker et al., 2009). Self-image goals would be mostly connected with this type of perspective as importance put on goals to improve oneself could lead to an individual to begin to see interactions in terms of themselves. Ecosystem perspectives would be the opposite, and would be related to compassion goals, as they would include others as components in achieving a desirable outcome for the self and others (Crocker et al., 2009). It is important to note that it is possible to have self-image goals within an ecosystem perspective. This may be due to the inclusion of self in the population an individual is attempting to benefit. For example, an athlete may want to perform well individually, but desire this as a steppingstone to a larger collective benefit of winning as a team.

Crocker et al. (2009) found the adoption of either perspective to be related to viewing situations as zero-sum. Zero-sum reflects situations in that only one individual can benefit. If there is no belief that more than one can benefit, an individual would be more likely to adopt an egosystem perspective and develop more self-image goals (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Crocker et al., 2009). Further, there would be an increase in anxiety and depression symptoms (Crocker et al., 2009). With the belief that many can benefit, an ecosystem perspective and compassionate goals will tend to also be present (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Crocker et al., 2009).

Competitiveness

An egosystem and zero-sum belief may create a need to maintain the upper hand in situations such as competitions. Fredericks (2018) provides a philosophical account of exclusionary desires or desires that provide a outcome with only one winner. The desire to be the best, which is similar to the desire to be the GOAT, is described as an exclusionary desire that is argued to be immoral. At the core of the argument is that exclusionary desires promote zero-sum beliefs. There is a suggestion that competitive environments, such as sport competitions, would be better off by reducing exclusionary desires and enhancing athlete's desires to pursue their personal best or objective standard independent of other athletes' performance. Finally, the article suggested that one does not necessarily need to alter their goals as much as alter the reason for having such a goal. Therefore, an athlete would be suggested to be better off if they desire to be the GOAT for a reason that reduces the zero-sum belief. This study also points to the lack of empirical research on exclusionary desires. A study on the GOAT identity could possibly serve to enlighten some of the claims made in this article.

This could relate to competitiveness such as in completive athletic environments. Houston and colleagues (1997) compared amateur and professional tennis players using data from two different tests the competitiveness index and the competitiveness subscale of the sports orientation questionnaire and determined that professional players were more competitive than amateur tennis players. Other research by Deaner and colleagues (2011) has found that competitiveness and training volume are associated, although only a weak impact on training volume was found for males ($r^2 = .06$) as well as females ($r^2 = .02$). Performance was also associated with both of these variables, but again there was only a weak impact of competitiveness on performance in males ($r^2=.07$) and females ($r^2=.08$).

A deeper look into competitiveness finds that not all competitiveness is maladaptive; personal development competitiveness has been positively related to mastery/cooperation (Ryska, 2002). Co-adaption (interaction leading to adaptation) has been theorized as the driver of the potential benefits of competitiveness within a sports setting (Passos et al., 2016). Beyond motivation, some of the benefits include the potential to drive innovation and creativity. People compete for resources such as intrateam resources, which causes competing against teammates, and inter-team resources, which causes competing against opponents (Passos et al., 2016). Relating back to belonging work by Crocker and colleagues (2009), realizing that sport competition does not require a zero-sum approach, may possibly lead to more positive forms of competitiveness. This would occur by working with a competitor to co-adapt and improve performance. Team sports require more cooperation which may lead to an athlete taking on a more co-adaptive competitiveness. This leads one to believe that team athletes would demonstrate more transcendent values while individual sports would demonstrate more self-enhancement values.

Values For Olympic Athletes

Athletes generally display all values (Albouza et al., 2016; Lubianka & Filipiank, 2020), but as with different cultures (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001), what varies is the importance and prevalence of each value. Sport is a specific culture that may hold variations in value preference. The importance of sport specific values was demonstrated as Lubianka and Filipiank (2020) used picture-based surveys within a sample of mix of 120 athlete and non-athlete Polish adolescents to determine the difference between values and personality traits between groups. The results showed a significant difference of achievement values ($t(118)=4.15$, $p=0.001$) with athletes (M=9.38; SD=1.98) holding more achievement values than non-athletes (M=7.86; SD=2.02).

There was also a significantly lower importance of stimulation values in the athlete group (M=9.00; SD=2.28) than non-athlete group (M=10.01; SD=1.75) (t(118)=2.74, p<0.05).

From a coach's perspective Giacobbi Jr. and colleagues (2002) held semi structured interviews with 10 division-one coaches from a variety of sports (5 coaches worked with female sport) to determine what characteristics were held by the athletes who made the most progress in sport. Coaches pointed out the motivational factor of a desire to be the best in the world. This could be related with the self-enhancement value of achievement. Another motivational factor common to sport values research included a love for the game which could be related to the value of hedonism. Other characteristics included being inquisitive, and open to change. This relates to the value category of openness to change. From these findings, achievement values appear to be important for athletes even within the eyes of a coach.

This importance on achievement values helps to determine sport-specific values, but there is a need to explore how values specific to the GOAT differ from the sport. In predicting what the values would be for the GOAT within a sport, one could potentially utilize the values of Olympic athletes as this group has a genuine chance of winning a gold medal and becoming recognized as the top athlete. This would therefore allow the desire to become the GOAT to be a part of the ideal self and separate it away from the fantasy self. When looking at the values associated with Olympic athletes, there are organizational and individual values to be aware of.

Organizational Values

By referring to organizational values, it is meant that the organization(s) that governs the sport an athlete is participating in has values they desire the athlete to exhibit. Teetzel (2012) looked at the idea of Olympism which is an ever-changing idealistic set of values that individuals would demonstrate. The paper reviewed past literature of Olympism and found three themes

prevalent within conceptions of the term. These include fairness, equality, and ethical behavior. Fairness is referring to fair play which involves athletes playing by the rules of the game and demonstrating the "spirit of the sport" (p. 324). This could mean treating opponents with respect not for fear of being punished, but because it is intrinsic to the rules. This means that an individual is following the rules beyond valuing conformity. Equality is defined as "the state of quality of being equal" and refers to individuals having the same opportunities (p. 325). Ethical behavior relates with moral values such as respecting human rights. From these themes, one can see a strong similarity to self-transcendent values, such as universalism and benevolence, of Schwartz's theory. Like Schwartz's values, these ideas were commonly explained to extend outside of sporting contexts.

Despite containing very high, what may be considered unachievable, standards, the researcher argued that the point of these standards is for individuals to strive to achieve them in an ongoing and imperfect process (Teetzel, 2012). These standards are similar to that of the ideal self in this way, but it is worth arguing that these values relate more to the ought self. The important distinction here is autonomy of choice. For an organization to determine what values are desirable for athletes to enact, this removes the choice away from the athletes. An athlete following these rules would then be following them because they feel it necessary or that they 'ought' to.

This 'ought' to feeling brings up the topic of conformity. Tsang (2000) explored sport-related identity in an autobiographical narrative inquiry. In a story on shaving legs, there is a conflict between a desire to not shave legs due in order to reject common feminine values and peer pressure that demonstrates a value of conformity. This is summarized by the quote "This is a story of abiding laws: of not "standing out," especially as deviant. Conformity is the rule." (p.

49). A reflection on the experience believed they demonstrated a shift of power that can occur by orienting to a bigger cause. Power originally was held in the hands of peers who pressured the author to conform. Tapping into a larger purpose, possibly activating values such as universalism and benevolence, was what protected against the influence of peer pressure or possibly organizational pressure.

Olympic Athlete Values

An importance of self-transcendent values is represented in athletes' perceptions of what makes them successful. In a study by Gould and colleagues (2002), including 10 Olympic athletes in addition to one coach and family member for each athlete, interviews were conducted to understand the perceptions of what mental traits the Olympic elite athletes had. From the results, 16.7% of participants expressed that prosocial behaviors, such as good morals and sportsmanship, as having an impact on their talent development (p.187). It should be noted that this result included an athlete, but perceptions of family and coaches as well. One difference was that 'being a nice person' was not a theme brought up by the athletes but was by the family and coaches. This demonstrates the difference that occurs in qualitative reports from separate groups even on a similar topic as coaches and family members may present an overly positive perspective. There was one athlete who acknowledged values relating to the self-transcendent category and this is enough to further consider these values within Olympic athletes.

Although self-transcendent values are seen within Olympic athletes, they may not be held as the most important. Cruz and colleagues (1995) interviewed 40 adolescent soccer players giving them sport situational dilemmas that elicited certain values. Through their analysis, they found adolescent soccer players commonly respond to dilemmas with themes of winning (93%), demonstrating skill (88%), helping the team by acting against the rules (80%), and equality-

justice within sport (80%) (p. 367-368). Concern for others was also a theme found within the answers to many of the dilemmas. Although it appears that there is a win-at-all-cost mentality among athletes, the authors were careful to note that there are sport norms of playing against the rules in a specific sport situation. With this in mind, there is a mix of values with an emphasis on the values that are self-enhancing. It is also important to note the level of competition is different from Olympic athletes.

In looking at how these sport values relate to Schwartz's values theory, Albouza and colleagues (2016) interviewed 20 adolescent boxers and found themes of all the values within the theory. The main question of these interviews was "What does it mean to you to be a boxer?" (p.104). There was a higher preference for self-enhancement values that relate to achievement, power, and hedonism. Even when using a model with values relating to Schwartz's 10 values, the results found an emphasis on self-enhancement values and although winning was not directly tested, it is clear by the reported statements that winning was very important to the participants.

In a sample of fifty youth sports club athletes (11-17 years old), Lee and colleagues (2000), in providing evidence for the Youth Sport Values Questionnaire (YSVQ), found enjoyment in the sport was ranked highest and personal achievement ranked second highest. Winning ranked lowest on values. This contrasts with the findings presented previously by Cruz and colleagues (1995). The reason for this massive difference in the importance of winning could be due to awareness of values being tested. In the study by Lee and colleagues (2000), the participants were aware of the value being assessed as it was listed for them to rate. This is different from participants interpreting situations and having themes drawn out from a researcher. Participants may not desire to be perceived as valuing winning over other values so a

more thematic analysis may pull out themes that are underlying. A more qualitative method may be able to pull out more meaning behind some of these values.

An example of such a study comes from Mallett and Hanrahan (2004) who used semi-structured interviews with 10 athletes (5 female) Olympic or world champion track and field athletes to determine their motivation. They used frameworks from self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000), the hierarchical model of motivation (HMM; Vallerand, 1997), and achievement goal theory (AGT; Duda, 1992) to describe the responses. The results found that a primary goal of athletes is to win. Personal goals of the athletes included the goal to be "the best in the world" and to "beat everyone" (p. 192). Despite the focus on winning within a sport environment suggesting that athletes would have lower self-determined motivation, athletes demonstrated higher self-determined motivation. This was believed to be the case if an athlete viewed the accomplishment of their goals as a reflection of their competence. The results of past research was thought to be influenced by the population as age and development play a role in motivation. In exploring motivation of elite athletes in a qualitative study, the researchers were able to present an explanation for a paradox in motivational frameworks. Underneath the motivation explored in the study, the desire to win or "be the best" and to prove oneself are examples of self-enhancement values. These are desires and values that a potential GOAT could have. By further exploring these and other values of the GOAT in a qualitative way, important nuances could be brought to light.

Another example by Coker-Cranney and colleagues (2018) included three division-one collegiate wrestlers who utilized a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures to research overconformity in sport. The quantitative measures included an athlete identity scale and a social motivation orientation sport scale to gain context to the qualitative data presented. Qualitative

methods utilized a narrative inquiry to analyze an interview with each participant. Data was displayed by a word cloud from codes created from the responses and a creative nonfiction piece. Specifically, athlete identity was described.

The results can relate to values from Schwartz's theory. One example was an apparent presence of achievement values with a need for social recognition. A second was a sense of personal fulfillment that can relate to a sense of self-direction. Another was the importance of maintaining a masculine identity in the eyes of others which connects with conformity and face values. Specific values not directly labeled as in Schwartz's theory were expressed by the participants. Of values, winning was not seen as the most important part of competing and instead was seen as a way to determine progress, determine if the sacrifices made were worth it, and reaffirm their self-concept. This is similar to the results found from the previous study by Mallett and Hanrahan (2004). Despite the difference in importance of winning, the desire to win was fueled by the similar desire to demonstrate competence.

This can add more layers to the research from Lee and colleagues (2000). Winning itself may not be the primary driving force of competition and therefore was rated lower by the individuals within Lee and colleagues (2000). Winning may have been confused with power values which are commonly viewed as less important than other values. Conversely, the reasons behind winning could relate to achievement values as well as self-direction, security, and face values. This would not include any self-transcendence values, but it does for values from both conservation and openness to change.

Continuing with the study by Coker-Cranney and colleagues (2018) the need for belonging was apparent throughout the responses with themes of acceptance and maintenance within a group. This could be believed to relate to issues associated with overconformity such as

disordered eating, disordered exercise, pushing through pain, and intentional violence. It was brought up by the researchers that none of the participants believed there was an issue with overconformity. The presence of qualitative data demonstrating beliefs and behaviors related to overconformity despite the decline of an issue with overconformity shows the importance of this type of method in determining identity. Further, the interpretation of a researcher may need to extend beyond the participants perceptions to include evidence demonstrated in behaviors and outcomes.

In exploring other outcomes of having athletic values, Iñigo and colleagues (2015) used a mixed methods approach to examine continuing sport after injury through the sport commitment model (Scanlan et al., 1993) in student athletes from the Philippines. These athletes played a variety of sports and must have missed at least a month and had surgical intervention due to the injury. Of the reasons for returning to sport, sport enjoyment, valuable opportunities, personal investment, social constraints, and social support were areas proposed by the sport commitment model. The valuable opportunities reason included not only winning, but also personal development as well. Two other reasons appeared. These included the desire to be the best and the desire for self-affirmation. The desire to be the best could relate to one's desire to be the GOAT. If this is the case, it has been shown that some athletes return to sport because they strive to be the GOAT. The inclusion of self-affirmation supports the findings of previous research on values within sport (e.g., Coker-Cranney et al., 2018; Mallett & Hanrahan, 2004). From this previous research, the desire to win being a reason to return to sport could also be related to the desire to self-affirmation.

The desire to demonstrate one's competence and the competitive desire to be the best could be values within GOAT as it has been shown in elite-level athletes. If they are values

demonstrated by the GOAT, individuals striving to be the GOAT may also model these values which may lead to higher sport commitment and return to sport after injury.

Sport-Specific Values

Other than Schwartz (1992) values theory, a value model specific to sport have also been identified. Lee and Cockman (1995) extended the work of Simmons and Dickinson (1986) looking at values within sport. Ninety-three adolescent football or tennis athletes from England were interviewed and themes from these interviews were formulated into a list of values. Values include: fairness, companionship, compassion, conformity, conscientiousness, contract maintenance, enjoyment, good game, health and fitness, obedience, personal achievement, public image, self-actualization, showing skill, sportsmanship, team cohesion, tolerance, and winning. Themes were found between many of the values, and like Schwartz's (1992) values, groups (e.g., competence, moral, self-expressive, interpersonal, social) were formed. This list of values could be a useful guide for research on sport values. Two values, health and fitness, and public image did not fit into a group. These groups would be refined by Lee and colleagues (2008) into status, moral, and competence values. What it fails to do is look at values that influence behaviors outside the sport as well. These overlap with the values within Schwartz's values theory (Lee et al., 2000). Lee and Cockman (1995) related the values with their list to the values within the circumplex model of Schwartz's values theory. Of these, caring, companionship, and tolerance were related to benevolence. Contract maintenance, fairness, and sportsmanship were related to universalism. Achievement, conscientious, showing skill, and winning were related to achievement. Finally, Public image was related to power. It is important to note the comparison of Lee and Cockman's (1995) values to Schwartz's values theory was done before the revision by Schwartz and colleagues (2012). This may cause some shifts in the way the values overlap.

One example is the value of public image. This was originally under Schwartz's (1992) power value. Within the revision by Schwartz and colleagues (2012), this may better fall under face values. These values still fall under the self-transcendence versus self-enhancement continuum within the circumplex model.

There are also some values that do not fall strictly under this continuum (e.g., enjoyment, good game, self-actualization, conformity, obedience, team cohesion, and health and fitness). This further supports the need to explore values and therefore identity in a broad fashion. This can be done by allowing for values under Schwartz's values theory not strictly within the self-transcendence versus self-enhancement continuum, possibly those under the conservation versus openness to change continuum (see Appendix B). Considering there is some overlap between Schwartz's values theory and Lee and Cockman's (1995) sport values, one could utilize Schwartz's values theory without leaving out the sport-specific values listed in Lee and Cockman's list.

It appears that despite some overlap, what sport organizations or governing bodies desire athletes to value is in part contrast to what they themselves value. This may be a result of the differences in goals. While Olympic athletes are pushing for success in their sport, the other groups mentioned may be focused on the success of the sport as a whole. Promoting the success of a sport would include increasing revenue. Olympism could be a set of values that supports this goal (Teetzel, 2012).

Activism

In Teezel's (2012) review of Olympism, the topic of social justice was consistently referenced as a way to demonstrate Olympism. On the topic of social justice, an athlete who is considered the GOAT may engage in activism. Some elite athletes participate in activism. For

example, Muhammad Ali, from whom the acronym GOAT came, was against the Vietnam war choosing not to enlist (Magrath, 2021). Athletes engaging in activism could change the minds of fans who look up to them (Magrath, 2021). The Olympics is a stage where social justice concerns could have a large audience to spread awareness.

For the 2020 Summer Olympics, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) set guidelines preventing forms of political protest that had been recently demonstrated which re-emphasized Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter against actions related to political, religious, and racial activism (Magrath, 2021). Despite being against the rules, there are many examples of athletes using their respective platforms for activism. A classic example is John Carlos and Tommie Smith taking off their shoes and putting their gloved fists into the air to protest oppression.

Who Participates In Activism

Those who participate in activism tend to be individuals from a minorized or underrepresented group (Magrath, 2021). College athletes participated in activism to use their platform, provide a voice for underrepresented groups, demonstrate role model characteristics, and limit discrimination (Magrath, 2021). Choi and colleagues (2019) used a mixed methods approach to explore group differences regarding activism between elite athletes and non-athletes. An even split of 200 total participants from South Korea represented elite athletes with disabilities and non-athletes with disabilities. Results from an activism questionnaire found elite athletes with disabilities ($M = 28.9$, $SD = 21.1$) compared the non-athletes with disabilities ($M = 22.6$, $SD = 23.1$) were more likely to have a higher activism orientation than those from the same underrepresented group ($t(198) = 2.01$, $p = .046$). Elite athletes reported their reason for participating in activism was due to an event that provided expectations, opportunities, and

information on the social issue. In regard to athletic identity was seen as a responsibility of an elite athlete to participate in activism.

Smith and colleagues (2016) created narratives based on 36 elite paraathletes and from the results, split political activists into an identity distinct from their athlete identity. In para-athletes, those who put emphasis on the athlete portion of themselves were less likely to participate in activism than those with an emphasis on the person-with-disabilities portion. Because of the impact social acceptance has on activism, it is important to note that the International Paralympic Committee encourages activism for individuals with disabilities (Magrath, 2021). This being the case, separating activism and sport is not very likely to happen any time soon.

Activism And Performance

There are arguments over if activism on a stage like the Olympics is adaptive for the individual and their performance reviewed by Magrath (2021). There are serious outcomes to consider when discussing activism. For their protest during the Olympics, Carlos and Smith received death threats. Other possible negative outcomes include decreased pay, a distraction from sport, and losing support from fans. Of the benefits, research suggests that activism helps with building resilience. The difficulties in participating in activism open an opportunity for athletes to practice psychological skills and as a result build resilience. This means the negative outcomes may only fuel the positive outcomes in a 'whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger' kind of way.

To possibly help determine if there will be backlash from activism, fans generally approve of what they already sympathize with (Magrath, 2021). For an issue that is important to the athlete engaging in activism, there may have to be some ruffling of feathers. There are

different forms of activism that may occur at different stages of change within the cause being fought for. For activism with split opinions and a high potential to garner backlash, one could engage in soft activism which can be as simple as posting on social media what you give support to. This may assist in raising awareness without demanding large change which is nonconfrontational and may help to limit backlash. Other examples of soft activism include holding awareness walks and creating an organization centered on helping a cause. Due to the rules put in place by sport organizations, it is a big difference for athletes to participate in activism within and outside of sport. Soft activism can make an appearance within the sport as wearing specific clothing during competition. This is one tactic used by tennis player Serena Williams.

Development

Age and development play a role in the importance of values (Albouza et al., 2016; Rokeach, 1973). As individuals develop and branch out from their family and culture, they could learn various ideas and have novel experiences that cause lasting changes in values. Throughout development the same values are present, but the importance of each value may differ within various ages (Silfver et al., 2008). This means that throughout one's life what we consider important changes as we develop. In these slight changes, increased age tends to come with larger importance on positive qualities (mastery/ cooperation, and good citizenship) and less risk of hypercompetitiveness (Ryska, 2002; Lubianka & Filipiak, 2020; Mezirow, 1978).

The development of values is believed to be recognized during childhood, stabilize in adolescence, and change only slightly after this period (Schwartz, 1992). This does not mean that exploring past adolescence is pointless for research. Well into an athlete's competitive career, there are stages of development that could cause noteworthy shifts in perspective (Durand-Bush

& Salmela, 2002). For example, an athlete may alter their ideal self after the results of an injury. This change in perspective on the importance of the safety of the body may lead to a change in values relating to security. There may be important signs to look out for as sports participation and culture can be situated developmentally to allow for both performance and personal excellence (Miller & Kerr, 2002). This excellence is one can both succeed within sport and outside it as well. Considering the developmental influence on values and excellence, it is important to include when looking at identity.

Developmental Models

In order to map out development, there are general development models (i.e., Bloom, 1985; Erikson, 1959) as well as models oriented toward sport (i.e., Baillie & Danish, 1992; Côté & Hay, 2002; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). In order to get a better understanding of how a GOAT identity develops, changes in values through a sport-specific model is warranted. Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) explored the factors leading to and maintenance of high levels of performance. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 athletes, four of whom were retired at the time of interviews, from a mix of team and individual sports who have won at least two gold medals at the Olympics or World Championships in different years. The researchers extended previous models of development (e.g., Bloom, 1985; Côté & Hay, 2002) by highlighting the sampling, specialization, investment, and maintenance phases within an athlete's career. The sampling stage is when an athlete takes on many different sports in order to find what they enjoy. Being that this stage tends to occur at a younger age, and an athlete's family has a large influence on this stage (Boyatzis et al., 2000). Specialization is a period where attention is given to a particular sport. With this, increased time and importance are given to the selected sport. The investment stage is described as a period when even more time is given to a selected

sport where one's life orients around being an athlete. This time towards the sport is multifaceted including physical, mental, technical, and tactical training. Although it may be difficult for an athlete to pursue anything other than sport due to the time devoted to sport, non-sport areas of life could occur such as education or work/career. Finally, the maintenance phase occurs as an athlete has made it to the elite arena and is working to stay at this level. At this stage, there was a lack of trust in the groups an athlete associated themselves with which brings up a concern for belonging. The responses from the participants suggest a sense of competitiveness that makes interacting with competitors a difficult endeavor at the elite level. Potentially helping other athletes whom an individual would be competing against appears to have caused an internal conflict. During the interviews, family was reported by the athletes as being a group that could be trusted and helped to supplement the lack of support from teammates. This further represents the importance family has on development even when branching outside of common familial experiences.

Of the different stages, only the factors found within the investment and maintenance stages were described. Many of the same themes were found including context, personal characteristics, training, and competitions. Of these, what made a difference within the context theme was the presence of work outside of sport (e.g., self-learning or part-time job). For personality characteristic changes, there was an increase in the level of open-mindedness to ideas that took the form of changing up routines and developing new tactics. Under the training theme, recovery was found to be immensely important during the maintenance phase. Finally, within the competition theme, the maintenance stage included the pressure from the media and higher expectations that took the form of a belief that the athlete needed to repeat their success from a previous competition.

In analyzing the interview data, a significant event was found to be at the transition point of all of the stages within Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002). These transition points could also be points where values make a large shift. In looking at values, these transitions could be used to pinpoint experiences that make these shifts in values. In support of this, a study by Dhar and colleagues (2021) gathered data from 48 graduate and professional students in the United States who wrote about their future selves and their current values. Self-enhancement values tended to decrease, and self-transcendence values increased with age. Still, identity changes associated with age were not without exceptions leading to the acceptance of trigger events as an indicator of developmental stages. This led the authors to believe that transitional stages were more of a product of trigger events as opposed to simply age.

Transformations. Transformations within the self occur due to a situation that cannot be solved using previous strategies (Mezirow, 1978). The currently held meaning perspective of a situation is believed to require adapting. Meaning perspectives are "the structure of cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated to, and transformed by, one's past experience (Mezirow, 1978, p. 101)." In other words, a transformative experience requires a person to adapt the way they experience an event in order to progress forward. This would cause changes within an individual's thoughts which would affect their feelings regarding a situation (Mezirow, 1978). As a result, their actions would be structured toward change in the direction of this new perspective (Mezirow, 1978).

At these transformations, extraordinary experiences could be the cause. A study by Rundio and colleagues (2020) interviewed 32 participants who had completed a 4000-mile bike ride during the Texas 4000 fundraiser for cancer. Thirty-two participants were interviewed after completing a 4000-mile bike ride (Austin to Anchorage) during the Texas 4000 fundraiser for

cancer. The data analysis showed that extraordinary experience elements, including the unusualness or novelty, the high levels of emotional intensity, and the interpersonal interactions on the ride all contributed to feelings of personal transformation. All these factors allowed for a transformation of their previous thoughts on the impact of cancer. This may have looked like a sense of empowerment, need for action, and purpose.

In relating this study to the definition of a personal transformation, the need for adaptation in the cyclist's thought process would have been due to the inability to fully grasp the weight and impact that cancer has. The transformation that occurred would cause a change in thought processes that ideally cause a change in behavior. For Olympic athletes, personal transformations could also occur in a similar way. If an event contains the factors within an extraordinary experience, there would be an increased likelihood of a personal transformation. An example of this could occur at one of the developmental stages and be an event where an athlete had an impactful experience that causes a shift towards a more universal ideology. This could potentially manifest into supporting a select cause by engaging in activism.

One stage not included in the altered sport development model (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002), is the transition out of sport. Narrative research has been done on transition from sport that works to bring a fuller picture to the experiences related to this stage. Douglas and Carless (2009) interviewed two elite level amateur female golf athletes. These athletes were interviewed over six years to explore their experiences transitioning out of sport. Considering each athlete left suddenly from the sport (i.e., without demonstrating intention to leave) the athletes were considered "dropouts". Each athlete demonstrated living the performance narrative or being solely focused on their sport (Douglas & Carless, 2006). For their own reasons, each athlete had to stop competing in their sport. This transition out of sport brought on what the authors saw as

"narrative wreckage". This was described as no longer being able to continue with the narrative one has given a strong emphasis to. In this narrative wreckage, athletes experienced negative outcomes such as negative affect, anxiety, depression, and for one athlete attempted suicide. To aid in the transition, "asylum" or a time away from sport was taken in order to develop a narrative outside of sport. Considering the severe potential negative impact of transitioning from sport, this stage in an athlete's career would be important to include in exploring the impact the GOAT identity can have on an individual.

Conclusion

As an individual begins to embody the GOAT identity, they will be more likely to demonstrate values associated with the identity in the form of behaviors. In looking at the exclusionary pro-self desire of being the GOAT, there appears to be room for prosocial aspects as well. Manifestations of self-transcendence values could take the form of activism and provide a relatively new side to sport values research. Of the variables that affect values, development is an important one to get a more holistic view of this desire. The GOAT identity is proposed to change over time as an athlete goes through certain major developmental events. No research has been done on this topic within sport psychology research or psychology in general. Exploring this area could lead to a better understanding of identity and values within retired white male individual sport elite athletes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Design

This qualitative study used a narrative approach to answer the research questions. Narrative approaches to research such as narrative inquiry have been increasingly used in sport psychology research (Carless & Douglas, 2013). Narrative inquiry allows a researcher to go beyond the overarching themes of a story and identify the finer details that may be initially neglected but may help enlighten identity in a more holistic way (Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). The speaker or interviewee may choose to include some "small" stories while excluding others and this selection of specific stories is important to consider in exploring identity (Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). As said by Carless and Douglas (2013), this approach assists in avoiding "privileging structure over agency, viewing the relationship between culture and the individual as reciprocal and co-constitutive" (p. 702). Instead of simply exploring data separated from culture, this approach will allow for the participants' experiences to be interrelated with cultural factors, such as values one holds having an impact on the world around them as well as the world around the having an impact on their values.

Narrative inquiry also explains how and why we have come to be as we are (McAdams, 2013). This works to explore identity across multiple settings and how what one experiences gets infused into an individual's identity during athletic development. Similar to other studies utilizing a narrative inquiry (e.g., Ronkanien et al., 2019), this study will explore a topic in a nuanced way by including the context of the data with the intention of discovering topics for future research. In doing this, this study utilizes an interpretive paradigm that aims at

"understanding and illuminating human experience" (Carless & Douglas, 2013, p. 28). With this

belief, the shared information is relative to the individual and their experiences.

Participants

Participants were two white male athletes from the United States, who competed in a

World Championship in individual sports and have been retired for at least 10 years. One athlete

competed in multiple track and cross-country World Championships and the other in elite-level

swimming, biking, and triathlon in which they competed in the Olympic swimming trials and the

World Championship in triathlon multiple times. The participants were given the pseudonyms

Drake and Josh. Two participants have been used in previous studies using narrative analysis

(e.g., Carless & Douglas, 2013; Douglas & Carless, 2009). After completing two interviews, the

data appeared to reach the point of saturation based on guidelines by Hennink and colleagues

(2011) as the information appears to repeat itself. An example of repeating information was the

overemphasis on performance which is a part of the common performance narrative (Douglas &

Carless, 2006). While experiences with the GOAT identity are unique, similar topics were

included by the participants which were formed into themes discussed below. The participants

were recruited using convenience sampling. This was done by the researcher contacting

individuals in their network (e.g., track and field coaches, competitive athletes) asking them to

forward information about the study to individuals who meet the inclusion criteria. The inclusion

criteria included participated in an individual sport, male, competed in a World Championship or

Olympic event, retired from sport, and from the United States. The participants included in this

study had no prior relationship with the researcher. The identities of the participants were

changed to Drake and Josh and any identifying information was changed (i.e., names of specific

individuals the participant knew, dates of specific events, performance at events) to protect their anonymity.

Procedure

First, pilot interviews were conducted with two individuals to clarify the wording of the questions. The first was an expert in qualitative methods, specifically narrative analysis. Through their suggestions, a reworking of the questions helped to enhance clarity and depth of responses. An example of this was the addition of the question "How does the idea of the GOAT resonate with you?" This expert also gave resources to assist in the interview (e.g., sample introduction and conclusion statements) and narrative analysis process. The second individual was a retired professional individual-sport athlete. This interview tested the interview questions and found the wording to be sufficient to get depth from responses.

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, convenience sampling was used as the researcher contacted ten individuals in their network asking for recommendations for individuals to participate in the study. From these, three individuals met the study requirements and were emailed information about the study, and inclusion criteria, and asked to contact the author if they were interested in participating. Then, an email was sent from the researcher to schedule a time to conduct an interview over Zoom. In this email, a link to a Qualtrics survey to obtain demographic data (i.e., gender, age, sport, racial identity, retirement status) and an electronic consent form (Qualtrics, 2023). From these emails, two individuals out of three responded with a time they were available to meet for an interview. To ensure confidentiality, all documents such as transcribed interviews, reflexivity pieces, interview recordings, and data analysis work were contained in password-protected document files on a password-protected computer.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually with each participant over Zoom. These interviews were recorded using the Zoom software and used the passcode and waiting room security features on Zoom (Zoom Video Communication Inc., 2023). Consent was obtained by verbal confirmation at the beginning of the interview with a reminder that the interview would be recorded. Before the interview questions began, the participants were informed about the study aims, potential issues with using an online format, and the format of the interview (see Appendix E). Questions were asked in a conversational approach to allow for open dialogue suggested in studies by Carless and Douglas (2013) and Lally (2007) which includes probes and colloquial language. This means the questions that are asked can vary slightly between interviews to gain deeper insight into areas brought up by the interviewee that flow with the conversation. There is a general progression to the interviews. The interview question began with, "Can you give me a brief background on your sport experience?" to build rapport. Carless and Douglas (2013) caution researchers that it can be difficult to gain trust in an elite athlete population, which could result in genuine answers to questions being held back and replaced with responses that are 'rehearsed'. Building rapport and ensuring that identifying information is kept anonymous at the beginning of the interview process was used to help prevent the perceived need to alter answers in this way and gain trust of the participants. After discussing the individual's sport experience, the interview progressed to the questions following the interview guide (see Appendix D). The interviews lasted between one and two hours.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and then an edited version of the data was created and sent back to the individuals. As an ethical consideration, the stories themselves were left largely unchanged to preserve the meaning behind them. Changes were made to assist in the readability of the stories. For example, deletion of filler words, sentence structure, and

grammatical edits were made. Also, the researcher's thoughts and questions were included as comments on the document to spark reflection and discussion from participants. This process took just over a week from the interview date for both participants. After the transcript was complete, the edited version was sent back to the participants. The purpose of sending this transcribed version was to help ensure the researcher's perspective of the data was consistent with the participants. After one month a follow-up email was sent, but neither participant responded to the request to make changes. A decision by the researchers was made to continue despite the lack of feedback from the participants.

When all the interviews were complete, the analysis of the data began. This included a mix of narrative and thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify the described qualities of the GOAT. This looked at the 'whats' of each story. The purpose is to answer the first research question "What characteristics describe the GOAT identity" by pulling out specific descriptions related to the GOAT. Narrative analysis was used to explore the impact of the uncovered perceptions of the GOAT and give more depth to the understanding of a potential GOAT identity.

First, the primary researcher engaged in multiple read-throughs of the transcripts and re-listening of the interviews were done to get familiarity with the data. While doing this, notes were created for information relevant to creating themes or a better understanding of the data. Then two rounds of coding were completed. These two rounds of coding are described in depth in the "Data analysis" section. The first round used narrative and In-Vivo coding which worked to separate the responses into stories and create an initial description of the data. Then, in the second round, stories from the transcripts were coded based on the emotions, values, conflicts,

and story variables (i.e., Narrative coding) present within each story. Stories were reviewed by the researcher multiple times to help ensure codes were reflective of the story.

After coding rounds were complete, thematic analysis was continued by identifying themes on the data. This process is explained in further detail in the "Data analysis" section. This was done by grouping the codes based on patterns and similarities to create themes. These themes were named and given a definition that described the included codes and what separates the inclusion of one code over another. While these themes were being created code mapping was upheld on a Word document in order to capture the decision-making process (Saldaña, 2013). Themes were reviewed with a member of the research team. These themes, theme definitions, and codes were also sent to a critical friend who reviewed them with the researcher to ensure the themes were representative of the codes. When sending this information to the critical friend, the stories were shared to familiarize the critical friend with the data. After being familiarized, the researcher discussed the themes found in the data. Edits were made after a discussion with the critical friend that caused a removal of the theme *"Hard Training"*. The reason for this was that the included stories better represented other themes that helped to understand the characteristics of the GOAT. Edits were made to the stories based on this feedback such as spelling corrections for the names of individuals within the stories. Stories were differentiated from other stories such as *Fool Me Once, Fool Me Twice* which was originally a portion of *"Kung Fu".* After discussing themes, theme definitions were discussed with the critical friend although no changes were made to the definitions.

Then, narrative analysis was used to examine each participant's narrative and the experiences relating to the relevant theme. In doing this, the data in the form of smaller separate stories, were synthesized into one narrative that included a compilation of stories shared by each

participant that display the impact and experiences of the various themes pulled from the thematic analysis (see Appendix F for Drake's narrative and Appendix G for Josh's narrative). These results were also reviewed by the same critical friend to ensure the stories were accurately displayed relative to each theme in a similar fashion as during the thematic analysis. In doing this, the coded data were sent to the critical friend and their interpretations were questioned. This was seen to support the interpretations of the data by questioning these interpretations as the codes were seen by the researcher to be the evidence for interpretations. After the narrative analysis was complete, the participants were contacted to confirm that the analysis represented the participants' experiences. Emails to the participants consisting of draft results were done in an unfinished format in order not to bias the participants (Frentz, 2022) and to demonstrate to the participants that the results are still in progress which ideally helped to encourage thoughts for change. Any changes needed to be made to match the perceptions of the client would result in editing the narratives and then emailing participants again to clarify symmetry. Due to the lack of response from the participants, no edits were made.

Instruments

  Semi-structured interview guide. The primary researcher created a semi-structured interview guide, informed by Schwartz's values theory (Schwartz, 1992) to include questions on values such as "Values are enduring beliefs that serve as motivation for behaviors that individuals attempt to demonstrate. What values do you think the GOAT would embody?" The interview guide contained nine open-ended questions, with non-scripted probing and follow-up questions which were used based on the participant's response. Example questions include: "What does it mean to be the GOAT to you?" and "What behaviors would the GOAT demonstrate in and out of sport?" Pilot interviews were conducted with two individuals to clarify

the wording of the questions. An example of this was the rewording of the question "How familiar are you with the acronym GOAT" and the addition of the question "Was there a time when you wanted to be the GOAT; if so, what was that like?" Ensuring that identifying information would be kept confidential before the interview process begins was expected to help prevent the perceived need to alter answers in this way. In addition to this, each interview began with a discussion to build rapport. This discussion began with the question "Can you give me a brief background on your sport experience?" where information related to demographic questions consisting of age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of experience in sport, years out of sport, and sport played were brought up by the participant as details within their personal experience relating to this question.

The next question on the interview guide asked about the participant's knowledge of the acronym GOAT. All participants were familiar with the term GOAT. This question in addition to the question "Was there a time when you wanted to be the GOAT; if so, what was that like"? were added to account for the potential biases uncovered in the positionality statement. Particularly biases that the participants knew the term GOAT and that they desired to be the GOAT were accounted for by these questions.

After the first few questions, the questions became more unstructured and included more probing questions. The goal being to illuminate the participants' experience and to assist in pulling out the "small stories" held by the individual. The first area to follow the beginning questions revolved around what the individual believes is the identity of the GOAT. These questions will look to explore identity separate from the self. In other words, looking at the GOAT generally regardless of an attachment to the contained qualities. After this, the questions

were oriented toward the impact and the potential similarities or differences they may have shared with the GOAT identity.

Data analysis

Narrative studies can contain both thematic analysis and narrative analysis (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Thematic analysis can be an effective way to analyze data in qualitative research (Willig, 2013). It was used to inductively analyze the data and find themes such as specific qualities of the GOAT. To better understand the potential identity related to the GOAT and the impact it may have on elite athletes, narrative analysis was used. In differentiating the goals of each style of analysis, the cross-case thematic analysis helped in determining the themes of the data, and a within-case type of analysis took the form of narrative analysis for determining the GOAT identity and the experience of interacting with the identity which relate to the impact on society and themselves as believed by the individual. Analysis of narrative studies can vary based on the goals of the research (Smith & Sparks, 2009a). For this study, responses from the participants were coded into stories (i.e., narrative analysis) and grouped by similarities (i.e., thematic analysis).

Narrative analysis includes what is said but infuses with it the context and the emotional tone (i.e., how things were said). Sparkes (2005) stated that narrative analysis incorporates "the formal aspects of structure, as much as the content, express the identity, perceptions, and values of the storyteller" (p. 195). This uses a within-case style of analysis in which plot, meaning, and context are important. Another way to think of within-case analysis is that it is an analysis of an individual's response that includes the participant (e.g., their perceived past, present, and future) as well (McAdams, 2013).

Narrative analysis includes coding that analyzes a full story being told as opposed to individual lines (Smith & Sparkes, 2009a). Responses from the participants were grouped into 29 stories. The cut-off point to determine a story was determined when a response no longer described the same topic or experience. This means that even if the researcher asked a probing question that split a response, the response that followed could still be a part of the same story if it was describing the same topic.

Two rounds of coding were done using a different mix of coding types for each round. The first round of coding consisted of a mix between Narrative coding and In-Vivo coding. Narrative coding was used to separate the responses into stories. In-vivo coding was used in a holistic way to label the experiences being described through the participant responses. In-vivo coding in which what the participant said was used as the code for stories such as "More A Burden Than A Blessing", "Magic Bullet", "Don't Suffer Fools Gladly" (Saldaña, 2013). This type of coding was seen to help capture the 'personality' of the participants by including their specific wording. The second round used an eclectic strategy, which utilized coding methods such as emotional coding, values coding, and versus coding in addition to Narrative coding. This helped to bring out the finer details of each story. Multiple reviews of the data were done before completing this coding round. The eclectic style of coding helped to review previous coding and make changes if necessary. Emotional coding was used to find the feelings of certain events and experiences (Saldaña, 2013). This was mostly impactful on the stories the described personal account. It helped to uncover the emotions that an individual had in relation to an experience. Values coding was used to find the underlying motivations, thoughts, and beliefs under actions and behaviors (Saldaña, 2013). This created depth in understanding of stories by exploring the question "How do they view the experience?" Versus coding was used when a contradiction

between concepts arose (Saldaña, 2013). These stories were coded using narrative coding which pulled codes from the responses that went beyond content and structure. It included emotions, values, and the purpose of each story. The questions were asked "What is the purpose of this story" or "Why was this story included" as well as "What does this have in the context of other stories." These questions were asked throughout the process as they assisted in developing the themes and narratives.

Theming of the data was done by looking at patterns in the stories. This helped to identify the 'what's' of each story. The purpose is to answer the first research question "What characteristics describe the GOAT identity" by pulling out specific descriptions related to the GOAT. Thematic analysis finds general similarities in the responses through a cross-case style of analysis (Carless & Douglas, 2012). Cross-case means that the themes are manifestations of patterns within responses seen between the different participants. This is done by looking at the data of all the participants to find overarching similarities. In the analysis of the data, patterns are identified and responses are grouped into themes (e.g., Smith, 2016; Ronkanien et al., 2019). When developing a theme and subtheme, this study required both participants having had a story that fit under the theme. Also, a response that did not include a personal experience (e.g., stories of other people used as an example) could not act as a stand-alone theme as there needed to be evidence of an impact of the theme. This information was considered as a definition. From this, two themes and five subthemes emerged. Data in some of the subthemes were seen to better fit under other subthemes. Even with two rounds of coding, a continuous process of readjusting old codes continued. For example, by continuing to ask oneself the question "What is the purpose of this story?" stories were combined or even had a change of subtheme. This was seen in the story "Not Just Physical" which was renamed to a more fitting title "Kiss Their…" and was placed

under the subtheme of Self-Belief from Resiliency. Stories were reorganized into three themes; two of which (i.e., qualities and values) contained five subthemes.

After identifying the themes and subthemes, the researchers continued with a narrative analysis for each participant's story individually to get a more holistic account in relation to the described theme. The stories individually were viewed as failing to capture the entirety of a single participant's experience. Similarly to Carless and Douglas (2013), fewer participants allow for this deeper investigation in this portion of the analysis. To more holistically describe the data, a narrative analysis of each individual interview was done. This was used by looking at the stories of a single participant and determining the narrative behind them. Narratives were created as a compilation of the various stories within each interview. In this, the chronological ordering of the stories was changed to enhance readability and, more importantly, the ease of understanding the narrative as a whole and bring out the significance of certain stories. The stories themselves remain largely unchanged. The codes created as well as the purpose for including each story were used to help determine the ordering of each story within the larger narrative.

Trustworthiness

By nature of the qualitative study, contextual information is threaded throughout the findings, and as such it is critical to have trustworthy results. The goal is exploration for further research and a deep investigation will be effective using this type of analysis. This will help with trustworthiness in addition to code mapping, reflexivity pieces, and back analysis.

Code Mapping. The process for creating themes and finalizing codes was included (see Appendix H). This has been shown to enhance trustworthiness by representing the changes that were made through the theme-creating process (Saldaña, 2013). From this document, one can see

the initial themes and included stories and the major changes that occurred until the finalized version. This served as an account for the reader, but also for the researcher during the process as a way to double-check previous decisions made in order to limit bias. Each change to the themes, general categories, and story names all had a purpose which was intended to better represent the data.

Reflexivity Pieces. Reflexive pieces were done throughout the process which demonstrated member reflections. These pieces attempted to uncover potential biases of the researcher. This was important throughout the process due to the researcher being an instrument to gather data. In the interview process, the researcher as an instrument can be seen within the questions asked to the interviewee. In the analysis portion, the interpretation of the data required the researcher as an instrument as well. The researchers' current thoughts and feelings about the data were included as well as regarding the process. These pieces helped to bring to awareness the current state that the researcher was in which helped to limit the bias of the researcher. Due to the awareness of specific biases, the researcher was able to reflect on how these biases may impact the data and steps to limit the biases. One example, seen in reflexivity journal 4, brings to light the stress due to the due date impacting results. A solution explained in the journal was to use deep breathing to bring oneself into a more calm state when analyzing results. During the time the researcher was engaged in the interview process, reflexivity writing was done within 24 hours after each interview (i.e., 2). During the analysis stage, the researcher made weekly reflexivity pieces when interacting with the data. A total of 5 reflexivity journals were completed.

Member Checking and Reflection. Member checking was attempted first by returning the finished consolidated transcript to the participant for feedback and then by referring back to

the participants after a draft of the final analysis had been completed to ensure that the researchers' perceptions of the information matched the participant's perceptions. The participants did not respond to the attempts made by the researcher. The researchers' interpretation of this lack of response was that the perceptions of the data were believed to match that of the interviewee and no new information needed to be presented by the participants. To ensure the interpretations of the participants were considered and to limit the bias of the researcher, multiple reviews of the data were done.

Member checking also occurred in the form of a critical friend who has experience in research and working with elite athletes. They were included at two parts of the data analysis. First during the thematic analysis phase to review the themes, they were sent information about the analysis and the themes were discussed with the critical friend. The reasoning for each theme and code was given by the researcher and the critical friend worked to question the reasoning. From this, the themes created by the researcher were seen by the critical friend to follow logical reasoning. In this, the critical friend offered their interpretations of the data. The critical friend also helped in adding depth to the data in areas unknown to the researcher such as sport history brought up by the participants. The critical friend was also consulted during the narrative analysis. A similar process occurred, but here, the critical friend reviewed the stories included to see if they believed the themes and individual stories were represented. Again, the story placement with themes were seen to be representative. By reviewing the narratives and logical reasoning, this member-checking process acted as a "reasoning check" for the researcher.

Positionality Statement

To bring to light my potential background and biases, I am a white male in my mid-twenties, and a master's student in a sport and exercise psychology program working to become

certified as a certified mental performance consultant (CMPC) and eventually. This paper acts not only to satisfy degree requirements for a Master's thesis, but also in a genuine curiosity for the topic. I have a clear lack of experience with qualitative research methods and research in general. To help with this inexperience, the members of the thesis committee, especially the chair Dr. Megan Byrd, were referred to throughout the project.

In taking a narrative inquiry approach, the paper holds an interpretivist paradigm. With this, there is a relativist belief that knowledge is relative to the individual. This leads to the creation of knowledge that is socially constructed. In all, there is a need to explore the research question through the integration of the participant and their experiences. I believe that researchers cannot truly understand the results in a way that is exclusive to individual and collective contexts.

The historical context is important to consider for this project. Due to the rapid spread of information through social media, the athletes can be viewed in more depth. This does not extend only to sport as it is believed that athletes' identities will extend beyond the context of sport. Athletes can craft a social image and develop a following with success that could depend largely on the maintenance of a positive perception from others in society. To maintain this social image, athletes may feel pressured to act a certain way. Confidentiality of the data is absolutely necessary to ensure the protection of the social image of the athletes.

Many behaviors can occur outside of sport that can be perceived in a biased way. A relevant one is social justice actions, either for or against. I have interned with a sustainable development group that supported various social justice topics. This could demonstrate a positively biased view of social justice although a belief in relativism works to provide balance.

My experiences with various viewpoints and topics of these social justice pursuits have led to an appreciation of the relevance of these different viewpoints to the individuals who hold them. Biases are critical to continue to uncover during the research process. I am a United States-born citizen and identify as a cis-gender white male. I am from a nuclear family and am the oldest of four younger siblings. I played baseball in high school and currently participate in many endurance sport events such as triathlons. These are not at the collegiate or professional levels. Within this background of sport was a belief instilled at a young age of being the greatest of all time as a baseball pitcher. The presence of this desire and participation in related sports would make me an insider on this topic. This view is perceived as being facilitative towards my motivation towards sport and role model behaviors. To demonstrate the duality of this belief, I understand that there could also be negative effects relating to this belief due to the high expectations placed on oneself. A reflexive approach was taken throughout the process to ensure the presence of this belief is not biased toward being primarily positive or negative. This took the form of reviews of the data that look specifically for both the positive and negative effects of holding this belief.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to explore (a) the characteristics that describe the

GOAT identity and (b) the impact that this identity has on elite athletes. In determining what is

meant by the GOAT, the participants included a description of what the GOAT was to them (See

Appendix F & Appendix G for definitions). The definitions were not included as themes because

they lacked a clear impact on the individuals. Although the definitions are not themes in

themselves, they provide an important contribution to the meaning of the GOAT. These

definitions came as part of the answer to the question "What does it mean to be the GOAT to

you?" Drake's definition of the GOAT depicts an athlete with the best "combination of factors."

These factors being mental, physical, and luck. Qualities salient to Drake, illustrated in Drake's

narrative, describe these factors. The idea that the GOAT is an individual who excels in their

sport was also brought up by Josh who stated the GOAT "needs to be dominant." Another

important point is that the GOAT was seen by Josh to be relative to the era of sport one is

considering. To Josh, the variables that describe the GOAT need to be specified objectively. He

explains the difficulty as:

> I think a lot of it is subjective though, you know. Pelé was a GOAT in soccer, but
>
> he wouldn't be a GOAT today. Pelé was a goat when he played soccer for Brazil, but I
>
> think Messi is probably a better player. I've seen Pelé play and I watched Messi play. I
>
> think Messi is a much better player. So it's all relative to the time and the place you are. I
>
> mean, a lot of it is subjective as training, technique, and equipment change. (Appendix G)

He did however suggest some qualities are common among GOATs which are described within his narrative. The content of the interviews, as presented in the individual's narrative, served to bring light to the research questions related to the characteristics and impacts on the individuals.

A goal in sampling was to isolate individuals who held the GOAT as part of their ideal self. Both participants desired and actively pursued to be the GOAT which suggests the qualities representing the GOAT were a part of their ideal self. The ideal self is a type of self in which an individual believes they can achieve and is a source of motivation (Bybee et al., 1997; Higgins, 1987). The fact that the individuals actively pursued becoming the GOAT represents the motivational portion of the ideal self and separates it from the fantasy self (Bybee et al., 1997). Being that the participants were no longer competing in their sport, the results come from reflections of striving to be the GOAT during their careers.

The results are organized into four sections narratives, drives, qualities, and values. The narrative section contains the overarching narrative that describes the entirety of the responses by each participant. The qualities, values, and drives sections relate to the themes pulled from the data. The two broader grouping of themes, qualities, and values, contain subthemes found in the data. The qualities section describes stories within the subthemes of self-belief, resiliency, and consistency. The values section includes a description of stories depicting subthemes of self-direction and humility.

Narratives

The narratives are a compilation of the stories told by each participant who worked to illustrate their experience striving to be the GOAT. This represents their perceptions of the GOAT as well as the impact of the GOAT identity in their competitive careers and their lives.

Drake's narrative is a story of failure to live the part of the athlete. It begins with success as he had gone from a "Podunk little town" to "one of the top programs in the country". He describes the mental side of sport in the stories *"Regular Every Day", "Small Room Big Pressure", Less "Scientific",* and *"Kiss Their…".* Along the way, he sees people who are unable to excel at this top level due to a "mental side" of sport. Despite having certain qualities (i.e., never giving up) part of the mental side leading to a "bootstrap mentality" that is a reason for success, there is a critical mistake of not emphasizing sport enough by focusing more on sport improvement and less on non-sport-related activities. This is stated in the story *Support To Focus On Sport.* Drake can continue into a life where he is successful using the tools he had sharpened in his time as an athlete, yet others may not be as lucky. In *Back To Reality,* the narrative looks at some of the negative impacts of sport that may manifest as depression and suicide. Drake did not achieve all of what he could have wanted or become the GOAT, but he did have a positive sport career.

Josh's narrative is a story of resiliency. It begins with describing the success Josh has had due to the use of interval training which procured a training advantage. Due to this training advantage, he is competing against more mature competition. There is a discussion on humility and being kind to others in the story *"Humility"* which is not what his opponents in the story *"More Than A Burden Than A Blessing"* demonstrated. This causes failure, and from this failure, he continues to pursue sport and maintain the effort and focus outside of his professional career. These impacts are seen in *"Magic Bullet", It Stays With You,* and *Trouble In Biking Paradise.*

Drives

The primary motivation for each of these stories is included as the theme Drives. Participants both shared what they think is the GOAT's drive or motivation which they themselves shared to have desired as well. The drives or motivations of the GOAT described by Drake's story titled *"Want To Be The Best"* are directed toward achievements as he brings up personal desires of winning big events (i.e., Olympic or World Championship events).

Josh's perception of the drives depicts someone with a more Eastern mindset which is influenced by martial arts and his experiences in China serve as examples. He used the term "kung fu" to describe someone who demonstrates the qualities of a GOAT. Someone who has kung fu or is the GOAT would hold their discipline as an intrinsic motivator that is distinct from a desire for money.

Josh included an example of the desire of a GOAT for someone who is not an athlete. This represents a desire to not only be good at one's discipline but to make a statement. In Josh's story *"Making A Statement"*, it is making a statement about the "worth of a black male" which is seen to fuel Deion Sanders or Prime in his pursuits as a college football coach. Although this story includes an example of a GOAT who is not currently an athlete, it was used to emphasize the fact that the GOAT does not rely solely on the extrinsic reward of money.

Qualities

The stories included in the narrative have been broken apart and found to represent different subthemes under the theme qualities including Self-Belief, Resiliency, and Consistency. These qualities work as characteristics that represent abstract concepts that are common to the GOAT. In this, they are not motivations (i.e., drives) of the athlete or a described GOAT and are not values listed in value theories (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2012). Each subtheme is described by the

stories that are included in the following sections. It should be noted that the stories included were a mixture of personal stories, examples of top athletes, and opinions all from the athlete. This information is not expected to be an exhaustive list of qualities that describe the GOAT, but as an account of the GOAT using the participants' responses.

Self-Belief

The theme of Self-Belief groups together the need for self-belief in an athlete's athletic pursuit. Included stories help to describe the impact of having belief in one's ability which allows them to handle pressure and succeed in competition or not having belief in one's ability which shows individuals to doubt their abilities leading to quitting a team or a decrease in performance. The stories *"Small Room" Big Pressure, "Kiss Their…",* and *"More Of A Burden Than A Blessing"* demonstrate the difficulty of having self-belief and the outcome of not having self-belief. Drake gives a detailed example of what pressure can look like during a World Championship competition. Just the event itself is demonstrated to be stressful. Josh's' *"More Of A Burden Than A Blessing"* describes the pressure the impact of other competitors when one does not have self-belief.

The stories *Less "Scientific"* and *"Intimidating"* are examples of self-belief being used to the athletes' advantage. Specifically, the story by Drake, *Less "Scientific",* brings up the importance of believing in one's self and that this is connected with a "less restrictive thought pattern." An exert from the transcript is included below:

> … one of the Kenyans was out there leading by about 10 yards. Even the Kenyan announcers didn't know who he was. And then they looked up his best times. And you know, he had a time of like 30 minutes for the 10k, which is definitely not world-class at all. He was leading some guys that had ran three minutes faster. He ended up getting

passed, but he still ended up finishing third, which for that race is an amazing result.

Afterwards, the Western press were asking him, "Well, why do you think you could do

that?" He was just like, "Because I thought you could do that, because I thought I could."

[in a questioning voice as to suggest why the press was asking in the first place] And

they're like, "No, no, no, you don't understand. This is like the toughest race in the world

to win. And you were leading why!" "yeah, because I thought I could." So in that aspect

it is kind of just less, I guess less restrictive thought pattern. (Appendix F)

The story *"Intimidating"* by Josh shows the effects of self-belief in the form of creating a

competitive advantage against competitors. A women's soccer team he witnessed had instilled a

sense of fear into the hearts of their competitors. "Most teams were beat before they got on the

field." It is a factor that also was given an origin. It was the hard workouts, which included one

one-on-one practicing, that made the team a dominant team. The way this story was shared

suggests Josh believes that it is the hard practicing that leads to a more dominant performance

and then to self-belief effects. The line "After our practices, these games are nothing" represents

the perceived impact that hard practices can have on one's performance and self-belief.

Resiliency

The theme of Resiliency includes stories that attempt to describe the GOAT's ability to

come back from a setback and display personal experience implementing or experiencing the

difficulties of this theme in one's life. The obstacles faced in these stories are due to causes

outside the individual as opposed to self-imposed obstacles which can be seen more in self-

belief. Drake tells the stories *Bootstrap Mentality, Defy The Odds,* and *"What Do I Do Now?"*.

Bootstrap Mentality is the articulation of an idea of self-sufficiency, brought up in the story *Defy*

The Odds, which in turn describes a GOAT's ability to overcome setbacks. The underlying

message that Drake is attempting to describe is that a GOAT can hold themselves accountable and find a way to overcome an obstacle. In a later portion of the story, Drake explains his personal qualities. He states that he thinks there were "a lot of other people more talented than me out there. But I just I never gave up; I kind of never quit." This quality of never giving up transformed into a tendency to solve problems himself. The example from the story being that Drake would work on a furnace for 10 hours so that he could fix it the next time it broke.

Defy The Odds is an example of Klay Thompson coming back from a painful injury. Not only was Thompson able to come back from the injury, but he was able to exceed others' expectations and win a National Basketball Association (NBA) championship. Drake was not saying that Klay Thompson was or wasn't a GOAT, the point being made is that a GOAT can overcome a large setback if one presents itself.

"What Do I Do Now?" described Drake's experience of being a world-class athlete. The World Championships themselves were described as an "adrenaline ride." The excitement that was apparent in Drake's body language when telling this part of the story added to the intensity of the experience being described. This changed quickly as the narrative switches to a discussion about the struggle of some athletes with suicide and depression. Drake's tone is also much less excited and more serious when discussing this portion. Drake opens up about a "depressive funk" he was in after large races like the World Championships. He himself was not stating that he had depression, instead, Drake explained his level of understanding of what some athletes are going through. While this story does not demonstrate strictly the ability to come back from mental illness, it does show an obstacle, that according to Josh, many athletes face.

Josh had only one story in the Resiliency theme. The story shared includes a clear obstacle and overcoming of it. *Fool Me Once, Fool Me Twice* is an example of a top runner who

suffered being disqualified from the World Games 100m race due to marijuana use. After Josh

describes the ease in simply accepting the setback as a failure, the story shifts to show the

comeback to win nationals and then the World Games.

Consistency

        The stories included in the theme of Consistency illustrate consistency in performance

and training as well as the impact remaining consistent has after one is no longer competing in

sport. The term consistency used for the subtheme could be confused with the values category

conservation within Schwartz's values theory (1992). While both terms in themselves depict a

lack of change, they are starkly different. The value category conservation labels a general desire

to maintain the status quo. Conversely, the subtheme consistency centers around a continued

effort to improve powered through change. In reality, this subtheme does not prescribe to a

particular value or value category which is the reason it serves under the theme qualities.

        Consistency is described in the story by Drake *"Regular Every Day"* as having consistent

efforts in practices and competitions. It may be misleading as Drake, in the story states:

> He would do some amazing workouts and people would just go "that guy's gonna be a
>
> world record holder." And yet, he would get into a race and do worse. He couldn't even
>
> replicate what he did in practice. But, you can't have a great workout one day but then
>
> you can't run the next day. So a GOAT is able to kind of essentially practice at one level
>
> and then raise their game when it matters. They can practice at 90% and when they hit
>
> competition they can hit 110% percent of their effort. (Appendix F)

Effort in this case is not to mislead the reader into believing a GOAT does not give a strong

effort in practice. What this statement is getting at is explaining the need for a GOAT to

consistently have performances in practices that allow for strong competition performances.

Drake explains that you can't have consistency if you "have a great workout one day but then you can't run the next day."

Consistency in performance does not necessarily mean an athlete must do the same thing they have always done. The story *"Training Advantage"* by Josh illustrates the need for a GOAT to always be trying new training techniques that give an athlete an advantage. The story describes the use of interval training which had the effect of improving one's performance largely compared to those who did not do this training technique. The line "We came out of that camp and we beat everybody" sums up nicely the impact this training method had. After listing the competitions Josh won post including this technique, Josh notes the shift that occurred when other athletes learned of the benefits of interval training, "[When other competitors didn't do interval training] It wasn't even a race and he might be a better athlete than me. But he didn't have that advantage. And once he did he'd beat me."

Josh did share an example of a need for consistency that was less fluctuating. The story *"Don't Drink Like A Fish"* is an account of Josh's negative view of alcohol. A story included where Josh has a conversation with Jimmy Buffett. Buffett only acts to confirm Josh's beliefs that alcohol should be entirely abstained from. This story appears salient to Josh as he shares upfront that alcoholism is an issue within his family. His reasoning for including this quality of abstaining from alcohol appears to stem from these past experiences.

The remaining stories under the theme of consistency are impacts related to maintaining consistency. When developing the themes, consistency in this instance was seen as consistency of the effort and focus after transitioning out of high-level competitive sport. Josh brings up positive examples in the stories *It Stays With You and "Magic Bullet". The story It Stays With You* represents the impact years of training and consistency have on one's life after no longer

competing. It is an adaptation that can be viewed as a positive impact on an athlete's life. The *"Magic Bullet"* in Josh's story is exercise and its impact can be seen in this story:

> I think it has a huge impact on your quality of life that you don't get any other way. I just, it's a magic pill. I've been telling people that for years. so, you know, that's my philosophy. I know a lot of guys in my age group that's been their philosophy and they're still around. A lot of guys I swam with were incredible athletes back then. I mean, just big fast strong guys and they're on the ground now because they picked up a golf club and that was all they ever did. They didn't even drink a lot. (Appendix G)

Exercise has clearly had an impact in the years during and since competing. The final sentence about drinking emphasizes the impact that exercise has. While striving to be the GOAT, Josh has found this exercise to have a positive influence on his life.

Josh gave a short story about a potential negative associated with consistently being engaged in the effort and focus required to compete. *Trouble In Biking Paradise* includes the potential for a relationship conflict due to having many different types of bikes. This story brings out the impact of striving to be the GOAT as consistency in one's pursuit could potentially lead to being divorced. Josh even suggests that people who are in a conflict "probably got a way of doing it [convincing their spouse to have so many bikes.]" This shows that every person's method for balancing consistency and their relationships is partly unique.

Drake's story *"What'd You Go There For? A Race"* is also a more negative impact due to consistency of effort and focus. The story is included below:

> I don't know that that was a long time ago, you know, still good memories and stuff like that from it, you know, and just kind of places I went and everything. For a little while after that, just all the different experiences I had and kind of all the different places I

went, it always made people go, "Wow! You went to Brazil? What did you go there for?"

[I'd respond] "A race." "Oh, OK. And oh, you went to Cuba. What'd you go there for?"

"A race." (Appendix F)

Despite Drake stating there is a positive influence of the years he spent competing, the story overall brings to light a negative side to racing. Drake had been to all of these places people would consider interesting, but the experiences he had there were solely for competing. The responses "Oh, Ok" by the unnamed friend serve as an indicator that going to places such as Brazil and Cuba for a race is unordinary. The story itself is meaning that the experiences such as traveling as an athlete are not what others would expect. Someone who is the GOAT would be expected to have a similar experience to Drake who was striving to be the GOAT in his sport. This impact of striving to be the GOAT comes as a reflection that is brought to Drake's awareness only after the years of competing. It is a friend who asks the questions that spark this awareness.

Values

Values can be used as a way of describing identity. The values category includes qualities of a GOAT that more closely resemble values listed under a value theory such as the one by Schwartz and colleagues (2012). Values are "enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5). This is distinct from the qualities as values are concepts that work to motivate an individual to act in certain ways whereas qualities simply describe behaviors as an abstract concept. Two values are included as themes included are Self-Direction and Humility.

It is important to distinguish between drives and values. While drives are the primary motivators, the values one holds may manifest into behaviors demonstrated by a GOAT. Think of the desires as the "what" someone strives for and values as the "how" someone goes about striving for it. There are also assumptions specific to Schwartz's value theory which include: "values are beliefs linked inextricably to affect," "values refer to desirable goals that motivate action", "values transcend specific actions and situations", "values serve as standards", the ranked order of values reflects priorities, and multiple values determine behaviors (Schwartz, 2010, p. 222-223). While drives serve in the assumptions "refer to desired goals that motivate action," and "transcend specific actions and situations," they fail to "serve as standards." In addition, while drives may be "linked inextricably to affect," they are not beliefs in the context Schwartz (2010) uses the term.

Self-Direction

The theme of Self-Direction includes stories that represent the value self-direction which is a freedom to choose, create, and explore (Schwartz, 1992). The stories *"Don't Suffer Fools Gladly"* and *"Selfish With Their Time"* represent the need to be selfish with ones time. This selfishness is not due to treating others poorly. Instead, it is the desire to choose to focus on ones training and recovery.

Josh's story *"Don't Suffer Fools Gladly"* illustrates a GOAT's desire to not "waste their time." This can be seen in the story included below:

> One thing that GOATs do is they don't suffer fools gladly. They don't like you to waste their time because time is very precious to them. In order to get good at something you need to utilize your time. You can't be screwing around and wasting time. And, most GOATs I've met are no exception. They've got their days pretty well structured and don't

particularly want to put up with, some idiot wasting their time. They're not unkind to them, but they just don't want to deal with it. I've become like this. (Appendix G)

One can see that a GOAT has a plan for each day that does not allow for much time to be spent outside of this plan. The final sentence also demonstrates that Josh has actually developed this tendency. No specific event was given as a cause for this change, and the word "become" suggests a more gradual change.

Drake in *"Selfish With Their Time"* states that a GOAT would have an "elite attitude." This is followed up later in *"Easier In Retrospect"* with the need to use one's time for sport-related endeavors and not distractions outside of sport. A lack of being selfish with ones time is viewed as a personal failure. The "elite attitude" that story begins with acts as a reflection of what Drake views kept him from excelling in his sport. In Drake's eyes, having more of an "elite attitude" would had helped him become more successful in sport.

The story by Drake *"Good Team"* brings up the potential impact that having good support could have made for NFL quarterback Archie Manning. It was the team Archie was on that was suggested to be the reason for not being "in the conversation for being one of the great NFL quarterbacks."

Drake includes other types of support in his story *Support To Focus On Sport*. Personal chef's, physiotherapists, managers, and seat holders were other examples specifically brought up. The point Drake makes is that these people and support in general, act to allow an athlete to focus on their sport (i.e., training, recovery). The Kenyans, after being brought up earlier in the conversation for demonstrating self-belief, are included here as well. He states "The Kenyan's sole focus is just, "I trained twice a day and that's it. Everything else, I don't do anything. I just let my support team kind of do that.""

Josh includes a story *Where Was The Money In My Day* that represents the change in support for athletes in his sport from the time he competed to today. His experience can be seen in this portion of the story:

> Back when I was a pro I also had another full-time job. While training for Kona, I did live over there for some months and did a design project for the state of Hawaii. I helped design and put in a trunk line and it went out to where the race was so they could get water out there. They didn't have any water out there at the, at the beginning of the race when I got to see a lot of Hawaii. For the large races I did, like Kona, I had a team sponsor. I wouldn't go over to Kona if I had to pay for it. (Appendix G)

The example above shows the need to have a "full-time job" while also including the necessary training required for a top-level athlete. Despite the investment of effort of holding a job while training for the event, the lack of financial support was something that prevented Josh from continuing to compete at large events such as Kona.

Humility

The need to be selfish with ones time is juxtaposed with humility. The stories *"Humility"* and *"Let You Eat Dinner With Them"* are both stories by Josh, and *Can't Let Go* and *"Kiss Their…"* are by Drake. Humility is a value that recognizes the "insignificance of oneself in the grand scheme of things" (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019, p. 3).

The tendency to demonstrate humility is explained and recounted in Josh's story *"Humility".* A number of other traits are included such as being quiet yet extroverted, friendly, and kind. Being humble is clearly about not "bloviating" about one's ability. There is an exception with the example of Muhammad Ali:

I mean, Muhammad Ali did it but he did that because it's part of his persona before a fight. But if you listened to him and just as a normal person, he has a great deal of respect for the people he fought and he does and he was very kind to those around him. He was not a bloviating asshole. And usually, I have found whether it's on the martial arts mat or wherever, somebody that's a bloviating asshole is not a goat. They don't have kung fu. All they got is a mouth. I found that personally to be universal. (Appendix G)

It is the use of bloviating as a performance tool that set Muhammad Ali apart from others who are not humble. This means that a GOAT can be perceived as not humble as long as this does not perpetuate outside of competition.

Josh brings another example of humility in the story *"Let You Eat Dinner With Them"* where high level individuals, some Josh would consider GOATs, talk with Josh and allow him to eat with them. Josh expresses this story in a way that demonstrates that he is surprised they would even allow this, giving emphasis to the amount of humility a GOAT has.

"Can't Let Go" is an account of an individual that Drake knows who posts on social media (i.e., Facebook) about the previous success (i.e., making the Olympic team) he has had. This is viewed as a clearly negative trait to possess and helps to define what humility is. Instead of remaining humble about ones past successes, this individual is reminding others of his success "30 years later." This is seen as an example of what can happen if someone fails to let go of one's GOAT identity. Drake tells this story in a way that demonstrates he is frustrated with what this individual has done. Beyond demonstrating a lack of humility, it comes as a reminder of his lack of success.

Drake's story *"Kiss Their…"* is an example of an athlete who quit the team when they no longer are being praised for their past performances. The quote "…nothing happened for them

because they kind of expected the coach to, sorry to say this, but like kiss their ass all the time because they were such a great athlete." represents the difficulty an athlete had because they were not being kissed up to. It is another example of how an athlete without humility could be negatively impacted.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Despite being a popular topic in sports (Lundberg & Rosenberg, 2020), there is a lack of

research on the topic of the GOAT in sport. The purpose of this research was to explore (a) the

characteristics that describe the GOAT identity and (b) the impact that this identity has on elite

athletes. Through the in-depth interviews, a more holistic understanding of the elite athletes'

perspectives of the GOAT and the impact it has had on them was revealed. In describing the

characteristics of the GOAT, certain themes surfaced from the data which include qualities,

values, and drives. The theme qualities demonstrate qualities that a GOAT possesses and had

sub-themes of self-belief, resiliency, and consistency. Each sub-theme represents a quality which

were considered as abstract concepts found within the interviews that are representative of

behaviors. The theme values groups together stories that center around specific values from

Schwartz and colleagues' values theory (2012). The values self-direction and humility were

found within the stories and included as subthemes. Drives are an account of what motivates a

GOAT in the form of desired outcomes. These were separate from values as drives were the

thing being pursued and the values were the way in which one pursued them.

Considering there is a lack of consistency in the factors that determine the GOAT in a

given sport (i.e., Bundy et al., 2020; Fatahian, 2021; Higgins, 2018; Imam, 2017) it was

important to determine each individual's definition of the term. How the GOAT is defined was

slightly different among the participants. For Drake, this was an athlete who was the best

combination of traits, including mental aspects, physical aspects, and luck. Josh's definition

includes a requirement that a GOAT must have "kung fu". It can be assumed that having kung fu

reflects the mental aspect described by Drake, but unlike Drake's definition, Josh's definition

does not include the physical or luck aspects. The difference in definitions of the GOAT could be due to the lack of objectivity of the term (Bundy et al., 2020).

Interestingly, neither individual shared specific measurable factors related to the GOAT. All factors included were abstract concepts that lacked objectivity. This again ties into past discussions on the GOAT which demonstrate a lack of objectivity (i.e., Bundy et al., 2020; Fatahian, 2021; Higgins, 2018; Imam, 2017). There was an attempt by Josh to set boundaries around the term. In this, he clarified that the GOAT was relative to the timeframe one is investigating, which echoes a point from current GOAT debates in the media (Fatahian, 2021).

Despite slight differences, the definitions are similar to past findings which suggest that determining the GOAT includes qualitative factors (Albouza et al., 2016; Bundy et al., 2020; Higgins, 2018). Both participants viewed that there were similar characteristics (i.e., qualities, values, drives) of an individual who is, or would be considered, the GOAT which describe a GOAT identity (Hogg et al., 1995). The following sections are based on the themes and related subthemes. In each section, the characteristics that describe the GOAT and the impact it had on the participant's will be discussed in relation to previous research.

Qualities

Qualities represented abstract characteristics that described behavioral outcomes. Examples from athletes and the participants careers were given by the participants and used to describe each quality. Subthemes (i.e., self-belief, resiliency, consistency) include a quality the individuals learned to be important because they themselves possessed or lacked the quality during their sport career. As such, each subtheme includes both a depiction and impact of a quality and the potential negative outcomes of not having this quality. A commonality between the qualities was an element of high-level performance due to self-determination and less from

support of others which was similar to a finding by Ronkainen and colleagues (2019) who found evidence of athletic hero role models were described as self-determinant of their success in sport. Striving for success, or striving to be the GOAT, illustrated by the participants was accompanied by a sole focus on the self. The sole focus on oneself is reminiscent of self-enhancement values (Schwartz et al., 2012). This is not to suggest that the GOAT identity generally contains a lack of self-transcendent behaviors, as self-transcendent behaviors were found in this study, but instead describes the specific characteristics under the theme qualities.

Despite the necessity of these qualities, there was no specific steps shared by the athletes on how to gain these qualities. The only step taken to obtain these qualities was the requirement of high-level training and at a level higher than one's competition; no other specifics were given. This is similar to Rokainen and colleagues (2019) as steps to navigate specific challenges or the role models' path to success were not mentioned as part of the narrative map. This is suggested by the authors to be due to the lack of information regarding the role model.

While the interpretation of the findings in this study could be due to a lack of information on how an athlete considered to be the GOAT demonstrates certain qualities, it may also point to the way in which one interacts with a GOAT identity. The impact that is created from a GOAT identity may develop from individual attempts to enact an idealistic outcome of becoming the GOAT. Individuals would be following their own ideal self, as proposed by Higgins (1987), then specific role models. If this is the case, individual perceptions of the GOAT identity become even more important to consider as these would be the qualities an individual strives for in comparison to the actual behaviors demonstrated by a GOAT in their given sport. Although in an unexpected finding, by desiring to be the GOAT, the results from this study suggest it is more

difficult to obtain these qualities, which can especially be seen in the subtheme self-belief. These points considered, the data suggests the path to having these qualities to be gained indirectly.

Self-Belief

The subtheme Self-Belief demonstrates that a GOAT has belief in their ability to perform. By having belief in oneself, the GOAT is described to then be able to be successful in large competitions. Self-belief is described through the different stories shared by the participants. The stories illustrate the type of self-belief that a GOAT has, but also the difficulty in obtaining this self-belief.

Josh's story *"Intimidating"* describes the impact of self-belief and tells that it is gained by training at a "level" that is much higher than your opponents. In addition to the effect training has on oneself, training at a high level was also said to negatively impact the self-belief of competitors. The competitive desire to increase one's performance by decreasing others performance represents an emphasis on self-enhancement values over self-transcendence values (Schwartz et al., 2012). This emphasis on self-enhancement values while describing the qualities of the GOAT is a common occurrence in the data. Past research supports these findings as it has shown an emphasis on self-enhancement values in athletic populations (e.g., Albouza et al., 2016; Caliskan & Ozer, 2021; Cruz et al., 1995).

Josh's story demonstrates that having self-belief is beneficial to an athlete, although in Drake's story *Less "Scientific"* the process of increasing self-belief through training was suggested to not be a perfect one-to-one ratio. Drake discusses the "scientific mindset" and tells that individuals with this mindset may have a high level of training, but it can place a ceiling on an athlete's performance potential. The story *Less "Scientific"* shares Drake's belief that the "scientific mindset" is culturally influenced and that a GOAT is someone who has a "less

restricted" way of thinking. Included was the belief that this is a cultural difference. Cultural differences through socialization have shown in the ideal self (Boyatzis & Dhar, 2022) and specific values (Belic et al., 2021; Boyatzis et al., 2000; Molden et al., 2017; Smolicz, 1981). Being that having a scientific mindset is potentially a cultural difference of the GOAT, simply having a scientific mindset may not hold one back from being a GOAT. A deeper look at what Drake is sharing is that performance benefits come from the "less restricted" way of thinking that individuals from other cultures possess. In other words, a GOAT must believe they can achieve something beyond what training results suggest. It is uncertain the exact path to gaining self-belief, although desiring to be the GOAT may have a reverse effect which can be seen in the story *"More Of A Burden Than A Blessing"*.

The story *"More Of A Burden Than A Blessing"* brings up a paradox that Josh faces. As Josh strives to be the GOAT, he must have self-belief, but desiring to be a GOAT has a negative impact on his self-belief. In striving to be the GOAT, Josh stated that having the desire was "more of a burden than a blessing." The impact he refers to is possibly a decreased self-belief leading to "choking". Josh's story suggests decreases in self-belief may not be a direct result of striving to be the GOAT and could be moderated by competing in competitions above one's current level of performance. Striving to be the GOAT brings Josh's accelerated athletic progress that put him into a competitive environment he was not ready for with individuals older and more "mature" than himself. The story by Josh suggests the variation of self-belief in different sport development stages due to age of the athlete. In other words, athletes both in the investment phase of the extended sports development model (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002) may potentially have different strength of self-belief depending on their age. From Josh's story, those who are younger in age would have a weaker self-belief than someone who is older. Therefore,

someone striving to be the GOAT is suggested to benefit from developing their self-belief before advancing to higher levels of competition.

The "trash talking" Josh received negatively impacted his self-belief and ability to perform which was made worse by the desire to be the GOAT. This experience can be seen as a transformative experience that shifted Josh's beliefs. Transformations occur when previous beliefs must be altered in order to fit the current situation in a way that causes lasting change (Mezirow, 1978). Two transformations that can be seen in Josh come in the form of viewing the desire to be the GOAT as negative and Josh's emphasis on humility as a value of the GOAT. The previous belief could be that desiring to be the GOAT was beneficial to performance and after this experience, Josh believed that desiring to be the GOAT had a negative impact on one's performance. This experience could also have led to the belief's found under the subtheme humility. After the competitors "trash talking" negatively impacted Josh's performance, an emphasis on behaviors that demonstrate humility could have surfaced.

Resiliency

Resiliency as a subtheme represents the quality of a GOAT to come back from a setback. These athletic heroes did have a quality of resiliency when facing hard challenges. A key idea brought up by Drake was to "never quit." This mentality described in the story *"Bootstrap Mentality"* act as a guide to overcome challenges such as maintenance of consistent training. Still, there are other challenges, such as transitioning out of sport, that may not be overcome from the same type of strategy.

There are other challenges that individuals face such as the one described in the story *"What Do I Do Now?"* by Drake. Miller and Hoffman (2009) found that the social identity, similar but distinct from athletic identity, jock identity was associated with higher levels of

suicide attempts. Not only suicide but also depression was brought up as struggles faced by some athletes (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2009; Miller & Hoffman, 2009). This story by Drake was surprising as it included examples of top athletes in negative situations which was went against the finding by Ronkainen and colleagues (2019) who found athletic heroes and role models were shown to be absent of negative emotions. This could be due to the age of participants as having experienced elite-level career, and participated in large events, which could have made the issue of mental health more aware to the participants in this study. Drake himself experienced what he referred to as a "depressive funk" after a large event. No solution was brought up by Drake to counteract this feeling. While a lack of a solution was expected from athletic heroes, as it related to the findings of Ronkainen and colleagues (2019), no solution was given by Drake himself. In other words, he experienced this "depressive funk" without a clear path through it. Exploring mental health and depression was not a primary goal of this study, yet the experience Drake had suggested it was commonplace for elite athletes. Therefore, the importance of bringing awareness to mental health and depression in the sports world is emphasized by Drake's story. Athletes striving to become or are considered the GOAT may not be immune to mental health concerns such as depression. Athletes may benefit by working with mental health professionals after large events. More work needs to be done on depression after large competitive events as this work could assist elite athletes who compete in many large competitions such as Olympic and World Championship events.

The inclusion of mental health among athletes is used by Drake as a transition to describe the difficulties with transitioning out of sport and the source of these challenges. Drake depicted a drop in the notoriety and high adrenaline moments during his career (i.e., after competing in a

large event) as well as after his career. This being the case, drop in notoriety and high adrenaline moments should be considered for athlete's striving to be the GOAT.

While the Drake's story suggests issues of transitioning out of sport stem from a drop in notoriety, past research suggest it is due to narrative wreckage (Douglas & Carless, 2009). The experience of transitioning out of sport was illustrated in the work by Douglas and Carless (2009) where narrative wreckage occurred as the athletes no longer could live the narrative of an athlete. While the results in this study appear less severe than the outcomes in that study (i.e., Douglas & Carless, 2009), the drop in notoriety and high adrenaline moments could be a part of the narrative wreckage that may come from transitioning out of sport.

Drake's narrative brings light to the unique outcomes of transitioning out of sport. For Drake, the solution to transitioning out of sport is to let go of the intense desire to be a competitive athlete which is a solution that is notably different than prescribed by the "never give up" mentality. This solution brings up an interesting dichotomy in potential strategies to handle challenges. From this, one can assume that the best way to handle a situation is dependent on the context and individual. Knowing when and how to engage one's resources to overcome an adversity might be what bring success. Specifically for Drake, challenges within sport are best served with a mentality to never give up, and for separating from sport (i.e., transitioning out of sport), the approach is to let go. While never giving up is a trait that resembles the dominant sport narrative (Douglas & Carless, 2006), athletes have different degrees of difficulty in the opposite, letting go (Douglas & Carless, 2009).

Douglas and Carless (2009) found there was an emotional pull toward the sport that created tension when leaving sport. For Drake, the experiences (i.e., notoriety, high adrenaline experiences) he had at the elite level are the emotional pull toward sport. On the lines of handling

transitioning out of sport or narrative wreckage, Drake's solution to transitioning out of sport was similar to the suggestions made by the authors. Drake let go of the intense desire to be an elite athlete by taking "asylum" or time away from sport and over time built up a life and started a career outside of sport which demonstrates the building of other identities and narratives. Interestingly, Drake's version of asylum was different from the athletes in Douglas and Carless (2009). Instead of completely forgoing the performance narrative, he went into another performance domain (i.e., job) where he continues to use strategies such of "never give up". Asylum similar to past studies (i.e., Douglas & Carless, 2009) may have been present although not uncovered in the present study, yet there is still a possibility for differences due in gender and the fact that the athletes in Douglas and Carless (2009) were considered "dropouts" or stopped sport during the middle of their careers without demonstrating a clear intention of doing so. Either way, the importance for support as one transitions out of sport is described here. As individuals begin to transition from sport, having qualified individuals (i.e., counselors, mental performance consultants) to assist in this transition would help to ameliorate some of the potential difficulties in this event.

Consistency

Consistency as a subtheme demonstrates the need and potential ways for a GOAT to maintain consistency in performance and training. The results illustrate that there is consistency in the training and performance of the GOAT. For training, this can be seen as effort given during workouts and discipline leading up to a performance. Consistency in performance would be displayed by positive outcomes in competitive events which is a quality suggested by current discussions on the term (e.g., Bundy et al., 2020; Lundberg & Rosenberg, 2020). The stories *"Regular Every Day"* by Drake and *"Training Advantage"* by Josh include training

recommendations that a GOAT would need to succeed. Through these stories, one can see the impact this consistency, particularly consistent training and behaviors, has had on the participants. Past research has demonstrated a link between athletic identity and performance (Horton & Mack, 2000; Lu et al., 2019) and this was in part due to the impact on training (Horton & Mack, 2000). Similarly to this study, consistency in the training was said to lead to success in competitive events. Therefore, this study suggests that individuals who are striving to be the GOAT would have more competitive success due to the influence it has on training consistency. In addition to during one's career, there were positively viewed outcomes after an athlete's career (i.e., wellbeing). Although there is a clear positive impact, most notably wellbeing, the participants stories include a potentially negative impact as well in the form of balancing non-sport related identities.

Consistency in behaviors such as hard training and refraining from drinking was brought up in the stories by Drake and Josh. Josh's stories *"Intimidating"* and *"Training Advantage"* demonstrates the difficulty of training one must endure to gaining a training advantage. *"Training Advantage"* brings to light to the preparation of elite athletes and shows this hard training is not consistent in terms of being a set difficulty, but instead represents the consistent innovation and raising of the bar of one's training. From the story, the training advantage Josh had, procured by an early discover and application of interval training, helped to maintain a high level of performance in elite sport. However, as competitors learn how to mimic the training advantage a top competitor has, the training advantage disappeared. To maintain this higher level of intensity or training advantage, a GOAT must be willing to try new training techniques. This is a finding similar to Giacobbi Jr. and colleagues (2002), who found that coaches believed athletes who were open to change and inquisitive made the most progress. In terms of values,

open to change is a category within Schwartz's (1992) theory. A value included under this category is self-direction which in this study is included as a subtheme under values. Athletes who follow in the footsteps of a GOAT may therefore also be open to trying new training techniques if it is expected to improve performance or perform at a consistently elite level. In addition to adapting training techniques, higher levels of intensity of training than one's competitors is shown in Josh's story to be necessary to be the GOAT. Because of this, athletes striving to be the GOAT may also give increasing effort in training and performances.

Discipline throughout one's career was seen in Josh's story *"Don't Drink Like A Fish"* which promoted the suggestion that an elite athlete, such as the GOAT, must refrain from drinking. Josh's thoughts on drinking are revealed to originate from when he was younger. Seeing the negative impact of alcohol on his family members propelled Josh to refrain from alcohol for the remainder of his life possibly showing that the behavior is a part of his ideal self. In support of this, previous research suggests that the ideal self is altered by socialization (Boyatzis & Dhar, 2022). Therefore, Josh's striving to be a GOAT and his ideal self may have served as a barrier to drinking.

Josh included refraining from alcohol consumption as a quality of a GOAT, but there is a sport related social identity that is associated with higher alcohol binging. Although not significant, binge drinking tendencies were found to be higher in those with a high jock identity than those without a high jock identity (Miller et al., 2006). Josh's story suggests the potential for the opposite in those with a high GOAT identity. Josh includes an example of someone he considers to be the GOAT to represent the prevalence. While this is not enough to conclude that increased GOAT identity lowers alcohol abuse, it does represent the impact that striving to be the GOAT has had on Josh.

The benefits of consistency are not only represented within sport. Within this subtheme, there was an impact on the lives of the participant's post-sport. Some were positive such as maintaining exercise after competing which can be seen in the story *"Magic Bullet",* and another positive impact was found in the ever-lasting effects of years of training consistency seen in the story *"It Stays With You".* Training and discipline consistency was viewed by Josh to have a positive influence on his wellbeing during his career, so he continued to engage in these behaviors. As this story demonstrates, an individual who is striving to be the GOAT may also maintain habits after they no longer compete in sport, and these habits may have a positive influence on one's wellbeing as the same behavior had on one's performance during their time competing.

There is one story from each participant that illustrates a potentially negative impact of the quality consistency. In Drake's story *"What'd You Go There For? A Race"*, the impact is shown to be in the lack of experiences outside of training and competing. While Drake states his memories from competing were "still good memories," there is something to be said about the sacrifice that comes from devoting oneself to their sport. As Drake recounts, the individuals who question him on the places he had been do so with surprise when they learn of the trips being solely for racing. It is the investment of time in one's sport that while is not necessarily viewed as a negative in Drakes eyes, is a negative when viewed by non-athletes. This finding relates to Horton and Mack (2000) who found that while general social relationships were not absent for the individual, non-sport related relationships suffered. Building on this finding, one can see the reasoning behind a lack of non-sport relationships being partially due to the orientation around competing. These data suggest that a person who strives to be the GOAT would possibly need to

sacrifice their non-sport relationships in order to orient themselves properly around an endurance sport such as running or triathlon.

Negative impacts may continue after one begins transitioning out of sport. While challenges in transitioning out of sport were seen due to narrative wreckage, there can also be a discrepancy between social identities. The discrepancy between social identities would create conflict within the individual which has been shown to lead to decreased well-being (Killeya-Jones, 2005). Discrepancies between ones GOAT identity and outside sport identities were found in both participant's narratives. In Josh's story *"Trouble In Biking Paradise"*, this was stated as relationship issues. The conflict was a difference in the required responsibilities associated with each role. Although not within the consistency subtheme, the story by Drake *Can't Let Go* also represents a similar issue with training after one is finished competing. Not only is it important to consider the potential negative consequences (e.g., time investment, relationship issues) during one's time competing, consistency after one's sporting career similar to one's pursuit of being the GOAT during sport, may lead to an extension of these issues outside of sport as well.

Values

Outside the theme values, there was a lack of values from the self-transcendence category. In the subthemes under qualities, there is a clear desire to improve one's performance in the subtheme self-belief, to return to a high level of performance in the subtheme resiliency, and to maintain one's performance in the subtheme consistency. While these subthemes suggest values which are not a part of the self-transcendence category, a single value from the remaining categories cannot capture the essence of the motivation behind these themes. This is supported by the framework of Schwartz values theory (1992) which proposes that an individual can have multiple values activated at a single time. As found by Ponizovskiy and colleagues (2019),

values activated toward a specific event are integrated as a value instantiating belief (VIB). So although the focus for the athletes, with regard to the subthemes under the theme qualities, is towards sport performance, there is a mix of values that serve as the motivational force for the individual's.

There were specific values determined from the data and are included in the results under the theme values. Specific values (i.e., self-direction, humility) from the values theory by Schwartz and colleagues (2012) were subthemes found from the data. While the findings under the theme qualities primarily emphasized the common narrative of an overemphasis on performance (Douglas & Carless, 2006), this section highlights an important interaction and distinction between values which are found in the theme values. The subthemes self-direction and humility include stories with a primary value that is different than the other. These findings do not suggest that other values are not held by the GOAT, but that the stories under these subthemes emphasize certain values over others.

Self-Direction

The value of self-direction is the desire to have autonomy or freedom in choosing (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019). The theme of self-direction includes stories that represent the value self-direction which is a freedom to choose, create, and explore (Schwartz, 1992). The stories represented under this subtheme describe the value of self-direction and its impact. The subtheme of self-direction contains within it ways of behaving that bring out more variety in the values held by a GOAT. Similarly to the theme qualities, the stories in this subtheme represent the common sport narrative of an over-emphasis on sport performance (Douglas & Carless, 2006; Douglas & Carless, 2009) which goes against the findings of Ronkainen and colleagues (2019) who found that youth athletes included in their study included role models who did not

take sport overly seriously. The participants in this study demonstrated that the GOAT would have a sole focus of sport at the expense of anything non-sport related. The different findings could be due to differences in the age and athletic career stage of the athletes as the athletes in this study were retired from sport. If this is the case, a possible interpretation is that the athletes in this study reflected on the positive impact sole focus on sport has had for them. Another possibility could be due to culture. As suggested by Ronkainen and colleagues (2019) this preferred focus on sport could be due to societal factors making this belief culturally specific.

In order to dedicate time to one's sport towards becoming the GOAT, support is believed to be required by the participants in order to succeed. The stories *Where Was The Money In My Day* and *Support To Focus On Sport* in this theme can be viewed as requiring resources to satisfy the value of self-direction. This is due to the resources (i.e., money and people) described in the stories are used to allow an athlete to continue to pursue what they desire. For example, in Drakes *Support To Focus On Sport* other people are assisting the athlete in continuing to training and recover. Josh's *Where Was The Money In My Day* works as an example of financial support. Money in this case is not being desired in of itself. Instead, it is desired as a tool that would have allowed Josh to continue to pursue his racing at large events like the Iron Man World Championship.

GOATs are described as having an elite attitude in Drakes' story *"Selfish With Your Time"*. This would mean that a GOAT values power as it is the desire to dominate another person (Schwartz, 1992). The meaning of this elite attitude does not appear to be purely a value of power as the following sentence explaining a tendency of a GOAT shows they must be "selfish" with their time to not get distracted doing activities outside of sport. Josh also includes a similar thought in the story *"Don't Suffer Fools Gladly"*. Similarly, the importance is on not

"wasting time." This time more explicitly, Josh states, "They're [GOATs are] not unkind to them, but they just don't want to deal with it." This interpretation is supported by work by Maio and colleagues (2001) suggesting that a reason behind certain values helped to determine behavior. Therefore, because a GOAT desires self-direction or a desire to spend time on the activities one wants, a GOAT may need to demonstrate an elite attitude in order to safeguard their time. The primary motivator in this case appears to be more the value of self-direction which is about the choice to focus on one's sport (Schwartz, 1992). Instead of spending time doing activities outside of sport, one demonstrates self-direction by doing the activity they choose for themselves. The power value appears to be a value that assists but is not the primary motivator in shifting ones focus to their sport versus other activities. The way this power value may assist is by creating less conflict between values. As supported by previous research (i.e., Ponizovskiy et al., 2019; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz 2010), if one has more salient self-enhancement values such as power, they would have an easier time making the choice that is more self-enhancement. Power in this example, is not used or seen as a negative trait which has been assumed in past research (i.e., Belic et al., 2021). The example from the story *Support To Focus On Sport* of an athlete who had support to help with "pushing people out of seats" could serve as an example of power value that is overly salient, but this does not describe an example of a GOAT. It is important to note that this story was given as an outlier to represent a GOAT's need for support. In addition, Drake himself includes the interpretation that this behavior was "rude" suggesting he does not model this behavior. Still, this example illustrates the benefit of holding power values in the form of an elite attitude so that one may direct their focus on sport even if other values are more salient.

Humility

Humility is a value that recognizes the "insignificance of oneself in the grand scheme of things" (Ponizovskiy et al., 2019, p. 3). The theme Humility contains within it stories that illustrate what humility looks like acted out and the consequences if one does not demonstrate humility. This theme represents behaviors found within values of Teetzel's (2012) list of idealistic portrayal of an Olympian. Specifically ethical behavior and fairness can be seen within the stories under the subtheme humility. The story *"Humility"* also intertwines benevolence values in the form of kindness and not being "unnecessarily cruel." The narrative ties this into an experience Josh had at 16 years of age when competing against 23-year-olds. Josh demonstrates anger toward these other athletes through the term "black hearts" as he recounts them as "trash talking [him] out of [his] pants." Despite the competitive advantage it gave these athletes, as Josh states it "hurt me more than helped", Josh takes this story as an example of what a GOAT does not do which is being unnecessarily cruel. Josh states that his thoughts on the GOAT have been mixed with the principles outlined in martial arts and this attributing benevolence to the GOAT was above a potential performance enhancement.

Josh includes a story that specifically uses the term "humility" which is a value from the updated version of Schwartz values theory (Schwartz et al., 2012). The value humility is a part of multiple value categories (i.e., self-transcendence, conservation) although the way it is defined demonstrates the value is mixed with the value of benevolence. While the presence of behaviors representing benevolence could be viewed as separate from humility, the story in its entirety represents the value humility. In addition, the benevolence value related behavior serves more as a way of suggesting humility is a part of the self-transcendence category than as a stand-alone trait (i.e., the value humility). This is supported by the data, as the reasoning given for being

humble is the understanding of what type of effort is required to compete at a high level in sport which clearly depicts humility and not benevolence. Previous research has demonstrated there are self-transcendent values within a sport population (e.g., Albouza et al., 2016; Gould & colleagues, 2002; Lubyanka & Filipino, 2020), similar to these studies, humility in this study related to demonstrating good sportsmanship. Despite the findings of humility values that promote benevolence which that suggests self-transcendent values, further work would need to be completed specifically looking into benevolence values of the GOAT.

There is an example of humility that moves toward conservation that comes in the form of people Josh considers to be GOATs, grandmasters of martial arts, willing to talk to and eat dinner with him. The way this example is told demonstrates the grandmasters tolerance toward Josh. It could be more related with conservation, although the way Josh interprets this example is that the grandmasters are humble. Overall, this example represents the wide range of what humility means in the describing the GOAT.

According to Josh, although one may appear to be demonstrating a lack of humility, they may still value humility. The example of Muhammad Ali was given to point out that it was a "persona" the athlete had that did not extend outside of competing. Outside of sport Muhammad Ali is described as being a kind and humble person which is considered by Josh to be his primary values. This contradicts the concern brought up by Caliskan and Ozer (2021) that elite athlete role models (i.e., Muhammad Ali) may be followed despite representing "narcissistic behaviors and signs such as grandiosity, preoccupation with power, a strong need for admiration and attention, and exaggerated feelings about themselves" (p. 2). While the desire for achievement may be correlated with narcissism, it does not mean that individuals who desire to be the GOAT will demonstrate a lack of humility. The participants did not take a scale to determine their level

of narcissism, but their stories point to the influence of context specific behaviors. In other words, the way a GOAT acts in a competitive setting may be different from outside of competitive settings.

The impact this theme had on Josh was arguably extensive as he took his "trophies and threw them in a landfill." The trophies could act as a representation of achievement values as they depict the successes Josh has had in sport. His actions suggest that there was a higher salience of humility than achievement. This plays against the common narrative of an overemphasis on performance as the trophies represent successful performances. This is of course Josh's perception a GOAT identity, but this example illustrates the impact it has had on his actions.

A lack of humility may be related with negative outcomes. An example of a lack of humility, from Drake's story *"Kiss Their…"*, illustrates a situation that is to be avoided if one is the GOAT. This is in the form of an athlete expecting the coach to treat the athlete differently because of past successful performances. Due to the lack of acknowledgement for past performance, the athlete is said to leave the team. The story is included to support that an athlete, such as one who is the GOAT, should remain humble about past successful performances. Drake's story suggests that if the athlete demonstrated a high level of humility, the outcome may have been different, possibly motivating the athlete to remain on the team. It is relevant to note another value that is displayed by the athlete in the story is face. Face is the value of one's self-image (Schwartz et al., 2012). In quitting the team due to the coach not treating this athlete differently, one could interpret this action as being guided by a high value of face with a low value of humility.

The humility illustrated by the participants opens the possibility that the GOAT identity depicts a low egosystem goal orientation or a smaller number of goals that comparison oneself to others (Croker et al., 2009). The GOAT was also shown to have the reverse in the form of high compassion-oriented goals leading to an ecosystem goal orientation (Croker et al., 2009). This can be seen in the active attempts to consider others wellbeing which can be considered as manifestations of the humility value. This suggests that striving to be the GOAT and having a higher GOAT identity would increase the likelihood of prosocial behaviors. Although the desire to be the GOAT is an exclusionary desire or a desire that only allows for a single individuals success (Fredericks, 2018), the more salient goal orientation is of an ecosystem goal orientation.

This also suggest against negative outcomes related to sport related social identities such as jock identity. While an ecosystem goal orientation was suggested by the data for a GOAT identity, an ego orientated has been linked with a jock identity (Miller, 2009). This could magnify the idea that the GOAT identity is distinct from a jock identity as ego orientated, binge drinking, and nonfamily violence have been related with jock identity (Miller et al., 2006). The GOAT was suggested to have an ecosystem goal orientation, limited alcohol used, and demonstrate humility. Holding a GOAT identity instead of a jock identity may therefore work to safeguard individuals against the maladaptive behavioral outcomes associated with the jock identity.

Drives

In working to develop an identity related to the GOAT, a theme centered on what drives or motivates a GOAT, distinct from values, came up in both interviews. It is clear from both interviews that the desire of the GOAT is to be the best. Drake included "there's always a common desire among competitive athletes to be the best" which potentially generalizes the

desire. For athletes like those in this study, the best is determined by winning an Olympic or World Championship event. Although Josh emphasized the relative nature of accolades and of the GOAT, winning or being "dominant" are necessary. This is similar to the common performance narrative that contains an over-emphasis on performance (Douglas & Carless, 2009) and self-enhancement values (Schwartz, 1992). The winning of a competitive event serves as a requirement to demonstrate to others that one is the best meaning that it is a value of achievement. It would not be a salient power value as winning was not included as a reflection of one's desire to be better than others.

In terms of potential impact, the achievement desire (i.e., winning an Olympic or World Championship event) could lead to pro-self behaviors that negatively impact others despite the lack of desire to do so. This brings a concern brought up by Frederick (2018) describing exclusionary desires or desires that can only be fulfilled by one individual. By nature of these desires, competition and self-oriented behaviors that emphasize a negative effect on others would be expected to arise. While the illustrated behaviors in this study do represent a strong self-orientation (i.e., focus on one's sport performance), a desire for negative outcomes for others was only partially found. The story *Intimidating* by Josh did suggest a benefit in decreasing the performance in others by lowing the opponent's self-belief. Despite this, his story *"Humility"* strongly supported against treating others poorly. So despite the intention in competitive settings to decrease an opponent's self-belief, this is only done as a way to enhance performance outcomes and not with the primary intention of decreasing an opponent's level of performance.

While the desire to win an Olympic or World Championship event would suggest self-enhancement values of power and achievement, the value related behaviors were broader. The

findings in this study were more similar to findings which suggest that this desire leads to their success as an athlete or commitment to their sport (Giacobbi et al., 2002; Iñigo et al., 2015; Mallett & Hanrahan, 2004). This relates to a specific description by Josh in *Gotta Want It* stating in order to be the GOAT "you need the desire to be good". Fundamentally, it is not a desire of the outcome of winning large events as it is a desire to be good. A desire to win was not the only description of a drives for a GOAT and a further description by Josh enlightens the connection between drives and commitment.

Josh describes the drive to be the GOAT as having "kung fu," which is dedication to one's discipline. The word "discipline" is used because anyone can have kung fu and it is not restricted to sport. There is no need for money as this is a distinctly different motivator. In this way, the motivation to excel is "intrinsic" to the individual. Josh's description of kung fu supports the results from Mallett and Hanrahan's (2004) findings that demonstrate higher self-determined motivation. Like past studies, the desire for winning is used as a marker of one's competence (Coker-Cranny et al., 2018; Mallett & Hanrahan, 2004). Success is highly self-determined for Josh in his description of kung fu as it is the discipline that serves as a motivator that follows one to the grave in some cases. Similar to those findings, Josh may value winning, but as a reflection of his competence. This would explain the strong distinction between his desire to win and to be humble which is shown in the story *"Humility"*. In this, the desire to be the GOAT or having kung fu is a value that is not an exclusionary desire and allows for the coexisting value of humility.

The dominant narrative among athletes is an over-emphasis on performance (Douglas & Carless, 2006). There is a possibility for alternative narratives that can challenge or overtake the dominant narrative (Carless & Douglas, 2013). This was found in Josh's definition of drives. A

story titled *"Making A Statement"* included in Josh's definition on drives is believed to represent the self-transcendent values category. The value universalism represents the desire for the welfare of others generally (Schwartz, 1992). In the story, Primes' actions of "making a statement" are said to be about the "worth of a black male" in society. Making a statement such as this is suggesting there is a desire to help people generally which reflects universalism. What Prime is doing in this story can be considered to be activism (Magrath, 2021). As the story states, activism acts as a motivator while performing as a coach. This activism was not brought up during one's sporting career, but after. If anything, Josh's definition of drives demonstrates that is unlikely an athlete who is the GOAT would be able to focus on this during their career. Drake's story *"Easier In Retrospect"* also centers around the belief that spending time away from sport was fundamental to his failure. Distraction from sport was brought up by Magrath (2021) as a potential negative of engaging in activism. Although the reason for the lack of focus may not be activism, it does bring to light the need for consideration when engaging in activism as an athlete on an individual level.

　　While activism was brought up during the interview, there was no indication of an athlete feeling as though they ought (i.e., pressured by sport organizations) to engage in activism. This is opposite to the experiences of Tsang (2000) who found pressure to conform from the sport governing bodies. None of the characteristics included any indication to be related with one's ought self or the standards others place on an individual. The pressure to spend time on one's discipline and Primes use of activism appeared to be strictly self-imposed. This is not to say that there is no pressure from sport organizations as the lack of finding could be due to a lack of knowledge of Prime on the part of Josh. Prime may have experienced pressure from sport

organizations that Josh was unaware of. A lack of knowledge on role models was demonstrated by the individuals in the study by Ronkainen and colleagues (2019).

Narratives

While the participants recounted and described the GOAT, they also included the impact their idea of the GOAT on them. These impacts can be seen throughout the stories, but overall get a better look combined as a whole narrative. The narratives are a reflection of the GOAT and at the same time, a reflection of the individuals themselves. The two narratives demonstrate a unique outcome in striving to be the GOAT. Both narratives can be looked at through the lens of Carless and Douglas (2013); particularly, the relationship to one's sport labeled as living the part of the athlete. Drake and Josh allude to the idea that the GOAT has a desire to be ingrained in one's sport to the point where both are the same.

Josh explains this within his definition of what drives the GOAT. This definition illustrates an intrinsic motivation where, like living the part of the athlete, "you and it [one's discipline] are one." This narrative can be seen playing out through Josh's entire career and after. There is a consistent effort and striving that brings success while competing in sport. Not only success in terms of accolades, but success in the form of demonstrating the characteristics of the GOAT. This success or living by the values of the GOAT, also termed having "kung fu", follows Josh into his years after sport. Despite no longer competing as a career, no clear transition out of sport is present for Josh as he continues to maintain the consistency in sporting habits as described in his story *"Magic Bullet".* Unlike previous research on transitioning from sport (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2009) Josh has not taken asylum nor does he express intentions of stopping sport activities. Josh reflects a clear positive impact having "kung fu" has had. In the narrative, the story *Trouble In Biking Paradise* might suggest social relationship difficulties, but there is no

lingering on this thought. So, while the events that play out in Josh's story represent a narrative of resiliency, Josh is truly representing the narrative living the part of the athlete.

In Drakes narrative, there is an internal conflict which comes in retrospect as Drake reflects on what he could have done better. One starts to see Drake's narrative in the beginning of the narrative in the last line in the story *"Wanted To Be The Best"* which states, "Just never put it together at the right time." It demonstrates his desires were never satisfied and serves as evidence of what relationship Drake has with sport and that he plays as an athlete. In going back to Carless and Douglas (2013), Drake's narrative describes an individual who is playing the part of the athlete. This depicts a person who holds a strong athletic identity in sport but not outside of sport. This can be seen in the stories (i.e., *Support To Focus On Sport, "Easier In Retrospect"*) recounting Drakes failure to focus more on sport. In describing his failure, Drake explains that he did too much outside of sport such as running errands. While one cannot confirm if Drake follows the playing the part of the athlete narrative through his narrative, there is an illustrated frustration with failing to live the part of the athlete. One can see this in *"Can't Let Go"* as the frustrations he has with an individual who continues to post on Facebook about his past Olympic success, a success desired by Drake. By including support to do non-sport related activities for Drake, he believes he would have been more successful in sport as seen in the story *"Easier In Retrospect".* This support would have allowed Drake to live the part of the athlete by focusing solely on sport. Therefore, Drake may view the GOAT as an individual who lives the part of the athlete similarly to Josh and the dissonance between these identities could be what leads to the conflict he faces as suggested by Killeya-Jones (2005).

Conclusion

In all, this study began to explore the concept of the GOAT. From the purposes of the study, the GOAT was characterized by participants as containing a set of drives, qualities, and values. While the definition of the GOAT varied between participants, these characteristics had some commonalities that each participant considered to be general among GOATs. The drives appeared to include desires for achievement (i.e., winning an Olympic or World Championship event), self-direction (i.e., kung fu), and although outside of competing as an athlete, universalism (i.e., using social causes as a motivator). These served as the underlying motivations for an individual who is considered to be the GOAT. Qualities that were illustrated to be a part of the GOAT include having belief in one's abilities, resiliency, and consistency in training and performance. Values of self-direction and humility were illustrated to be held by a GOAT. These manifested themselves as a GOAT focusing on their sport, which may include the use of others as support, and not being "unnecessarily cruel" to others.

For the second aim of the study, the impact of striving to be the GOAT has a mix of adaptive and maladaptive outcomes. Adaptive outcomes include examples such as refraining from drinking, continuing to exercise after one is no longer in the sport, and the willingness to train at a high level of intensity. Some negative outcomes include serious mental health considerations such as depression and suicide and strains on one's social relationships.

The GOAT identity was seen to relate to narratives of athletic identity demonstrated in Carless and Douglas (2013). The GOAT was seen to be an individual who lived the part of the athlete with an over-emphasis on sport. Dissonance in this and how an athlete viewed themselves was shown to create a conflict in one of the participants. This was represented in the participants as a lack of dedication to training. Interestingly, dissonance was expressed retrospectively in the

form of regret. After looking back on his career, Drake viewed his limitations in living the part of the athlete as dissonance to how he viewed himself.

Implications

Being there is no previous research in this area, these results serve as a starting point for future research. Exploration of a novel social identity in sport (i.e., GOAT identity) was done and a description of the identity and the impacts on a specific population (i.e., retired white male elite individual sport athletes) were highlighted. In addition, this study has implications that can be applied outside of research.

Applied implication of this research extend to individuals interested in becoming the greatest of all time (GOAT) in their related sport. Characteristics of the GOAT listed in this study can be used as a guide for individuals striving to be the GOAT in their discipline. These results can also be used by certified mental performance consultants (CMPCs) as a list of characteristics that are found in individuals who perform at a high level. By utilizing these characteristics, it is believed individuals striving to be the GOAT can increase their performance.

Importantly, there are potential negative impacts in striving to be the GOAT and this research brings awareness to these impacts. Mental health professionals and CMPCs can benefit from this study by having an increased understanding of the experiences of individuals attempting to be the GOAT. Particularly, this study emphasizes the relevance of mental health in transitioning from sport and after major competitive events. Therefore, in addition to increasing performance, individuals striving to be the GOAT may benefit from a reduction in the potentially negative impacts of their pursuit of becoming the GOAT.

Limitations

Being a qualitative study, the results were not intended to make conclusions about the GOAT. This study does work to begin the process of exploration of the GOAT to create a GOAT identity. The themes can serve as points for future study although they are not an exhaustive list. The lack of past research on the GOAT made parts of the study process more challenging such as the interview process, analyzing data, and connecting the results to past research.

This study included only two participants. Although a small number of participants have been used in other studies (e.g., Carless & Douglas, 2013; Douglas & Carless, 2006; Douglas & Carless, 2009), there is a need to include a larger variety of participants as other experiences are possible on this topic. A strength of this study was its defined population. Both participants were retired white male endurance athletes from the United States who have competed in multiple World Championships. While this helped the strength of the results related to this population, other populations need to be considered as well. For example, different genders cultures, races, and sport career stage are populations that need to be studied as their experiences are quite possibly different from the participants in this study.

One important thing to consider is that the study did not include individuals who would consider themselves to be GOATs. Therefore, qualities that the participants in this study were unable to experience could be missing from these results. As there is variation in the success of elite athletes and athletes who are considered to be the GOAT, the impact of following the GOAT is expected to be different for athletes who are themselves the GOAT. One strength of this study was the use of examples by the participants that included a GOAT. These individuals were not themselves GOATs, some of the examples they included in stories consisted of athletes who are the GOAT. A definition of the GOAT was included by the participants (see Appendix F

for Drake or Appendix G for Josh). While participants had a previous understanding of what the GOAT meant, there is no operational definition of the GOAT. The definition was largely up to the perception of the participant. This is a reason for including the definitions in the Appendix section (e.g., Appendix F, Appendix G).

To enhance the depth of the data, multiple attempts were made to allow for participant engagement. The failure to receive responses with feedback from the participants is also seen to be a potential limitation. This is important because the interview responses themselves could be imperfect representations of true events as they are reflections on past events (Nicholls & Ntoumanis, 2010). This study analyzed the results despite the participant's lack of responses to the offers to make edits. Efforts were made to encourage feedback (i.e., sending a document with comments attached) and a reasonable amount of time was given, but there were still no edits.

Another point to be made from the data is the possible overlap between athletic and GOAT identities. Multiple social identities in sport can be held at the same time similar to athletic and jock identities (e.g., Miller, 2009). It is uncertain if participants were differentiating between being an elite athlete and a GOAT. While this is an account of elite athlete perceptions of the GOAT, it does not differentiate it from an athletic identity.

Finally, very critical to qualitative studies is trustworthiness. Due to the lack of feedback received from the participants, it is unclear how accurately the narratives interpret the thoughts of the athletes. This being the case, the researcher's biases could be a factor affecting the results. Steps were taken to prevent biases from impacting the results such as codding mapping, critical friend, and reflexivity journals. In addition to this, the stories included within each narrative were largely unchanged. Despite the precautions taken, there is still a chance the researchers' bias significantly impacted the results.

Future Directions

Future work could be done in this area with different populations. While the results from this study illustrate the stories of a specific population, there are other populations that may differ in results related to the research questions. Particularly, outside of sport populations, different cultures, genders, and sport career development stage are all relevant for future study.

The definition of the GOAT given by both participants presents the GOAT as an individual who excels in their discipline. While the idea is commonly associated with sports (Lundberg & Rosenberg, 2020), the participants included individuals who were also outside of sport. These individuals not only served as examples of GOAT-like behaviors but were actual examples of GOATs as perceived by the participants. This opens the possibility to extend research of the GOAT to disciplines outside of sports. A couple of examples, which were included in the participant's narratives, are coaches (i.e., Deion Sanders in Josh's definition of the GOAT), and performers (i.e., Jimmy Buffett in *"Don't Drink Like A Fish"*).

Results from this study find evidence of activism being engaged by a GOAT but not in athletics. Athletes have engaged in activism during their sport career which supports the possibility for further research. One could do further research on the potential for a GOAT to engage in activism during sport. While doing this, it will be important to include the potential for distraction from one's sport as distraction from one's sport was a topic brought up within this study.

While activism was brought up during the interview, there was no indication of an athlete feeling as though they ought (i.e., pressured by sport organizations) to engage in activism. Tsang (2000) demonstrated their experience at the Olympic level which found an influence representing ought self conflicts with one's ideal self. Evidence in this study of the lack of pressure from

social sources could be due to a couple of reasons. One is the lack of questions directed towards this topic. The second is the potential for difference in the populations one studies as the narrative in Tsang (2000) is from a female perspective. Future studies could include more specific questions on the social pressures to behave a certain way as well as changing the population to explore the impact of the ought self on athletes striving to be the GOAT.

From previous research (e.g., Schwartz & Rubel, 2005) it was found there is a gender difference in values. Particularly, Males were found to have more self-enhancement values in compared to women as women demonstrated more self-transcendent values (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005). This being the case, the results from this study could have been different if the sample consisted of female athletes instead of males. Future work could be done to explore gender differences in GOAT characteristics, but also the impact the GOAT has on the individual. Considering the desire to be the GOAT is one suggesting self-enhancement values and higher prevalence of self-transcendence vales in females, one could investigate the potential for conflict between values.

It was suggested by a participant that the value subtheme self-belief was represented differently for athletes in different cultures. Previous research suggests culture has an impact on ideal self (Boyatiz & Dhar, 2022) and values (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). Interestingly, the importance of self-direction has been rated inconsistently among different cultures (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). The results from this study may therefore not be similar to a sample from a different culture; possibly one described as collectivistic. Future work could be done to explore the potential differences in characteristics and values related to the GOAT.

Of the phases of sport development by Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002), only investment and maintenance were represented in the data. This was in part due to the focus of

participant's responses on the GOAT and its current impact on them. The impact of the GOAT identity was centered around the maintenance phase, but also life post-sport. A recount of the participant's sport experiences was given although this was again primarily within the investment and maintenance phases. Future studies could be done to bring out specific phases of a sport career. This could be done by changing the population to include individuals who are currently within those phases.

In addition to investigating different populations, future research can be conducted to ensure what differentiates a GOAT identity from other related identities. While the characteristics of the GOAT did not relate with some of the qualities of jock identity (i.e., ego orientation, binge drinking, nonfamily violence), there is no understanding of how the GOAT identity differs from an athletic identity. Athletic identity has been used as a comparison for jock identity in previous studies (e.g., Miller, 2009; Miller & Hoffman, 2009) which is what this study used to differentiate a potential GOAT identity from jock identity (Miller, 2009). The way athletic identity compares to jock identity makes one question the distinctions between GOAT identity and athletic identity. By separating these identities, one can with more certainty determine if the GOAT identity is a distinct identity.

Finally, although not a goal of this study, the results provided somewhat contradictory findings to previous research on role models and behavioral modeling. Past research suggests that a role model would have their behavior modeled (Ueno et al., 2017). This finding was not given support as there was a lack of modeling of behavior from a specific role model. Potential reasons could be due to the lack of questions to target modeling behavior or the stage participants were in within their athletic career (i.e., retired). There were examples of elite athletes who could be viewed as athletic heroes as well as other individuals who serve as examples of GOAT

behaviors. Despite the lack of support for behavioral modeling, similarities between the

participant's behaviors and those demonstrated by the role models were included by the

participants. Future work could be done to determine the role of behavioral modeling of role

models by exploring the manifestation of characteristics of the GOAT.

REFERENCES

Albouza, Y., Wach, M., Chazaud, P. & Cremieux, J. (2016). The values of young boxers screened by Schwartz's model. *Staps, 111*,97–112.

Baillie, P. H. F., & Danish, S. J. (1992). Understanding the career transition of athletes. *The Sport Psychologist*, *6*(1), 77–98. https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.6.1.77

Bardi, A., & Goodwin, R. (2011). The dual route to value change: Individual processes and cultural moderators. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *42*(2), 271–287. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022110396916

Bardi, A., & Schwartz, S. H. (2003). Values and behavior: Strength and structure of relations. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*, 1207-1220.

Baumeister, R., & Leary, M., (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin. 111*: 497–529.

Belic, J., Djordjevic, A., Nikitović, T., & Khaptsova, A. (2021). The diversity of value construal: A constructivist approach to the schwartz theory of basic values. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2021.1965510

Berkman, Livingston, & Kahn. (2017). The identity-value model of self-regulation: Integration, extension, and open questions, psychological inquiry, 28: 2-3, 157-164, DOI: 10.1080/1047840X.2017.1343069

Bloom, B. S. (Ed.). (1985). Developing talent in young people. New York: Ballantine.

Boyatzis, R. E., & Akrivou, K. (2006). The ideal self as the driver of intentional change. *Journal of Management Development*, *25*(7), 624–642. https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710610678454

Boyatzis, R., & Dhar, U. (2021). Dynamics of the ideal self. *Journal of Management Development*.

Brewer, B. W., Van Raalte, J. L., & Linder, D. E. (1993). Athletic identity: Hercules' muscles or achilles heel? *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 24*(2), 237–254.

Bundy, J., Hayward, Z., & Kim, P. (2020, December 4). *What makes a G.O.A.T.* The Viking Magazine. Retrieved August 20, 2022, from https://vikingsportsmag.com/top-stories/2020/12/04/what-makes-a-g-o-a-t/

Bybee, J., Luthar, S., Zigler, E., & Merisca, R. (1997). The fantasy, ideal, and ought selves: Content, relationships to mental health, and functions. *Social Cognition*, *15*(1), 37–53. https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.1997.15.1.37

Caliskan, G., & Özer, A. (2021). Relationship between dark triad personality traits and work values among athletes. *Current Psychology*, *40*(12), 5834-5841.

Carless, D., & Douglas, K. (2012). Stories of success: Cultural narratives and personal stories of elite and professional athletes. *Reflective Practice*, *13*(3), 387–398. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2012.657793

Carless, D., & Douglas, K. (2013). "In the boat" but "selling myself short": Stories, narratives, and identity development in elite sport. *The Sport Psychologist*, *27*(1), 27–39. https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.27.1.27

Casey, S. (2008). Gold Mind. *Sports Illustrated, 109*(6), 38-44

Côté, J., & Hay, J. (2002). Children's involvement in sport: A developmental perspective. In J. M. Silva & D. Stevens (Eds.), Psychological foundations of sport (2nd ed, pp. 484–502). Boston: Merrill.

Choi, I., Haslett, D., & Smith, B. (2019). Disabled athlete activism in South Korea: A mixed-method study. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *19*(4), 473–487. https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2019.1674903

Chung, H. (2003). Sport star vs rock star in globalizing popular culture: similarities, difference and paradox in discussion of celebrities. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *38*(1), 99-108.

Coker-Cranney, A., Watson, J. C., Bernstein, M., Voelker, D. K., & Coakley, J. (2018). How far is too far? Understanding identity and overconformity in collegiate wrestlers. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, *10*(1), 92–116. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2017.1372798

Crocker, J., & Canevello, A. (2008). Creating and undermining social support in communal relationships: The role of compassionate and self-image goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *95*(3), 555–575. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.95.3.555

Crocker, J., Olivier, M.-A., & Nuer, N. (2009). Self-image goals and compassionate goals: costs and benefits. *Self and Identity*, *8*(2–3), 251–269. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860802505160

Cruz, J., Boixados, M., Valiente, L. & Capdevila, L. (1995). Prevalent values in young Spanish soccer players. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 30*, 353–371.

Daum, K. (2018, February 7). *21 inspiring quotes from Olympians that will bring out your inner champion*. Inc.com. Retrieved September 27, 2022, from https://www.inc.com/kevin-daum/21-inspiring-quotes-from-olympians-that-will-bring-out-your-inner-champion.html

Deaner, R. O., Masters, K. S., Ogles, B. M., & LaCaille, R. A. (2011). Marathon performance as a predictor of competitiveness and training in men and women.19.

Douglas, K., & Carless, D. (2006). Performance, discovery, and relational narratives among women professional tournament golfers. *Women in sport & physical activity journal*, *15*(2), 14.

Douglas, K., & Carless, D. (2009). Abandoning the performance narrative: Two women's stories of transition from professional sport. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 21*(2), 213230. https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200902795109

Dhar, U. (2021). Managerial identity development across the age-spectrum from an ideal self and values perspective. *Journal of Management Development*, *40*(6), 574–583. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-01-2021-0007

Duda, J. L. (1992). Motivation in sport settings: A goal perspective approach. In G. C. Roberts (Ed.), Motivation in sport and exercise (pp. 57–91). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Durand-Bush, N., & Salmela, J. H. (2002). The development and maintenance of expert athletic performance: Perceptions of world and Olympic champions. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *14*(3), 154–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200290103473

Erikson, E. (1959). Identity and the life cycle. Psychological Issues Monograph, 1, 1–171.

Fatahian, A. (2021, July 6). *Who is the goat: Michael Jordan or Lebron James?* The Daily Utah Chronicle. Retrieved August 20, 2022, from https://dailyutahchronicle.com/2021/07/26/who-is-the-goat-michael-jordan-or-lebron-james/

Feather, N. T. (1995). Values, valences, and choice: The influences of values on the perceived attractiveness and choice of alternatives. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *68*(6), 1135.

Fredericks, R. (2018). When wanting the best is bad. *Social Theory and Practice*, *44*(1), 95–119. https://doi.org/10.5840/soctheorpract201821332

Frentz, D. M. (2022). Journeying through sport with self-compassion: Athlete narratives of navigating pressure and struggle.

Frentz, D. (2022, October 27). 'The story I'm telling myself': Utilizing narrative inquiry in research and applied practice [LEC-05: Collegiate athletics]. AASP Annual Conference, Fort Worth, TX, United States.

Giacobbi Jr, P. R., Whitney, J., Roper, E., & Butryn, T. (2002). College coaches' views about the development of successful athletes: A descriptive exploratory investigation. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, *25*(2).

Gollan, T., and Witte, E. H. (2014). From the interindividual to the intraindividual level: Is the circumplex model of values applicable to intra-individual value profiles? *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology, 45*, 452–467. doi: 10.1177/002202211350 9885

Gould, D., Dieffenbach, K., & Moffett, A. (2002). Psychological characteristics and their development in Olympic champions. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *14*(3), 172–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200290103482

Hammell, K. W. (2006). Chapter 11- Contesting assumptions; challenging practice. In K. W. Hammell (Ed.), *Perspectives on Disability & Rehabilitation* (pp. 185–200). Churchill Livingstone. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-044310059-8.50013-X

Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative research methods*. London: Sage.

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological review*, *94*(3), 319.

Higgins, J. (2018). Why Roger Federer is a GOAT: An account of sporting genius. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, *45*(3), 296–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2018.1520126

Hogg, M. A., Terry, D. J., & White, K. M. (1995). A tale of two theories: A critical comparison of identity theory with social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *58*(4), 255. https://doi.org/10.2307/2787127

Horton, R. S., & Mack, D. E. (2000). Athletic identity in marathon runners: Functional focus or dysfunctional commitment?. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, *23*(2), 101-119.

Houston, J. M., Carter, D., & Smither, R. D. (1997). Competitiveness in elite professional athletes. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *84*(3_suppl), 1447–1454. https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1997.84.3c.1447

Imam, A. A. (2017). Who is the GOAT: Jordan, Bryant, or king James? An inference based on data crunching of the surface web. *Journal of Athletic Enhancement*, *06*(05). https://doi.org/10.4172/2324-9080.1000270

Iñigo, M. M., Podlog, L., & Hall, M. S. (2015). Why do athletes remain committed to sport after severe injury? An examination of the sport commitment model. *The Sport Psychologist*, *29*(2), 143–155. https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2014-0086

James, W. (1890). Principles of psychology. New York, NY: Dover Publications.

Kavussanu, M., & Ring, C. (2016). Moral thought and action in sport and student life: A study of bracketed morality. *Ethics & Behavior*, *26*(4), 267–276. https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2015.1012764

Killeya-Jones, L. A. (2005). Identity structure, role discrepancy and psychological adjustment in male college student-athletes. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, *28*(2).

Lally, P. (2007). Identity and athletic retirement: A prospective study. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 8,* 85–99. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2006.03.003

Lee, M. J., & Cockman, M. (1995). Values in children's sport: Spontaneously expressed values among young athletes. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *30*(3–4), 337–350. https://doi.org/10.1177/101269029503000307

Lee, M. J., Whitehead, J., & Balchin, N. (2000). Development of the youth sport values questionnaire. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, *22*, 307-326.

Lee, M. J., Whitehead, J., Ntoumanis, N., & Hatzigeorgiadis, A. (2008). Relationships among values, achievement orientations, and attitudes in youth sport. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *30*(5), 588–610. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.30.5.588

Lee, M., Whitehead, J. & Balchin, N. (2000). The measurement of values in youth sport: Development of the youth sport values questionnaire. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 22*,307–326.

Lee, M.J., (1977) Expressed values of football players, intramural football players, and nonfootball players. Eugene, OR: Microform Publications.

Li, Z., Zhu, Y., Zhang, L., Liao, J., Gong, Y., Zhang, Q., Xu, Y., & Zhang, Z. (2021). The effect of positive reciprocity in the relationship between college students' moral identity and moral behavior. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, *49*(6), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.9865

Lönnqvist, J.-E., Leikas, S., Paunonen, S., Nissinen, V., & Verkasalo, M. (2006). Conformism moderates the relations between values, anticipated regret, and behavior. *Personality and*

Social Psychology Bulletin, *32*(11), 1469–1481.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167206291672

Lu, L. D., Heinze, K. L., & Soderstrom, S. (2018). Playing multiple positions: Student-athlete

identity salience and conflict. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, *11*(2), 214–241.

https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.2018-0034

Łubianka, B., & Filipiak, S. (2020). Do conscientious athletes value world peace? Personality

traits and value preferences of young athletes and non-athletes. *Scandinavian Journal of*

Psychology, *61*(6), 784–793. https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12658

Lundberg, Robin, and Michael Rosenberg. "Before There Was 'The GOAT' There Was 'The

Goat' the Opposite of the Greatest of All-Time." *Sports Illustrated*, 26 May 2020,

https://www.si.com/sports-illustrated/video/2020/05/26/the-goat-before-greatest-of-all-

time. Accessed 20 Aug. 2022.

Magrath, R. (2021). *Athlete Activism: Contemporary Perspectives* (1st ed.). Routledge.

https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003140290

Maio, G. R., Olson, J. M., Allen, L., & Bernard, M. M. (2001). Addressing discrepancies

between values and behavior: The motivating effect of reasons. *Journal of Experimental*

Social Psychology, *37*(2), 104–117. https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.2000.1436

Mallett, C. J., & Hanrahan, S. J. (2004). Elite athletes: Why does the 'fire' burn so brightly?

Psychology of Sport and Exercise, *5*(2), 183–200. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1469-

0292(02)00043-2

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education*, *28*(2), 100–110.

https://doi.org/10.1177/074171367802800202

McAdams, D. P. (2013). The psychological self as actor, agent, and author. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *8*(3), 272–295. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691612464657

McClelland, D. C., Atkinson, J. W., Clark, R. A., & Lowell, E. L. (1953). Toward a theory of motivation.

Miller, K. E. (2009). Sport-related identities and the "toxic jock". *Journal of Sport Behavior, 32(1), 69.*

Miller, K. E., Farrell, M. P., Barnes, G. M., Melnick, M. J., & Sabo, D. (2005). Gender/racial differences in jock identity, dating, and adolescent sexual risk. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *34*(2), 123–136. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-005-3211-0

Miller, K. E., & Hoffman, J. H. (2009). Mental well-being and sport-related identities in college students. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *26*(2), 335–356. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.26.2.335

Miller & Kerr (2002). Conceptualizing excellence: Past, present, and future, journal of applied sport psychology, 14:3, 140-153, DOI: 10.1080/10413200290103464

Miller, K. E., Melnick, M. J., Farrell, M. P., Sabo, D. F., & Barnes, G. M. (2006). Jocks, gender, binge drinking, and adolescent violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *21*(1), 105–120. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260505281662

Molden, D. C., Hall, A., Hui, C. M., & Scholer, A. A. (2017). Understanding how identity and value motivate self-regulation is necessary but not sufficient: A motivated effort-allocation perspective. *Psychological Inquiry*, *28*(2–3), 113–121. https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2017.1337402

Morgenroth, T., Ryan, M. K., & Peters, K. (2015). The motivational theory of role modeling: How role models influence role aspirants' goals. *Review of General Psychology*, *19*(4), 465–483. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000059

Nalapat, A., & Parker, A. (2005). Sport, celebrity and popular culture: Sachin Tendulkar, cricket and Indian nationalisms. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *40*(4), 433–446. https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690205065750

Oishi, S., Schimmack, U., Diener, E., & Suh, E. M. (1998). The measurement of values and individualism-collectivism. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, *24*(11), 1177-1189.

Parker, A., & Watson, N., (2015). Sport, celebrity and religion: Christiantiy, morality and the Tebow phenomenon. *Studies in World Christiantiy, 21*(3), 223-238. ISSN 1254-9901

Parsons, O. A., Yourshaw, S., & Borstelmann, L. (1968). Self—ideal-self discrepancies on the MMPI: Consistencies over time and geographic region. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *15*(2), 160–166. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0025611

Passos, P., Araújo, D., & Davids, K. (2016). Competitiveness and the process of co-adaptation in team sport performance. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *7*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01562

Phoenix, C., & Sparkes, A. C. (2009). Being Fred: Big stories, small stories and the accomplishment of a positive ageing identity. Qualitative Research, 9(2), 219e236.

Ponizovskiy, V., Grigoryan, L., Kühnen, U., & Boehnke, K. (2019). Social construction of the value–behavior relation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*, 934. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00934

Ring, C., Kavussanu, M., & Gürpınar, B. (2020). Basic values predict doping likelihood. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, *38*(4), 357–365. https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2019.1700669

Rokeach, M. (1973). The nature of human values. Free press.

Ronkainen, N. J., Ryba, T. V., & Selänne, H. (2019). "She is where I'd want to be in my career":

Youth athletes' role models and their implications for career and identity construction.

Psychology of Sport and Exercise, *45*, 101562.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2019.101562

Ronkainen, N. J., Watkins, I., & Ryba, T. V. (2016). What can gender tell us about the pre-

retirement experiences of elite distance runners in Finland? A thematic narrative analysis.

Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 22,37e45. http://dx.doi.org/

10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.06.003.

Rosenberg, M. (2020, May 26). *How we got from 'The goat' to 'the goat'*. Sports Illustrated.

Retrieved August 20, 2022, from https://www.si.com/nba/2020/05/26/the-road-from-the-

goat-to-the-goat

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic

motivation, social development, and well-being. American Psychologist, 55, 68–78.

Ryska, T. A. (2002). Perceived purposes of sport among recreational participants: The role of

competitive dispositions. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, *25*(1), 91-113.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed). SAGE.

Sassenberg, A. (2015). Effects of sport celebrity transgressions: An exploratory study. *Sport

Marketing Quarterly, 24(2), 78-90.*

Scanlan, T.K., Carpenter, P.J., Schmidt, G.W., Simons, J.P., & Keeler, B. (1993). An

introduction to the sport commitment model. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology,

15, 1–15.*

Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 25, pp. 1-65). Academic Press.

Schwartz, S. H. (2010). Basic values: How they motivate and inhibit prosocial behavior. In M. Mikulincer & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Prosocial motives, emotions, and behavior: The better angels of our nature.* (pp. 221–241). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/12061-012

Schwartz, S. H., & Bardi, A. (2001). Value hierarchies across cultures: Taking a similarities perspective. *Journal of cross-cultural Psychology*, *32*(3), 268-290.

Schwartz, S. H., Cieciuch, J., Vecchione, M., Davidov, E., Fischer, R., Beierlein, C., Ramos, A., Verkasalo, M., Lönnqvist, J.-E., Demirutku, K., Dirilen-Gumus, O., & Konty, M. (2012). Refining the theory of basic individual values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *103*(4), 663–688. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029393

Schwartz, S. H., & Rubel, T. (2005). Sex differences in value priorities: Cross-cultural and multimethod studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *89*(6), 1010–1028. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.6.1010

Shields, D. L., Funk, C. D., & Bredemeier, B. L. (2018). Relationships among moral and contesting variables and prosocial and antisocial behavior in sport. *Journal of Moral Education*, *47*(1), 17–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2017.1350149

Silfver, M., Helkama, K., Lönnqvist, J.-E., & Verkasalo, M. (2008). The relation between value priorities and proneness to guilt, shame, and empathy. *Motivation and Emotion*, *32*(2), 69–80. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-008-9084-2

Simmons, D. & Dickinson, R. V. (1986). Measurement of values expression in sports and

athletics. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 62*, 651-658.

Smith, B., Bundon, A., & Best, M. (2016). Disability sport and activist identities: A qualitative

study of narratives of activism among elite athletes' with impairment. *Psychology of

Sport and Exercise*, *26*, 139–148. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2016.07.003

Smolicz, J. (1981). Core values and cultural identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *4*(1), 75–90.

https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1981.9993325

Sparkes, A. C. (2005). Narrative analysis: Exploring the whats and hows of personal stories.

Qualitative research in health care, *1*(1), 191-209.

Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2009a). Narrative analysis and sport and exercise psychology:

Understanding lives in diverse ways. Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 10(2), 279–288.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2008.07.012

Tajfel, H. (1978). Social categorization, social identity and social comparison. In H. Tajfel (Ed.),

*Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup

relations* (pp. 61–76). London: Academic Press.

Teetzel, S. J. (2012). Optimizing Olympic education: A comprehensive approach to

understanding and teaching the philosophy of olympism. *Educational Review*, *64*(3),

317–332. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2012.688729

Tsang, T. (2000). Let me tell you a story: A narrative exploration of identity in high-performance

sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *17*(1), 44–59.

Ueno, Y., Shimotsukasa, T., Suyama, S., & Oshio, A. (2017). Correlations between competitive

sports' characteristics and the dark triad. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport, 17*(2),

533536. https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2017.02080.

Vallerand, R. J. (1997). Toward a hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), Advances in experimental social psychology, 29. (pp. 271–360). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Watson, G. G., & Collis, R. (1982). Adolescent values in sport: A case of conflicting interests. *International Review of Sport Sociology*, *17*(3), 73–90. https://doi.org/10.1177/101269028201700305

Willig, C. (2013). Introducing qualitative research in psychology (2nd ed.). Open University Press.

Witte, E. H., Stanciu, A., & Boehnke, K. (2020). A new empirical approach to intercultural comparisons of value preferences based on schwartz's theory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 1723. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01723

APPENDIX A

Values Definitions Table

Values	Defined as Motivational Goals
Self-direction—thought	Freedom to cultivate one's own ideas and abilities
Self-direction—action	Freedom to determine one's own actions
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and change
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification
Achievement	Success according to social standards
Power—dominance	Power through exercising control over people
Power—resources	Power through control of material and social resources
Face	Security and power through maintaining one's public image and avoiding humiliation
Security—personal	Safety in one's immediate environment
Security—societal	Safety and stability in the wider society
Tradition	Maintaining and preserving cultural, family, or religious traditions
Conformity—rules	Compliance with rules, laws, and formal obligations
Conformity—interpersonal	Avoidance of upsetting or harming other people

Humility	Recognizing one's insignificance in the larger scheme of things
Benevolence—dependability	Being a reliable and trustworthy member of the group
Benevolence—caring	Devotion to the welfare of in-group members
Universalism—concern	Commitment to equality, justice, and protection for all people
Universalism—nature	Preservation of natural environment
Universalism—tolerance	Acceptance and understanding of those who are different from oneself

(Table 1. Values Definitions, Ponizovskiy et al., 2019, p. 3)

APPENDIX B

Schwartz (1992) Circumplex Model

(Figure 2. 10 Values Theory, Schwartz, 1992, p. 45)

APPENDIX C

Schwartz and Colleagues (2012) Circumplex Model

(Figure 3. 19 Values Figure; Schwartz et al., 2012, p. 72)

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide

Introduction
- Can you give me a brief background on your sport experience?
- How familiar are you with the acronym GOAT?
- Was there a time when you wanted to be the GOAT; if so what was that like?

GOAT Identity Generally
- What does it mean to be the GOAT to you?
- Values are enduring beliefs that serve as motivation for behaviors that individuals attempt to demonstrate. What values do you think the GOAT would embody?
- If you were to imagine the GOAT, what behaviors would the GOAT demonstrate while competing and while not competing?

GOAT Identity Related To Individual
- How does the idea of the GOAT resonate with you?
- If there are any, what values do you hold that are similar to those held by a person who is considered the GOAT?
- If there are any, what values do you hold that are different to those held by a person who is considered the GOAT?
- How have these values you have held had an impact on your life?

Closing Question(s)
- Is there anything else you would like to add that I didn't ask about regarding you and your perception of what it means to be the GOAT?
  - Is there anything you wish I would have asked you?
  - Is there anything else you would like to share?
  - Are there any other stories you would like to share?

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide Introduction and Conclusion

(Adapted with permission from Frentz, D. M., 2022, p.179-181)

Introduction

Thank you again for taking the time to share some of your sport experiences with me today. This interview is expected to take 1-2 hours. If you are not already, please find a space where you will experience minimal distractions. Although if you need to leave at any time, you will be free to do so. Are you in a space where you feel comfortable to engage in the interview? [pause for response; answer any questions]

In order to ensure I can properly integrate all of the information that participants provide, I aim to type up each interview word for word. In order to do this, we usually audio record each session. Are you okay with that? [pause for response; answer any questions]

Due to this interview being virtual over Zoom, you may find that there are some points where I am not looking directly at the camera. This may be perceived as me not fully focusing on the interview. Please know that I will be fully engaged for the duration of the interview. Other situations may occur due to being on a virtual platform such as lag time or disconnection. Be aware that these situations may occur and if they do, we will work through them. As a reminder, you are free to stop the interview at any point, and you do not need to answer any questions that you do not want to. Please do not feel any pressure to continue the interview if you do not want to. All answers will be kept confidential and identifying information such as your name will be altered to maintain confidentiality. Before we begin, do you have any final questions about the information sheet that we went over? [pause for response; answer any questions]

I am interested in exploring the characteristics, such as values and behaviors, that describe the greatest of all time (GOAT) and the impact one's perceptions of these characteristics have on themselves. I realize this topic may sound quite broad or open-ended – this is intentional! I want to hear your thoughts on the GOAT and your experience with the GOAT through sport and the various situations you've encountered and navigated. As a high performing competitive athlete, you are the expert of your sport experiences and I am interested in hearing about your thoughts, feelings, and perspectives. These thoughts, feelings, and perspectives may have stories that drive them and I would like to hear about these. This may have you recounting stories you have from your past or other examples that resonate with you. I realize that at times it may feel awkward or uncomfortable to just keep talking about yourself and your experiences. Please know that these feelings of awkwardness are natural (us humans are used to conversations being a two-way street). Remember, this interview is less of a conversation and more of an opportunity for you to tell the story of your understanding and relationship, if there is one, to the GOAT. I'm hoping you can include as much detail as possible. With this in mind, "storytelling typically involves the longer turn at talk than is customary" (p. 7) and may at times feel a bit uncomfortable (Reissman, 2008). Rest assured, I want to hear about you, your perceptions, and your experiences. To begin, I'd like to start by asking you some more broad or warm-up questions about your background in physical activity and just life in general.

Closing

Thank you again for your time. I really appreciate this opportunity of meeting with you and hearing about your thoughts and stories. I also want to take a few moments to give you an idea of what our next steps will look like moving forward. Based on what you've discussed in this interview, I will create a description of what values and behaviors the GOAT would demonstrate and an elite athletes relationship to that description. In about a week I will send this document to you and you will have the opportunity to add, modify, or delete anything as you see fit. If you have any questions between now and then, please don't hesitate to contact me by email (tb27197@georgiasouthern.edu). Thanks again and take care!

APPENDIX F

Drake Definition, Drives, and Narrative

Drake Defining The GOAT
"The Perfect Combination"

I consider the GOAT to be someone who stands out in athletics above everyone else. The term was not around while competing in the early 1990's. Despite the term not being around, there was always a common desire among competitive athletes to be the best.

To be the GOAT requires the perfect combination of all the mental, physical, and luck factors. It's kind of one package. Some people may think, "well, you know, they're great and physically talented," but, I think the mental part of it plays in there also. You know if you would have asked me when I was in my twenties, I'd say, "oh yeah the physical part of it's important, they got to be really talented." But I think now I've learned a little bit more that that mental part is there really more than anything. And so sometimes when you get to that top tier, it's that just 0.1% that separates athletes in those big races. It separates first from last. Some of that's just mental, some of it's just kind of getting there and getting in a good spot when you're there. So just all those kinds of things.

Drake Narrative
"Wanted To Be The Best"

I think as a competitive athlete, everyone wants to be the GOAT. The term may not have been around since I was competing, but the idea is the same. Even I desired this as I had a couple of times where I was like, convinced thinking I'm ready to go to the world championships or go to the world cross and be a medalist. In that way, I wanted to be the best. I always wish I was kind of one of those guys. I always wish I would have won an Olympic championship or a world championship or something like that. In that aspect, you know, I still…I did some great things and running and stuff, but still wish I would have been on an Olympic team or something like that. You know, I should have, should, I had the talent to do that and just missed out on it. Just never put it together at the right time.

All right. I went to a big university and ran track there, actually went there a walk-on. Meaning I wasn't highly recruited. I was kind of fortunate because I knew a family that knew the running coach. I trained with that family and stuff a couple of times when I lived nearby. So they talked to the coach, and it must have been enough because I ended up going to school there. I went from a high school nobody in a podunk little small town to one of the top programs in the country where I'm a freshman in college and I'm running with guys that are training for the Olympics and things like that.

"Regular Every Day"

Some of these giants were not as large behind the scenes. I saw guys before such as this one guy I knew of that I used to train with when I was up in university. He would do some amazing workouts and people would just go "that guy's gonna be a world record holder." And yet, he would get into a race and do worse. He couldn't even replicate what he did in practice. But, you can't have a great workout one day but then you can't run the next day. So a GOAT is able to kind of essentially practice at one level and then raise their game when it matters. They can practice at 90% and when they hit competition they can hit 110% percent of their effort. Part of this is about having consistency, in performance and in effort and focus, but it is also about being able to have a less constricted self-belief.

"Small Room" Big Pressure

I mean it's kind of a little hard to describe being mentally strong just because you have to… like when you're at a world championship or when you're at an Olympic trials. You know, mentally strong. Those are stressful times there's a lot of pressure and stuff. So how do you kind of deal with that is a factor too. I would probably say some of the most stressful weeks in my life were the weeks of the Olympic trials when those occur. You're there with the pressure on you of wanting to make that Olympic team.

One of the years I competed in the world championships before the race started they put you in this really small room where they check your shoes and they check your number. So you're sent and you're essentially standing there like two feet from the guys you're gonna like race against. All in this small room and you know everybody's kind of nervous and all that kind of stuff and so that adds a little bit to the pressure too. Then they walk you out this tunnel after they've checked all your shoes and numbers and made sure that you know you don't have the wrong brand showing or something like that. Through the tunnel you walk out and there's like 60,000 people in the stadium. So you go from this very small compressed environment out to like in front of like 60,000 people yelling and screaming.

Less "Scientific"

It's no secret that the Kenyans have always been great runners. And some people surmise it like, "oh, okay, great. It's because they live at altitude and they've kind of grown up that way." When you have essentially a small control group of people, and they all grow up in the same place at altitude, then you essentially got a fit group of people all in one spot. You are going to end up with some great athletes that way. That's true but the mental aspect of it is a part of it too. For example, us as Westerners, we're kind of more scientific. And so if you talk to like a guy that's a runner in the US, you'd ask him, "hey, why did that last race go really well for you?" They probably say, "well, my training really went well. And, you know, and I had these lead up races. And, you know, and I thought I was in a good place," and so on and so forth. If you ask one of the Kenyans, they'd have a different answer. I learned this from one of the times I went to the World Cross Country Championships, and it's a little bit different now just because they've kind of limited it. But when I raced, it was actually probably the hardest race in the world to win. The reason is, say that you're in the Olympics, you're running against like the best guys in your event; in the World Cross is the best guys from every event. So it's a very high quality race because you've got the best guys in the world from every event, not just a single event. One year, one of the Kenyans was out there leading by about 10 yards. Even the Kenyan announcers didn't know who he was. And then they looked up his best times. And you know, he had a time of like 30 minutes for the 10k, which is definitely not world-class at all. He was leading some guys that had ran three minutes faster. He ended up getting passed, but he still ended up finishing third, which for that race is an amazing result. Afterwards, the Western press were asking him, "Well, why do you think you could do that?" He was just like, "because I thought you could do that, because I thought I could." in a questioning voice as to suggest why the press was asking in the first place. And they're like, "No, no, no, you don't understand. This is like the toughest race in the world to win. And you were leading why!" "yeah, because I thought I could." So in that aspect it is kind of just less, I guess less restrictive thought pattern.

"Kiss Their…"

Again, the mental portion of being a top competitor is important. It difficult to sum up the mental portion, but another example was from my time in university. I did see a lot of people that went to school that I thought, you know, they're really talented. Then when they got there, I don't think they had the mental aspect of it. I saw a lot of guys that ended up dropping out of school or transferring or things like that just because of the fact that they kind of came in with all this talent and everything and nothing happened for them because they kind of expected the coach to, sorry to say this, but like kiss their ass all the time because they were such a great athlete.

Bootstrap Mentality

That wasn't me. I always considered myself somebody that I didn't think had the best talent. I think there were a lot of other people more talented than me out there. But I just I never gave up; I kind of never quit. And sometimes that can be an attribute, but then sometimes that also can be a little bit of a detriment because there are sometimes when you need to kind of, all right, yeah, maybe I, you know, don't need to go out there every day and beat my brains in. But that's why I succeeded in some ways was just because I never gave up; I'd never quit. 'd always kind of like analyze every day a little bit like "okay. What could I kind of do better? What areas can improve on?" And I still do that with my job today. That's why I stand out in my job. I don't sit there and if somebody asked me a question I just don't kind of go, "All right, I'll go ask somebody else." I figure it out myself and that way, not only do I figure it out myself, but I learn for the next time somebody asked me the same question. I don't have to be reliant on

someone else and think that I always have to ask somebody else. For example, my wife asked me one day "You just spent 10 hours tearing apart our furnace because it broke… Why did you do that?" And I said, "because I figured if I could fix it once, I'll fix it the next time." And she's like, "oh, okay. Why didn't you just call the repairman?" I said, "because I wanted to learn how to do it myself."

Defy The Odds

Just think of like great athletes. It's not like they hit some kind of a trial or something, like a lose, that people will think it's gonna like derail them. Compared to somebody that was able to kind of come back from some kind of a setback. I think of somebody like Klay Thompson know who plays for the Warriors. I watched that game where he broke his leg that just looked extremely painful. Yet he's been able to come back and then play again and won an NBA championship when a lot of people said he probably couldn't. GOATs do what Klay did, they figured it out. In this way they were self-sufficient.

This worked well for me as I went from, you know, kind of essentially a walk on to I was a national champion my last year, you know, All-American. In addition to that, I had a long career as I competed for over 12 years. During that time, I made many national teams and competed in many World Championship races.

"What'd You Go There For? A Race"

My time competing are still good memories. Just the places I went and everything. I did a lot of cool stuff but it's not what most people would think. When people hear about where I've been and ask me, they go, "Wow! You went to Brazil? What did you go there for?" [I'd respond simply] "A race." "Oh, OK. And oh, you went to Cuba. What'd you go there for?" Again I'd say "A race."

Back To Reality

In some aspects, being a world-class athlete is a little bit of an adrenaline ride. When it's going well, it's like, hey, this is cool. You know, look at what I'm doing and everything else. And when you go to like the athlete's village and everything, it's like free everything and you got all these sponsors walking around. Like one of the world championships I went to, I got to drive a Porsche around and I'm like living in a fantasy land then you go home and you're like, oh crap, it's kind of boring here. I actually remember when I would go to like something like the world championships. I'd kind of be in a little bit of a depressive funk after it was over with, because it is like you're going there, there's all this kind of pomp and circumstance then your back to reality.

You do see a lot of guys that once that ends have a real huge mental struggle with saying, "okay, all right, I can't do this thing anymore that I used to do really well." You do see a lot. I think you do more than you see let on in society these days. I think you see some of it come out a little bit just because you'll see like some suicide among professional athletes and depression. I kind of think of somebody like Junior Seau, if you remember him. And then do you remember Steve McNair? He was the quarterback for the Titans, Tennessee Titans. He took them to the Superbowl. They played against the Rams when the Rams won. When his career was over with he was extremely depressed. I think that transition is hard... so much of your identity is wrapped up in that being an athlete. There's so much notoriety, then all of a sudden it's over with, and it's like, "oh, I'm not on the front page of the newspaper anymore. Oh crap. What do I do now?"

Can't Let Go

I mean because it can be a big crash for some people. So because you are all that, have fame and fortune, when it's over with it's like "Where's that, is that identity gone really?" Speaking of identities, I even have a guy that I know. He's the same age as I am. He's almost 60. And yet every Facebook post is about when he made an Olympic team; even 30 years later. Even though he hasn't competed in many years, that's still his identity. The guy still runs many hours a week and I think this is starting to cause issues in his marriage. I am glad that I am not that person. But in retrospect, the goals I had are still something I wish I would have done. It's easy to think about the things you could have done.

"Selfish With Your Time"

I would say that like somebody who's a GOAT probably would have kind of more of an elite attitude. I think sometimes when you're an athlete you almost have to be a little selfish with your time. It is easy to get distracted and doing other things.

Support To Focus On Sport

One thing that I definitely saw was in terms of what the Europeans do, some of the Africans have essentially a support team that does everything for them. And the Kenyan's sole focus is just, "I trained twice a day and that's it. Everything else, I don't do anything. I just let my support team kind of do that." And so in that aspect, I see why as I was [not as great as I successful as I wanted to be. I would be like "]I'll do my training and I'll go and, you know, run errands or I'll go and do this or, you know, whatever, I'll work on that. Instead, I should just been kind of focused more on like, okay, great, make sure that you train twice a day, focus solely on that, don't get distracted with other things, and maybe finding that support team that does that for you. I saw some runners that I competed against that had kind of just essentially had people that would do everything, kind of do everything for them. Obviously not train and stuff because that's their sole focus was just to train and that was it. Just anything else outside of just doing their training and resting, they had somebody else kind of as a support team that kind of did it for them. You might have a physio that would travel with you. You might have a manager, somebody like that would travel with you if you were kind of a big enough athlete. Just kind of people like that, I think. So, I mean, I remember getting on a bus, you know, to go to the track stadium one time at the world championships, and this one guy from Morocco, it's like his support team came on and was like pushing people out of seats so that he could have the best seat. And I was thinking that's a little rude, but oh well. They're just kind of there, I think, to support him. I think somebody like Tom Brady has his own personal chef that does all of his cooking for him and everything. Also, I was watching that series with Marcus Mariota when he was playing for the Falcons, and he had a personal chef and everything that made all his meals so he'd eat correctly, because otherwise, he said he'd eat a lot of junk food. So in that aspect I think they're there to kind of support that person and just allow them to totally focus on their sport as opposed to having to do anything else.

This support is important as sometimes I think about the Manning brothers. Of all the guys in that family, in terms of the greatest quarterback, it was actually the dad, [Archie Manning]. He was on one of the worst teams ever, yet if he would have had some of the opportunities of like what his kids had, you know, he'd probably be kind of more in the conversation of one of the great NFL quarterbacks.

"Easier In Retrospect"

Twenty years later and after reflecting I realize in hindsight that I would have done a bit better with a little more focus, you know. If I could go back and do things again, I would just have more of that focus maybe a bit more selfish with my time. Like saying, "okay, you know, focus on this now for 10 years" and I would do a better job of it than doing the opposite which is trying to focus on too many other things that were outside of athletics. And so that aspect, I wish having that more. That'd be the one thing that I would say. I understand it's all easier in retrospect. I think that's something that I didn't do a very good job of. It's just if you look at how some of the Africans train, it's just like, okay I run twice a day and that's it. Then they just rest for the next training session. I didn't do a very good job of that. So… In retrospect, I wish I would have done a better job. I have worked to improve myself in this area, but only a little more. Probably not as much as I should have, but a little bit more.

APPENDIX G

Josh Definition, Drives, and Narrative

Josh Defining The GOAT
It's all relative

The phrase GOAT has been around long before many were born. At least since the 1960s or 70s. Recently it's gotten a lot of talk in the last five years. I don't know how exactly you would define a GOAT based on the accolades someone collects. I think someone has to be dominant to be a GOAT. I don't think you can be very good; I think you have to be dominant.

I think a lot of it is subjective though, you know. Pelé was a GOAT in soccer, but he wouldn't be a GOAT today. Pelé was a goat when he played soccer for Brazil, but I think Messi is probably a better player. I've seen Pelé play and I watched Messi play. I think Messi is a much better player. So it's all relative to the time and the place you are. I mean, a lot of it is subjective as training, technique, and equipment change.

Let's say we go back to the 1982 time period to the present time. The GOAT in the 1982 time period in the Iron Man was Dave Scott. He truly was a GOAT. I mean, he was a machine; an absolute friggin machine. You get out there in that 114-degree weather coming back having been clicking off six-minute miles. He'd been out there all day. He got around 8 hours as a time for the whole distance. And he truly was a GOAT as he won I think five of them or seven of them. He just won them every time and kept lowering his time for each race.

But then he got into the nineties and these younger people started coming along and I started incorporating better bike design, better nutrition, and better training habits. In fact, he was even coaching some of them and they lowered his time way down compared to where he was. And in more modern times between 2010 and 2020, he'd be the first to admit that if they were around back in 1982 he'd be lucky to make top 20. In the same race with the same times that he had then at that age. So it gets back to how do you define it? I think you needed to define it in the time frame in which it, in which it takes place.

I think we get too confused with he's on TV and makes a lot of money. You could be a GOAT and no one even knows it. It's like in martial arts, they call it you having kung fu. Well, a painter can have kung fu or be a GOAT. I think they're the same thing kung fu and being a GOAT. It has to be an integral part of your persona so that I may not be very good at martial arts and I may be a crappy athlete, but I can paint really, really, really well. So I'm a GOAT for painting as long as it becomes part of me and I become part of it and I take care of my stuff. I train hard at it and I execute it. Hell, no one may ever see the painting but you're still a GOAT. You know the martial artist says whether or not you have kung through or not, meaning do you have that intrinsic drive to be good at your discipline; in this case, it's martial arts. You can also be somebody who does the tea ceremony can be a GOAT at that. That's how I look at it. I think that too many people in this country particularly wrap it around somebody like Tom Brady, you know. I felt that way since the sixties, you know, since I've, and at the top of a couple of sports, I've known people that are GOATs and no one even knows about them.

Josh Narrative
Gotta Want It

One of the necessary factors of being a GOAT is that you need the desire to be good. The desire to be good is different from taking care of yourself. You can take care of yourself, but if you just don't really care about being good, you can throw a football 100 yards, you still are not going to be the GOAT. I mean you have to have the desire to be good at that discipline, not just winning accolades but more than that. I call it having kung fu.
"Kung Fu"

Kung fu is best described by as story I have about a time I went to China and studied martial arts. We were up in the mountains of China. In my presence were grandmasters, the ones that are really good,

the ones you don't wanna mess with, the ones that you are very humble when you're around, they all had the desire to become GOATs and some truly were. Everyone there, grandmasters and non, all did what is called developing your chi, which makes you healthy, you know, being able to move your around your body is big in Chinese culture. That's why you have tai chi, which is what that is. They all are good at that, but the ones that are really GOATs they would get up at like two in the morning and go out in the park and train for five hours and then go to work. That's the difference between somebody who has the desire to be the GOAT and just somebody who's healthy.

There was a guy there and I've never seen anybody as good at something as he was at martial arts. Now this guy taught me what's called the dragon form, which is a very combative and deadly form, which is one of the stools of tai chi. He took me up on the roof for 10 days and it rained every freaking day. I mean, a cold, wet rain because we were way up in the mountains so there was nothing but cold and wet. I worked up there with him, sparred with him, did drills, and did the form for 10 straight days for eight hours a day. The day after he got done with that, he laid down and died. I asked someone around me, "What was the deal? He knew he was dying, didn't he?" And the guy responded almost casually, "Oh, yeah, he just wanted to make sure that he passed on the dragon form to somebody and he picked you." He passed on the form and then just died. Now, that's a GOAT right there. You know? So it's almost like you have the desire to where the discipline is part of your life to the point where you and it are one. The discipline you're practicing has to be such an intrinsic part of you that you are part of it. The two come together so that instead of spending your last days watching the sunset, you're on the roof, the rain, and on these cobblestones for 8 to 10 hours a day to pass your discipline on to someone that you're comfortable will practice it after you're gone. Now that to me is intrinsic. It's not time related although you have a 10-day window there, but this guy's been practicing this all his life. The discipline is incredibly intricate and goes on forever. It's part of a GOAT's being, it's part of them.

Not For The Money

Money is not the real motivator for a GOAT. You don't do the dragon form for 8 to 10 hours a day in the rain a week before you're gonna die for $100 million a year. So, what I'm saying is that the true GOAT is doing it for other reasons than the money. You can start out for the money, but it goes further than that. I think the ones that are really GOATs, that really have kung fu, have a desire like Tom Brady. He came back that last season despite having all the money he ever wanted. He still came back knowing it was gonna destroy his marriage. It's that type of desire for the activity.

"Making A Statement"

There's no doubt about it but watch these players that Prime or Deion Sanders has at the University of Colorado. I remember his playing days. He was really good; he played both sides of the ball. So after his career as an athlete, he coached Jackson State, which is an HBCU. And then he got recruited by the University of Colorado in Boulder. Prime is very cognizant of the political landscape. I think that's a big motivator for him. because I've listened to his interviews because I find him fascinating. He said that what's happening now where they're coming after Jewish people, black people, and brown people, this is his way of putting a stop to it. He sure doesn't need to do this for the money. He's probably worth $50 million at least from his years of playing and everything. So, I think he's trying to make a statement and somebody like that who is trying to make a statement and it's not the money, it's deadly.

And I think Prime because I've listened to his interviews. I listened to him. He said the other day "you all been bad mouthing me and bad mouthing our team. We came here tonight and we brought receipts." It's that kind of talk and his other conversations that lead me to believe that he is very much making a statement about the worth of a black male and the worth of black people in our society. He had a lot of trouble with coaches when he was at Jackson State that he played because there were a bunch of darn rednecks in that conference that wouldn't shake his hand and wouldn't talk to him and that kind of thing. So, it's gonna be interesting to see what he does with this team. I'd love to see him just kick butt all season. I think it would be good for this country for somebody like that to come along and do that. He's gonna be fun to watch. I wish him the best, I really do.

Training Advantage

[I don't think I would call myself a GOAT], but I did have a long competitive career. I started out as a competitive swimmer and in the early sixties. A common training method used today is interval training. I competed in athletics before there was interval training at all. In the late fifties, early sixties, we went to a camp that was sponsored by this doctor who was the first coach who came up with the concept of interval training and recovery from interval training and HIIT. He's a big deal and has published a book on the topic.

When hearing about the camp, my coach said, let's go there and try it; thinking it can't hurt to try it. So we spent, I guess, three months there at Indiana training with the college team and nobody else was doing it. Well, after the first two-hour session, I can tell you what you did. You went back and flopped down on your bed until you came back that afternoon. You did this because the recovery was brutal when you haven't had a background in this type of training. Eventually, you learn about the required recovery days. The whole idea of that kind of interval training was to break the athlete down, rest them, let them recover past their previous level of competency, and then break them down again. But again, the first time we went through it, we were like holy shit. I cannot do this. "I cannot do this because it hurts." I didn't think it was supposed to hurt like this and that message plays the whole time you're doing it. To make matters worse, he's got an assistant on the deck screaming at you. The purpose of this is so you don't lose your stroke because in swimming if you lose your stroke, you might as well get out. It's a little different than say, running where, you know, if you start losing technique, you slow down a little bit and recover and get it back. You know, I've done intervals on the track many times and it's just not the same Intervals in the water, intervals in the water are much, much harder.

We came out of that camp and we beat everybody. I mean, we went to competitions and we won. We won the States, we won nationals. I succeeded individually too. I won several events. A couple of nationals. After I had a workout of where I swam harder than anyone else using interval training and I'd go and race against somebody who wasn't doing that. It wasn't even a race and he might be a better athlete than me. But he didn't, he didn't have that advantage. And once he did he'd beat me. When the rest of the population came along and they figured out interval training is the way to go, you know, and suddenly they all came up to our level. So, I was a GOAT for one summer and then by the end of next year, I was maybe top 10 in that event. So, you know, you may be a GOAT one year and the next year you're just part of a group because the training changes and technique changes and all that. It's interesting to watch as you become more scientific with the sport, the techniques that make a GOAT in one area may not be anymore when the training percolates across the board to some of the other areas.

I like to study people who are said to be the GOAT. I'll watch them and see if they really are. I'm very rarely wrong too. But if I can interact with somebody long enough I'll know.
"Humility"
GOATs are usually quiet, and friendly. Most of the time they're extroverts but they're in a very quiet way. They never brag ever about anything. That's how I can usually spot a GOAT when I first meet someone like that. I can tell dealing with somebody who is at a high level and their discipline, whether it's a swim coach, a swimmer, a martial artist, a baseball player or football player or whatever. If you look at their total life, they're reasonably kind to everybody and they don't, they don't bloviate about how good they are at something. They just accept their ability and that's as far as it goes. That's one thing I've seen consistently through the last 50 years of my life. They usually have a kindness and respect for their fellow human beings and they typically don't brag about their abilities at all. That's almost universal. They just don't do it.

I mean, Muhammad Ali did it but he did that because it's part of his persona before a fight. But if you listened to him and just as a normal person, he has a great deal of respect for the people he fought and he does and he was very kind to those around him. He was not a bloviating asshole. And usually, I have found whether it's on the martial arts mat or wherever, somebody that's a bloviating asshole is not a GOAT. They don't have kung fu. All they got is a mouth. I found that personally to be universal.

I think most people that are at the GOAT level are reasonably kind and humble people because they know what it's like. I don't care what the sport is. They know what it's like. I found that I found that universal. And I guess that's just a personality trait you see in a GOAT. I just don't think it's something

that you develop. I think that the person is just that way because if they're gonna get really good at something humility is a good thing. Let me tell you because you're gonna get really good, you're gonna suffer, you're gonna suffer a lot.

And the best example I can think of was when I was in China. I only had a 7th-degree black belt when I was there. The guys around me were so far beyond that, and they'll talk to you. I mean, they like you. They may smack you around a little bit but they'll let you eat dinner with them and at a certain point. They'll talk to you about what it means to be really good, which we're defining as GOAT, but they defined as just being really good at martial arts. And, you have to have the unbending desire that stays there for years and years and years and years until you get where you wanna be. Some of them, were very interesting people to be around. Some of them practiced up until the day they died. Hm. One guy taught me because I was above, above a 5th degree. I got to hang out with these guys.

A person who is a GOAT or has kung fu will treat those around them with respect and kindness and I was always nice to everybody still am. Although I might joke around that kind of thing, but I don't, I don't mistreat anybody. I don't brag about anything I've done. In fact, I took all my medals and trophies and threw them in a landfill. I didn't keep a single one.

I'll give you a behavior that's not representative of the GOAT and that's somebody who is unnecessarily cruel to those that are not as good as him. Someone with kung fu is kind to everybody and they don't look down on anybody. I've seen that over and over again. Hundreds of times.

"More Of A Burden Than A Blessing"

[I was in this wave of a training advantage and] I was seated first in the Olympic trials. Despite the training advantage, I didn't get to go to the Olympics because I choked. Holding the desire to be a GOAT can serve as motivation, but I found it in my brief time periods at that level to be more of a burden and a blessing. When I came on to really be at an international level, I was 16. Which is a little too young for a male swimmer. You need to be in your twenties. And when I went to the big races, everybody was keying on me and making jokes. They had a sophisticated mindset to deal with it and to deal with me and I didn't have the mindset to deal with them. I was just 16, they were like 23 and in college and they could trash-talk you out of your pants. You know, you'd be sitting in a room and you might have a really fast time and by the time they get done working you over verbally and you got out on the deck, you weren't gonna swim that well, you know, at a younger age like that. So for me, it became more of a burden than a benefit because not only did I not put fear in their black hearts, they took my desire to be the GOAT and used it against me. All because I was younger… younger and very naive. I mean, how many 16-year-olds can go one-on-one with a 23-year-old, intellectually, verbally? And, you know, their maturity level was so much greater than mine. So, my desire to be good hurt me more than helped.

Intimidating

I'll give you an example of a team that were at for a number of years GOATs. There was a women's soccer team and those ladies won like 12 national championships in a row and they get out there and they were scary. I mean they were flat scary. They would cut you down in a heartbeat and you had to watch them all the time. They play clean but they played hard and all the other teams were afraid of them. So there being a GOAT helps a lot because most teams were beat before they got on the field. They knock off big schools too. They had taken on teams that on paper were much better. Their workouts consisted of a lot of one on ones, brutal, one on ones. One girl said after our practices, these games are nothing. It's relative because the same team or offshoot of the team went to the World Games this year and got beaten. They got beaten in the sec next to the last round because the other teams Spain and some of these other teams have learned how to train at that level. Somebody who's a GOAT, they are out training everybody, they out practice everybody, and they mentally know that they own you. Eventually they're gonna come down to a different level and the other teams are gonna come up. It's just the way of sports.

But I then went on and swam on scholarship at university. So when I finished my swimming career, I had a lag time in there that most I think athletes have and they're on a real high and they're training really hard and suddenly it ends. I had a lot of difficulty getting my act together as to what I wanted to do with myself and ended up going back to graduate school.

Fool Me Once, Fool Me Twice

A GOAT needs to be resilient. Let's take this woman that's just won at the World Games. Also, she won nationals. She's a bit, a bit of an odd duck. She got disqualified at last year's nationals because she had smoked marijuana like a week before. She came back this year with that past challenge and wins at nationals. The national field is not a sloppy field. Those ladies are frigging fast and they've all run for universities. She then goes and wins the World games. She could have worked at McDonald's and gotten paid, but her desire of the discipline pushed her forward.

My resiliency came in the form of cycling. You'd never know it today, but I was a pretty darn good cad 2 rider back in the day. I was on a pro team that was sponsored by a company. They provided all our equipment and paid for our travel, food, lodging, and anything we wanted.

I had about 15 years of cycling. Then the team decided they wanted us to go to the Iron Man in Hawaii and no one had really heard of this thing. It only been around for a year or so, but they wanted a presence there. I went over there, did it, and saw God. I was ok till I got off the bike. But the heat and wind on the lava field just destroyed me. I end up shuffling on the run. I still did ok. I did ok, but not what I was capable of because I had a good swim. In pursuit of a win, I came back a few more times, and qualified all those times. I ended up working up to a point I was satisfied with before I decided it was time to move on. I had a team sponsor during that time. I wouldn't go over there if I had to pay for it.

Where Was The Money In My Day

Some top athletes were working as a physician in training while they are doing all their competing. Nowadays, if you're real fast, you aren't working as a physician. I can tell you that if you're a pro, you're a pro. You have no need for another job. Back when I was a pro I also had another full-time job. While training for Kona, I did live over there for some months and did a design project for the state of Hawaii. I helped design and put in a trunk line and it went out to where the race was so they could get water out there. They didn't have any water out there at the, at the beginning of the race when I got to see a lot of Hawaii. But I didn't want to invest any more into that race. Living for that race is very debilitating and it cuts into your time.

"Don't Suffer Fools Gladly"

One thing that GOATs do is they don't suffer fools gladly. They don't like you to waste their time because time is very precious to them. In order to get good at something you need to utilize your time. You can't be screwing around and wasting time. And, most GOATs I've met are no exception. They've got their days pretty well structured and don't particularly want to put up with, some idiot wasting their time. They're not unkind to them, but they just don't want to deal with it. I've become like this.

"Don't Drink Like A Fish"

I think one thing a GOAT has is they're typically extremely self-disciplined. They're physically, very self-disciplined because you can't be dominant in the Tour de France, unless you are disciplined over an extended period of time. What you eat, what you drink, how you sleep, how you train, and how you recover, all those things have got to be there to be a GOAT.

Would Babe Ruth be a GOAT today? I would, I would say definitely not because he drank like a fish, he ate very poorly, he never trained, and he was batting against players who weren't all that great compared to today's major leagues. But if you ask "was he a GOAT during his time period?" well, he was a GOAT but he didn't have any of the discipline relative to today.

First of all, take care of their bodies. Guys can have two good years in the pros, but if they took care of themselves they'd probably have a lot more. If you drink like a damn fish, party till three in the morning, and not train, you're not going to have a long career or be a GOAT. You may just get to the level you're at on natural ability, yet I wouldn't call you a GOAT. People like that probably wouldn't call themselves a GOAT either.

I think that you need to leave alcohol completely alone. I just think it's the worst drug out there. I've seen so much misery, so much pain from people because of alcohol. It's a drug that for some reason this country accepts. But I'm telling you if you're gonna be an athlete, you best leave that alone completely. Not even one drink. I just really bad for you. I've met Jimmy Buffett personally. He just died. I met him when I was in Florida to do the swim around Key West. It's a 13-mile swim. If you have anything else to do that day, I'd recommend it. It's a brutal race. But his house was right there at the start

and he just wandered out and was talking to us for the race. I didn't even know who he was, and I got to talking to him. I just started talking to him because he lived there, I didn't know his name. He said, "I happen to be a singer." Again, I didn't know who he was. I said "are there a lot of problems living here, because you wanna get caught up in the drinking lifestyle?" I brought this up because alcohol consumption is a big deal to me because I lost two brothers and my father and mother from alcoholism and that's what killed them, no doubt about it. And he said, "Well, I was that way until I was 40 and then I quit drinking completely. I don't drink at all because I figured out if I want to be a great and I wanted to be a great singer. The alcohol had to go." So the last 38 years of his life, he never touched a drop. Even though he sang about Margaritaville and all that stuff. He didn't drink at all. What killed him was the sun. He got cancer from the sun, and it got down into his limp system. That's what killed him. So, that's my example there. He would not have had his career, his greatest of all time career if he did not stop drinking and started self-disciplining himself. Even one to two drinks a day is too much.

One may ask where self-discipline comes from. I've had this discussion many times. First of all, you grow up in a society where drinking is not frowned on that much. I mean, I personally grew up in a household at was an Irish household, and they drank all the time. You know, they're, they're functioning drunks. Some of these people are functioning drunks. They can drink 1 to 5 a night and the next day get up and go to work. Your tolerance to it gets that high.

The question is not what causes them to become more self-disciplined, the question is what causes them to mistreat their body to begin with. And it's, it's societal pressure not knowing because no one ever has explained to them how bad this kind of thing is until suddenly they find themselves at 35 face down in a ditch somewhere.

And I think anybody that's a clinical psychologist, and I have a friend who is a clinical psychologist, will tell you the same thing, alcohol is a huge problem in a lot of human behavior. Even one or two drinks a day causes problems. So that'd be the first thing I would say in, in defining what a GOAT should have. So I think that if you're going back to your definition of GOAT, the number one thing is discipline to physically take care of yourself that has to be first.

It Stays With You

All this training and discipline stay with you for years to come. In a martial arts situation where you get someone trying to carry your head off while you're standing on asphalt, you learn to read them really fast and really well. This is because reading that person and positioning yourself is 99% of it at the higher levels. And, you ever see a bunch of grandmasters get in the same room, they're constantly moving and shifting and angling against each other. They don't even know they're doing it.

Trouble In Biking Paradise

I've continued to train at a high level. Obviously not the same as I did, but as much as possible. [I'm half joking], but I may end up divorced with a lot of bikes the way things are going. But anyway, so I got a gravel bike. Mountain bike, a road bike, and a time trial bike. That's four bikes. I don't know how one sells it to their spouse, but they probably got a way of doing. They probably say nothing inside the house anyway.

Magic Bullet

Even after my years of professional competing, I still continue to exercise and compete. I think exercise is a magic bullet. I mean, I think others would agree with that. It's a magic bullet compared to not working out. It's like you shorten your life by 20-25 years by not working out and by not training hard. I mean, not just going out there and walk in the sunset every day, but go out there and train hard every day. I think it has a huge impact in your quality of life that you don't get any other way. I just, it's a magic pill. I've been telling people that for years. so, you know, that's my philosophy. I know a lot of guys in my age group that's been their philosophy and they're still around. A lot of guys I swam with were incredible athletes back then. I mean, just big fast strong guys and they're on the ground now because they picked up a golf club and that was all they ever did. They didn't even drink a lot.

APPENDIX H

Code Mapping

Edits Round 1
- In actionable Qualities
- x-factor
  - Raising one's game
  - Defying odds
- Not just physical
  - Don't rest on past wins
  - Mental is important
- Less "scientific"
  - Believe you can
  - Less constrained
  - Cultural differences
- "Small room"
  - Ability to handle pressure
- "Self-sufficient"
  - Self-sufficient
  - Resiliency
  - Self-realization
- Regular every day
  - Consistency
  - Always give effort and focus
- "Don't suffer fools"
  - Quiet
  - Friendly
  - Extroverts
  - Humble
  - Kind
  - Don't mistreat anyone
  - Can boviate if part of persona
- Actionable qualities
- "Brutal one one-on-ones"
  - Scary
  - Beat before they began
  - Beat teams better than them
  - Outtrain everyone
  - Mentally own you
  - Did one one-on-ones
- "Interval training"
  - Trained by top people
  - Used interval training
  - Hard training
  - Rest
  - Training Advantage
  - Don't dope

- Where was the money in my day
  - Past: worked full careers
  - Present: only athletes
  - Need money for races
- "Don't drink like a fish"
  - Self-discipline
  - Eat right
  - Sleep
  - Recovery
  - Don't drink
- "Good team"
  - Have a good team
- Support
  - Support so you can train
  - Cooks, managers, and other support
- "Easier in retrospect"
  - Focus

- Outcome
- "What'd you go there for"
  - Good memories
  - Not a vacation
- Not stopping
  - People more talented
  - Not a good thing to bash brains in
  - Be independent
- Stays with you
  - Your body and mind show effects after the sport is over
- "Magic bullet"
  - Exercise is still good
- Trouble
  - Hard on relationships
- "More a burden"
  - Having the desire is hard
  - Need for mental strength
- Back to reality

- Drives
- "Wanted to be the best"
  - Win medals
  - Olympic team
  - Need the desire
- "Kung fu"
  - Intrinsically motivated
  - Not for money
  - Overcome

- o   Hard work
- Outside of being an athlete
    - o   "Make a statement"

Edits Round 2
- Qualities:
    - o   Self-belief: GOATs believe in their ability which allows them to handle pressure.
        - ▪   Less "scientific"
        - ▪   "Small room" big pressure
        - ▪   Impact: "more of a burden than a blessing"
    - o   Resiliency: GOATs have the ability to come back from a setback.
        - ▪   "Self-sufficient" (accountable)
        - ▪   "Able to come back"
        - ▪   Not just physical
        - ▪   Impact: "Not stopping until I can do it"
        - ▪   Impact: back to reality
    - o   Consistency: Must give strong performances consistently in competition and practice; always giving effort and focus.
        - ▪   "Regular every day"
        - ▪   X-factor
        - ▪   Impact: trouble in biking paradise
        - ▪   Impact: "Easier in retrospect"
        - ▪   Impact: "What'd you go there for? A race"
    - o   Hard training: A GOAT must out-train their competitors. This may come in a variety of forms, but it must give an edge to the athlete.
        - ▪   "Brutal 1 v 1"
        - ▪   "Interval training"
        - ▪   Impact: It stays with you
        - ▪   Impact: "magic bullet"
    - o   Self-discipline: A GOAT must eat, sleep, and recover right.
        - ▪   "Don't drink like a fish" or at all
    - o   Humble:
        - ▪   Impact: Humbly "don't suffer fools gladly"
    - o   Support: This theme represents the need for support in terms of resources and people.
        - ▪   Impact: Where was the money in my day
        - ▪   "Good team"
        - ▪   Impact: support to focus on sport
- Drives
    - o   "Wanted to be the Best"
        - ▪   Win medals
        - ▪   Olympic team
    - o   Need the desire
    - o   "Kung fu"
        - ▪   Intrinsically motivated
        - ▪   Not for money
    - o   "Make a statement"

Edits Round 3
- Qualities:
  - Self-belief: GOATs believe in their ability which allows them to handle pressure.
    - Less "scientific"
    - "Small room" big pressure
    - "Intimidating"
    - Impact: "more of a burden than a blessing"
  - Resiliency: GOATs have the ability to come back from a setback.
    - Bootstrap Mentality
    - Defy The Odds
    - Fool Me Once, Fool Me Twice
    - Impact: Back To Reality
  - Consistency: Must give strong performances consistently in competition and practice; always giving effort and focus.
    - "Regular every day"
    - "Don't drink like a fish"
    - Training Advantage
    - Impact: trouble in biking paradise
    - Impact: "What'd you go there for? A race"
    - Impact: It stays with you
    - Impact: "magic bullet"
  - Tendencies:
    - "Humility"
    - "Kiss Their…"
    - "Let You Eat Dinner With Them"
    - "Selfish With Their Time"
    - "Don't suffer fools gladly"
    - Can't Let Go
  - Support: This theme represents the need for support in terms of resources and people.
    - Impact: Where was the money in my day
    - "Good team"
    - Impact: support to focus on sport
- Drives
  - "Wanted to be the Best"
    - Win medals
    - Olympic team
  - Need the desire
  - "Kung fu"
    - Intrinsically motivated
    - Not for money
  - "Make a statement"

Edits Round 4
- Qualities:
  - Self-Belief: GOATs believe in their ability which allows them to handle pressure.
    - Less "Scientific"
    - "Small Room" Big Pressure
    - Intimidating

- ▪ Impact: more of a burden than a blessing
    - o Resiliency: GOATs have the ability to come back from a setback.
        - ▪ Bootstrap Mentality
        - ▪ Defy The Odds
        - ▪ Fool Me Once, Fool Me Twice
        - ▪ "What Do I Do Now?"
    - o Consistency: Must give strong performances consistently in competition and practice; always giving effort and focus.
        - ▪ "Regular Every Day"
        - ▪ "Don't Drink Like A Fish"
        - ▪ Training Advantage
        - ▪ Trouble In Biking Paradise
        - ▪ "What'd You Go There For? A Race"
        - ▪ It Stays With You
        - ▪ "Magic Bullet"
- Values
    - o Humility
        - ▪ "Humility"
        - ▪ "Kiss Their…"
        - ▪ "Let You Eat Dinner With Them"
        - ▪ Can't Let Go
    - o Self-Direction
        - ▪ "Selfish With Their Time"
        - ▪ "Don't Suffer Fools Gladly"
        - ▪ "Easier In Retrospect"
        - ▪ Where Was The Money In My Day
        - ▪ Support To Focus On Sport
- Drives
    - o Wanted To Be The Best
    - o Gotta Want It
    - o "Kung Fu"
    - o "Make A Statement"