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# Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athlete's Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development

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# Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development

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## Abstract

This phenomenological study examined high school student-athletes' perspectives on their adaptive skill development and how their experiences with sports influenced their career development techniques. The purpose of the study was to provide insight into the formation of the adaptive skill development of high school student-athletes to promote post-secondary planning that includes career options outside of the world of sports. Twelve graduated student-athletes who participated in revenue sports at the senior high level completed the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale and participated in an interview designed to measure adaptive attitudes, behaviors and competencies. Participants' interview responses were coded based on behaviors, attitudes, and competencies that correlated with each of the four dimensions of career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). Results of the self-reported Career Adapt-Abilities Scale indicated that student-athletes believed that they possessed the skill to make developmentally appropriate career decisions. However, the interview data did not support the strength of the student-athlete's claims of competency. The study concluded that some participants possessed more advanced adaptive skill than others, but overall, the adaptive skill level of participants was less developed than what was reported. Most student-athletes relied heavily on the advice and support of a parent, school counselor, or other trusted adult when making career decisions and problem-solving. Further investigation into the correlation between grade point average and the development of adaptive skill development would expand the literature regarding the career skills of student-athletes.

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**Dedication**

To my grandma Mattie,

Whom I miss every day.

Thank you for always believing in me.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Employability is a primary focal point of a youth's career development, especially after a sports career (Ryba et al., 2017). Only 6.4% of high school student-athletes are fortunate enough to receive an athletic scholarship to participate in a sport on the collegiate level. Less than 2% of those athletes will be selected to have a professional career in sports (Routt & Overway, 2020). Research shows that athletes are realistic about the prospect of having a professional career and realize how critical academic success is to their career plans (Christensen & Sørensen, 2009; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Ronkainen et al., 2016). However, career planning is a low-to-nonexistent priority for high school student-athletes because they face the pressures of competition and academic performance (Lyseng, 2016).

## Problem Background

Studies suggested that high school student-athletes have difficulties sustaining academic and career training while preparing for competition (Gerlach, 2018; Gomez et al., 2018; Ryba et al., 2016a; Ryba et al., 2016b, Yang, 2021). Student-athletes' struggle with balancing academics, career preparation, time management, and other stressors prove detrimental to their overall well-being (Gerlach, 2018). The student-athlete's ability to balance academic requirements with training and competition is critical to overall life planning success (Gomez et al., 2018). The challenges student-athletes face in maintaining their grades, participating in career preparation activities, and excelling in sports may hinder their employability and adaptation to life events after sports participation (Ryba et al., 2016b). Some student-athletes report role confusion and experience overall stress in daily living and difficulty maintaining control of all their responsibilities (Burns et al., 2016; Christensen & Sørensen, 2009; Love, 2018; Ryba et al., 2016; Van Rens et al., 2016).

Key factors influence the successful transition of high school student-athletes to secondary education or the workforce. Yang (2021) stated that they have more problems than other students in career preparation. Many student-athletes have difficulty adjusting to the academic rigor of college classes and the increased independence the college environment brings (Gerlach, 2018). Because of the lack of career readiness (Li et al., 2017), student-athletes show concern regarding their futures yet take little to no steps to actively address their deficits (Yang 2012). Past researchers identified the importance of developing educational programs that assist students in skill development, career development, and life planning (Fogarty & McGregor-Bayne, 2008). However, there is little research on the factors that influence the career planning processes of secondary student-athletes.

Much of the early research into the career development of athletes was focused on the athlete's indecision about a career path (Lyseng, 2016), but that research also lacked a theoretical background. A past study examined athletes' career decision-making processes related to demographic values, athletic identity, decision-making self-efficacy, and career locus of control (Fogarty & McGregor-Bayne, 2008). More recent research examining the career decision attitudes of student-athletes reveals a positive correlation between career decision attitudes and career preparation behavior (Yang, 2021). Moreover, research on the development of adaptive career skills of high school athletes, in general, is lacking.

**Career Adaptability**

Konstam et al. (2015) stated that emerging adulthood is a developmental period described as the most stressful time for adolescents because of the instability and uncertainty involved. Finding employment is vital for emerging adults to maintain a healthy disposition. Savickas (2013) stated that emerging adults are more vulnerable to psychological distress because they

lack control and support during the transition into the world of work. As a result, emerging adults are at significant risk of unemployment (Gerlach, 2018; Savickas, 2013). To navigate that developmental stage successfully, individuals need to rely on their adaptive skills. Nota et al. (2014) contended that numerous high-tech, economic, social, and moral changes in the 21st century required new skills in the world of work. The economic crisis that occurred from 2008 to 2010 was detrimental to the occupational opportunities for young people in the United States and Europe. Given the challenges that occurred because of the recession, adaptability has become a necessary life-long skill that helps individuals navigate today's careers and master challenging professional circumstances (Gomez et al., 2018).

Career adaptability has been a reoccurring trend in vocational counseling because of the need for workers to exhibit the ability to adjust to the changing demands of the world of work (Johnston, 2018). Employees are expected to show increased flexibility and self-motivation. Career adaptability is a vital component of career development preparedness and vocational transitions (Savickas, 2009). Those life-long skills allow individuals to succeed in the 21st century with work-life demands and challenges (Johnston, 2018). As a result, career adaptability is a vital component of adolescent career development and life preparedness (Gerlach, 2018; Savickas, 2009) and should be a primary focus for school counselors in career education (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012, Ozdemir & Guneri, 2017).

## Purpose of Study

The goal of this qualitative study was to understand adaptive skills of high school student-athletes at an urban high school in the Midlands of South Carolina. The researcher sought to examine student-athletes' adaptive skill level, which is critical to forming sound career development and life skills. Liang (2020) stated that career adaptability might provide vital

implications for interventions to facilitate adolescents' successful transition and promote their well-being across a lifespan. The goal was to provide insight into the formation of the adaptive skills of student-athletes so those career and school counselors can design and implement career programming to improve the quality of post-secondary career decisions that student-athletes make. Twelve participants were selected from a pool of student-athletes who, prior to their graduation, participated in revenue sports at the senior high school level.

## Research Questions

RQ 1: How do high school student-athletes perceive their career adaptive skill levels?

RQ 2: How have high school student-athletes made choices about their future careers?

RQ 3: How do high school student-athletes solve problems that could hinder post-secondary success?

## Problem Statement

Past studies show that student-athletes prioritize their athletic career over education and career development (Christensen & Sørensen, 2009; Cosh & Tully, 2014; Stambulova et al., 2015). Adolescent athletes who seek to balance college and occupational training with the increasing demands of their athletic careers face difficulties, including decreased professional preparation and adjusting to life after athletics (Gerlach, 2018; Gomez et al., 2018; Ryba et al., 2016a; Wooten, 1994). In addition, they lack practical experience in occupational settings (Cabrita et al., 2014) and score lower in career maturity than non-athletes (Brown et al., 2000; Tarver, 2020). Also, athletes devote more time to training and spend more time in higher education to fulfill graduation criteria and sometimes put off earning a degree to train as an accomplished athlete (Aquilina & Henry, 2010; Gerlach, 2018; Ryba et al., 2015). Student-athletes may have difficulty transitioning to a life outside of athletics because of their limited

ability to adapt to emotional and behavioral deficits and a lack of resources to cope with life transitions (Gerlach, 2018; Gomez et al., 2018; Wooten, 1994).

## Theoretical Framework

The findings were analyzed using the Career Construction Theory (CCT) to understand the adaptive skills of high school student-athletes. CCT explains the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals construct themselves, impose direction on their vocational behavior, and make meaning of their careers (Savickas, 2013). CCT provides a current explanation of careers and informs a model for career counseling. The theory was developed based on a diverse population and an ever-changing economy.

According to Savickas (2013), career construction theory examines an individual's vocational personality or behaviors, psychosocial adaptation (how individuals cope with vocational developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and work trauma), how life themes provide meaning for vocational activity, and why individuals integrate work in unique ways. A guiding principle for this study examined how student-athletes prepare for the transition from high school to their post-secondary destinations and explored the adaptive behaviors they use. The purpose is to gather information to develop programs to enhance high school student-athletes ' adaptive skill levels, increasing the likelihood of career and life success.

Savickas (2013) stated that CCT outlines four global dimensions of career adaptability: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. According to Nota et al. (2014), the dimension of concern involves having a positive outlook and recognizing that past actions and events impact future outcomes. Control is indicated by the individual’s belief that the future can be controlled by their actions and ability to be consistent. Curiosity suggests the individual’s interest in investigating their environment to gain information about themselves and the world around them.

Finally, confidence indicates the individual's belief in one's ability to manage changes and succeed in reaching goals regardless of the obstacles they experience. Savickas (2013) stated that those dimensions represent the general adaptability resources and strategies individuals use to manage critical tasks, transitions, and trauma as they construct their careers. Each set of variables includes specific attitudes, beliefs, and competencies, also known as the ABCs of career construction.

Savickas (2013) theorized that these behaviors shape the concrete adapting behaviors needed to master developmental tasks, negotiate occupational transitions, and resolve work traumas. Attitudes are affective variables or feelings that fuel behavior, whereas beliefs are factors that direct behavior. Attitudes and beliefs dispose individuals to act in specific ways, and thus, they form dispositional response tendencies. Competencies, including comprehension and problem-solving abilities, represent the cognitive resources that help make and implement career choices.

Savickas (2013) contended that resourceful individuals become concerned about their future as workers, increasing personal control over their vocational future, displaying curiosity in exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and strengthening their confidence to pursue their aspirations. Thus, according to Savickas, career adaptability increases along the four dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Therefore, the student-athlete's competency to make decisions regarding post-secondary training and career planning was measured by their adaptive levels in the four dimensions.

## Definition of Terms

*Adaptive Resources.* Self-regulated skills are used to manage changing situations in the career decision-making process (Savickas, 2013).

*Adaptive Responses.* Behaviors and beliefs, such as career planning, career exploration, and occupational self-efficacy, help cope with career development tasks and change career situations (Ginevra, 2017).

*Adaptive Results.* Outcomes of adapting include characteristics such as demonstrated career identity, better decision-making activities, and lower stress levels regarding post-secondary plans (Ginevra, 2017).

*Adaptivity.* Denotes personal characteristics of flexibility or willingness to meet career tasks, transitions, and career challenges with an appropriate response (Savickas, 2013).

*Athletic Identity.* The degree to which an individual identifies with the role of an athlete (Cartigny et al., 2020).

*Career Concern.* Demonstrating a future orientation and a sense that it is essential to prepare for tomorrow (Savickas, 2013).

*Career Curiosity.* Inquisitiveness about and exploration of the fit between oneself and the world of work (Savickas, 2013).

*Career Decision-making.* The process that an individual goes through when searching for viable career alternatives, comparing them, and then selecting one (Gu et al., 2020).

*Career Exploration.* The gathering of career-related information about the self and occupational environments and trialing activities which are focused on finding a niche or reaching a career goal (Praskova et al., 2015).

*Career Self-Efficacy.* The extent to which an individual believes they can successfully compete in various tasks associated with career decision-making (Gu et al., 2019).

*Dual Career.* The act of combining sport and education (Stambulova et al., 2015).

*Student-athlete.* An individual who is a full-time high school student who participates in athletics as a member of a varsity team (Gomez et al., 2018).

## Significance of the Study

No studies conducted in the United States (U.S.) were identified on the career adaptivity of high school student-athletes. All available studies were focused on validating the career adapt-abilities scale based on Savickas' career construction theory and were conducted in other countries (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2014; Di Maggio et al., 2015; Duarte et al., 2012; Johnston et al, 2013; Maggiori et al., 2015; Nota et al., 2012; Rossier et al., 2012; Ryba et al., 2016; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Soresi et al., 2012; Teixeira et al., 2012; Tien et al., 2014; Tolentino et al., 2013; Urbanaviciute et al., 2014; van Vianen et al., 2012). Porfeli and Savickas (2012) conducted the only study in the United States. However, they focused on the tool's validity rather than the adaptive skill level of the high school students who served as subjects.

In addition, no qualitative studies with high school student-athlete participants were identified. However, three relevant quantitative studies were found. Ozdemir and Gunerie (2017) found that a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the career adaptability of adolescents is much needed and can help school counselors design career counseling and developmental programs accordingly. Hartung et al. (2008), proposed that meaningful career adaptation experiences during infancy and adolescence should be researched to see whether they facilitate or block developmental job transitions. Lastly, Ryba et al. (2017), in the only study identified that had high school student-athlete participants, noted that further research is required to effectively grasp the essential competencies that young athletes can use to integrate sport and education effectively. Despite the apparent importance of career adaptability, relatively little empirical research has been completed to date on the adaptive responses of high school student-

athletes (Whiston & Rose, 2013). Investigations of student-athletes show that a dual career pathway to adulthood helps them develop valuable skills such as prioritizing and planning a balanced lifestyle, building a professional network, and decreasing stress about the future (Abruzzo et al., 2016; Aries et al., 2004; Ryba et al., 2016).

This study was intended to add to the literature on career adaptability regarding high school student-athletes. It illuminated how athletic participation affects the development of adaptive skills. In addition, this study provided insight into how the barriers that student-athletes face can be addressed by career and school counseling personnel.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

To provide the theoretical framework, context, and support for the study, Chapter Two offers an overview of the literature on the challenges that high school student-athletes encounter because of their commitment to sport and concerns regarding the development of adaptive skills. First, the concept of career adaptability is explained to include its origin, definition, and components. Next, literature related to the career adaptability of high school students and of student-athletes was examined. The literature was introduced to further explore the deficits of high school student-athletes in career development. Some strategies that school counselors should implement to assist in the skill development of students were explored. Finally, the barriers to the development of career-related adaptive skills are highlighted. The goal of this study is to understand the adaptive responses of high school student-athletes through the dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, student-athletes' perspectives on their adaptive abilities, and possible interventions to address areas of need.

The comprehensive literature review was performed utilizing the databases of EBSCOhost, ERIC, and Google Scholar, with support from the National Louis University and the University of South Carolina librarians for the recommended databases and search terms. The search terms included: career or vocation or job or occupation and training or development or planning or class and high school or secondary education or adolescents; academics, student-athletes, and sports participation.

The initial literature search revealed five articles that prompted an additional search using the terms career development in the children and adolescent sections of EBSCOhost, which yielded several articles in Career Development Quarterly journals. The search terms used were career development, high school or secondary, students, and athletes. The articles were selected

based on relevance and inclusion criteria such as language (English), whether they were peer-reviewed, and publication date. In addition, the articles were selected for topics that applied to the primary topic of sports participation's effect on student-athletes' career adaptability. The following websites were also searched for relevant, applicable information: The American Counseling Association (2021) and The American Psychological Association (2021). Lastly, the articles' sources were reviewed to find further relevant information and studies which lead to eight additional resources related to the career development of adolescents, the Career Adapt-abilities Scale, the development of athletic identity, and barriers that student-athletes face when pursuing academic success in college.

Preparing today's youth for success in their post-secondary pathways is a daunting task. In 2008, Palladino Schultheiss believed that career adaptability should become the central focus of career development programming for secondary students. Additionally, Johnston (2018) found that, because of social and technological changes, the capability to adjust, change or display adaptability became desirable. Having skills and talents that will make one stand out in a crowd is considered essential. The goal for career development professionals is no longer to promote skill development; it is to help students learn to adapt to the changing environment (ASCA, 2012).

**The Student-Athlete**

Often the dream of every young athlete is to emulate their sports heroes in obtaining a career in sports. Unfortunately, the reality is that less than 2% of collegiate athletes are fortunate enough to have a professional sports career. Moreover, less than 7% of high school student-athletes earn scholarships to play sports in college (Routt & Overway, 2020). Data from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA; 2020) indicated that a high school athlete's

likelihood of becoming a professional in their chosen sports is slim. Those statistics emphasize the importance of helping high school student-athletes develop a sound plan for their life after sports. To effectively address the issue, understanding how athletics influences student-athletes' development of adaptive skills is essential.

The literature suggested that students' athletic obligations harm their personal, academic, and career development (Burns, 2013; Love, 2018, Sorkkila et al., 2016). Career decision-making self-efficacy (CDSE) plays an essential role in career development. CDSE is the athlete's confidence in their ability to make career decisions. Those athletes who have low CDSE procrastinate when making decisions about their college majors, learning about their talents and interests, and obtaining career information to help them make sound decisions (Burns et al., 2013). Therefore, they are ill-equipped to make sound career choices and have difficulties meeting career challenges. The inability to overcome barriers causes them to change careers when issues arise.

According to Burns et al. (2013), student-athletes are at risk for career development deficiencies because of the level of commitment required to succeed in their sporting events. Though, in large part, there is little evidence that athletes differ from their non-athlete counterparts concerning career indecision, there may be sub-groups that do have difficulties. For example, athletes have scored lower than other students on career decision-making self-efficacy assessments because of a lack of direct career support and guidance.

Burns et al. (2013) suggested that conflicting roles may contribute to the athletes' poor career decision-making skills. Also, spending ample time with teammates who are not focused on academic matters contributes to the separation of academic focus. As a result, athletes have a

more difficult time than non-athletes who have issues with career maturity, clarity of educational goals, and adjustment to the college setting's academic rigor.

### *The Effect of Sports Participation on Student-Athletes' Development*

Student-athletes have the same basic needs as their non-athlete counterparts; however, their participation in sports brings about a set of challenges for school counselors and career professionals (Burns et al., 2013). Wooten (1994) suggested that intense sports activity may cause a young athlete to experience role confusion, foreclosed identity, and career, academic, and personal challenges. Fogarty and McGregor-Bayne (2008) suggested that student-athletes are at risk for career development deficiencies because of the time required to train for sporting competitions. Being successful in their sport becomes the focus of their efforts. When the student-athletes strongly identify with the role they play as an athlete, the expectation is that they will neglect other roles related to their student lives. Cartigny et al. (2020) identified career exploration and a commitment to a vocational role as crucial components in a student-athlete's ability to develop a vocational identity. Therefore, emphasis on a dual career strategy is necessary to help promote practical life and career planning.

A common theme in literature is that sports participation has a negative impact on student' personal, academic, and career development (Love, 2019, Goshorn, 2018). In high school, student-athletes' concerns for their careers after sports are not a priority. The student-athletes place no emphasis on the dual-career concern of balancing athletic competition and academics (Ryba et al., 2016). Research has shown that athletes have a higher tendency than non-athletes of experiencing difficulties with career maturity, establishing clear educational plans, and adjusting to college (Burns et al., 2013). However, many researchers found that sports add value to youth's academic, social, and skill development (Bowen & Hitt, 2016; Goshorn,

2018; Hwang et al., 2013). Work ethic, respect, and persistence are characteristics that sports participation helps to develop in youth (Goshorn, 2018).

### *Student-Athletes' Academic Challenges*

The academic challenges of student-athletes have been chronicled for many years. Many factors contribute to the struggles that student-athletes must face in maintaining passing grades and excelling in the classroom. According to Johnson et al. (2015), athletes have challenges because they spend up to 40 hours per week participating in practices, tournaments, film reviews, weight training, and other compulsory activities outside of the classroom. Another contributing factor is the attitude taken by the leaders in the institutions for which the athletes perform (Love, 2019). Successful athletes are revered and given a God-like status in their environments because they bring notoriety and revenue. Johnson et al, (2015) stated that coaches, administrators, and constituents overlook their academic performance if they are thriving on the field.

Parents play a vital role in this scenario, as well. Moreover, many parents see their student-athletes' success as a means of providing financial stability to the family (Love 2019). They will ensure that their student-athlete attends the early morning practices and weekend tournaments, and has transportation to out-of-town events, but fail to place equal importance on the student's academic responsibilities (Johnson et al., 2015).

### *Student-Athlete Diversity Challenges*

Cooper (2016) identified an academic performance gap between black male student-athletes and their peers. Those black male athletes recruited in football and basketball often enter college unprepared. Black student-athletes, male and female, are more likely to enter college with lower high school GPAs and lower college admission test scores than their peers. Also, they earn lower GPAs in college and are less likely to graduate than their white counterparts (Cooper,

2016; Love, 2019). The academic underperformance of Black male athletes has been ascribed to a lack of academic drive and self-esteem (Cooper, 2016). For this reason, institutional issues and environmental influences have been ignored.

Cooper (2016) contended that Black male underperformance is less of a matter of individual efforts and academic motivation rather than institutional inequality and the devaluing of educating and preparing Black males for success in life beyond the athletic context in the broader U.S. culture. Educational Testing Services data shows that Black children are three times more likely to grow up in poverty than white children (p. 268).

By fourth grade, Black males who attended large city schools were three times less likely to be proficient at reading and math than White children. In addition, Black males experience political, economic, representational, and institutional discrimination, oppression, exploitation, and domination (Cooper, 2016, p. 268).

### *Sports Participation and Academic Success*

Studies have shown that there is a relationship between sports participation and students' academic performance (Badura et al., 2016; Bowen & Hitt, 2016; Burns et al., 2013; Cooper, 2016; Gayles & Baker, 2015; Goshorn, 2018; Hwang et al., 2013; Love, 2019). However, the nature of the relationship is still up for debate. Several researchers found that participation in sports had a positive effect on academic performance (Badura et al., 2016; Gayles & Baker, 2015; Goshorn, 2018; Hwang et al., 2013). Others found a negative association between sports participation and academic performance (Cooper, 2016; Love, 2019). Still, some contended that sports participation can both positively and negatively influence academic performance (Bowen & Hitt, 2016). Ransom and Ransom (2018) suggested that considering the positive aspects of sports participation on academic performance, it is not the participation itself that positively

impacts academics; instead, it is the choice to participate in athletic activities that facilitates the positive academic outcomes.

Hwang et al. (2016) found that athletic participation positively affects academics and academic identity formation, influencing educational outcomes. Strategies that facilitate the formation of academic and school-related values for student-athletes strengthen academic identity while maintaining the benefits of sports participation. Bowen and Hitt (2016) stated that student-athletes who perform better than their peers on standardized achievement tests are more likely to go to college and earn higher wages. Moreover, student-athletes form more positive relationships with school personnel than their peers. Harris (2014) outlined educational resiliency, motivation, increased effort, and better educational success in college as benefits of sports participation. Participation in athletics has been associated with improved grade point average (GPA), higher educational goals, increased college attendance, and reduced school absenteeism. Harris also stated that there is minimal evidence that sports participation has a positive effect on college admission or graduation. Barron et al.'s research (2000) did not support the concept that sports participation facilitates increased education or labor market outcomes, increasing overall productivity. However, Ransom and Ransom (2018) concluded that sports may benefit high school student-athletes social and cultural development.

**Formation of Identity**

According to Heinonen (2018), one of the major developmental milestones in late adolescence is developing a sense of self. Identity refers to the roles, principles, aspirations, and personally significant commitments that an individual personifies as his or her own. The study conducted by Orenstein and Lewis (2021) supported Erikson's (1950) model for psycho-social development which suggested that, in the identity versus role confusion stage, adolescents

develop their identity based on their accomplishments. Adolescence is a complicated stage because teens develop a sense of self while trying to fit into their environment. Those researchers stated that adolescence is also a time where youth develop a sense of morality and the ability to tell right from wrong.

Brewer and Petitpas (2017) suggested that the most well-rounded development happens when individuals have been allowed to experience a wide variety of activities and have interacted with people from different cultures. Experiencing new ideas and cultures provides adolescents with the information needed to make informed decisions regarding their values, interests, and skills. Those researchers stated that during this time, adolescents learn coping skills and build confidence in their ability to handle issues independently.

Tabor and Blankemeyer (2014) reported that identity development is associated with a proper orientation towards the future and connecting present behaviors with future outcomes. Also necessary for sound identity development is the ability to view past events positively. Adolescents who achieve identity status were found to have participated in career exploration exercises and possess a commitment to taking control of their identity development. The future they envisioned is one that they have constructed for themselves. Tabor and Blankemeyer stated that adolescents who have a diffused identity are likely to have limited exploration experiences that are characterized by an absence of commitment and a lacking sense of identity. Those adolescents are likely to have little experience in future planning and are primarily focused on the present. Because of their minimal orientation to the future, adolescents with diffused identities have difficulties making connections between their current behaviors and future outcomes. Those researchers also asserted that adolescents with diffused identities tend to

display a negative attitude toward past events. They lack career exploration and rely on parents or other authority figures to formulate their plans.

### *Identity formation of the Student-Athlete*

There is a growing concern surrounding student-athletes' identity development because of the time and energy student-athletes spends building their athletic persona. Heinonen (2018) suggested that student-athletes often place greater importance on their sports-related role than their student role. Love (2019) suggested that an over-commitment to athletics can cause children to limit their opportunities for exploring new roles, which limits their development of a multidimensional self-identity. Heinonen additionally stated that narrowed focus is especially harmful to adolescent athletes because that timeframe coincides with the normal cycle of identity development. In addition, student-athletes rarely engage in effective exploratory behavior to form a healthy identity. Houle and Kluck (2015) suggested that student-athletes who strongly identify with their role as athletes may risk sacrificing career exploration activities. Other researchers indicated that student-athletes encounter some form of identity confusion, navigating both the student role and the athletic role simultaneously (Heinonen, 2018; Menke, 2015).

Gayles and Baker (2015) suggested that adolescents place a high value on performing well in sports, and that athletics provides a place for them to be respected within their high school communities. Participation in athletics can bring recognition and reward to student-athletes if they excel. Those researchers found that, as a result, the athletes experience increased popularity in their school setting and the community; the student-athlete gains self-confidence and forms an identity based on the positive feedback because of their athletic performance. However, Gayles and Baker also found that some student-athletes develop a dependence on the coach and the community for allowances in other areas of their lives. Often, the sports identity,

status, and preferential treatment create an environment in which the athlete feels entitled to preferential treatment in other areas of his school life.

### *Academic Identity of the Student-Athlete*

According to Love (2019), a student-athlete's academic identity is their perception of their ability to perform academic tasks. Love contended that student-athletes are so focused on athletics, they often fail to earn the positive reinforcement needed to have confidence in their academic abilities. That belief is supported by the premise that athletes with a robust and dominant athletic identity tend to focus primarily on athletic performances to the detriment of their academic output. Love suggested that if parents, coaches, schools, and society prioritized values that promote academic success, student-athletes would make better efforts in the classroom.

### *Vocational Identity of the Student-Athlete*

Tabor et al. (2014) identified adolescence as a time when an individual's vocational identity development is crucial. Negru- Subtirica et al. (2015) stated that adolescence is a time when educational and vocational paths begin to come into focus, and vital career decisions are made. Heinonen (2018) found that vocational identity affects many aspects of career development, such as career maturity, career decidedness, and career adaptability. It also serves as an essential component to self-sufficient career development and job readiness. Praskova et al. (2015) suggested that vocational identity is the underlying cognitive mechanism that drives perceptions of employability. Additionally, it has a positive correlation to career preparation activities and career progress outcomes. Zhang et al. (2021) defined vocational identity as an aspect of self-awareness that emerges from a combination of firsthand experiences and

interactions with others. Those experiences and interactions are also known as career exploration.

According to Subtirica et al. (2015), the occupational realm is a strong identity domain for adolescent's global development. It contributes to positive social adjustment as well as ongoing assimilation in the job market. Therefore, career exploration opportunities in the occupational domain are considered a vital part of adolescent development. Those researchers found that, along with career adaptability and vocational identity, career exploration serves as critical components in facilitating sound career decision-making.

**Career Adaptability Concept Origin**

According to Stead (2017), the initial concept of career adaptability was born in a conglomerate of career development segments, the last of which was developed by Donald Super in 1996. As society began to evolve and the demands of the workplace began to become more complex, the need for a more relevant career development theory became apparent. Super's (1963) first theory, Career Development Theory (CDT), was representative of the inclusion of a developmental perspective to the trait and factor perspective that had been widely popular at that time. Trait and factor theorists believed that career counselors should help individuals match their abilities and interests to occupations that provided the expected compensation (Savickas, 1997; Super, 1963; Watson & Steed, 2017). The career development theory focused on how individuals construct and navigate their work lives and identify specific, predictable tasks and coping behaviors that individuals encounter as they develop their careers. Thus, CDT enhances the premise of trait and factor theory by considering the individual's life course in their career development journey (Savickas, 1997; Watson & Stead, 2017).

Watson and Stead (2017) described Super's continued quest to produce time-relevant career development theories by the release of the Developmental Self-Concept Theory (DSCT) (Super & Knasel, 1981). DSCT incorporated the perspective of the individual related to their lived experiences. In addition, the individual's self-concept was added to understand better the career development process. In the original theory, the occupational choice was promoted as a self-concept. However, DSCT focused on outlining how the individual formed, translated, and implemented their self-concept and how that concept influenced their career behaviors (Super & Knasel, 1981).

Later, Super (1990) outlined the final segment in the series. Super's life-span life-space (LS-LS) theory incorporated the context in which the individual made career decisions. LS-LS focused on social roles, which widened the attention from DSCT's work roles to all life roles. LS-LS explains how individuals incorporate their work roles into other life roles and then use that life structure to achieve personal goals based on role-salience and life structure concepts.

Super (1990) hoped to integrate the three segments into one comprehensive career development concept yet was unable to identify one unifying concept to bridge them all. It was not until after Super's death in 1994 that Savickas (1997), a protégé, suggested that replacing career maturity with career adaptability would be the most logical way to unify all three segments of Super's career development theories.

**Career Maturity**

According to Super (1990), the concept of vocational or career maturity sought to present a basis for describing and assessing the stage of career development reached by students of differing ages and grades, the type of career development tasks they were confronting, and how they confronted them, and their readiness for a career decision. The concept was closely tied to

developmental tasks which society assigns to an individual as a demonstration of the ability to make appropriate career decisions based on biological, educational, or vocational levels.

Savickas (1997) stated that the CDT's primary contribution was the model for adolescent career maturity. The concept was later expanded to address the complete life span, but its primary use remained in the model for adolescent career development. Savickas determined that career maturity consists of four dimensions. Two dimensions address attitudes necessary for career success that include behaviors to indicate future planning and curiosity, displayed as career planning and career exploration skills. The other two dimensions address cognitive concerns of gaining rational information decision-making. Savickas determined the focus was on obtaining knowledge about occupations and careers in addition to knowledge about the act of career decision-making.

According to Ismail et al. (2018), Super described career maturity in his 1957 section as the capacity to make acceptable decisions while engaged in the planned exploration and possessing adequate occupational, personal, and decision-making knowledge. Ismail et al. stated that the term "readiness" refers to a person's stage of career growth. According to Ismail et al., Super's career development model is predicated on the assumption that each growth stage demonstrates acceptable career conduct. Thus, career maturity refers to the degree to which an individual's career conduct matches the assumed career behavior for a particular age level. Their study also found that the more compatibility with the anticipated conduct, the more mature the individual is with regards to career growth. An adolescent's career maturity level can be evaluated by comparing his or her career progress to others in the same age group,

Career maturity encompasses several dimensions. According to Eliana et al. (2016), career maturity has four dimensions. The fourth demonstrates an individual's capacity to adapt to

career demands and tactics employed, which involves a specific attitude, confidence, and competence that define the concrete behavior utilized in adapting. Eliana et al. found that attitude and belief are a disposition that represents how individuals perceive the world.

The four dimensions are: 1) Concern is caring for the future or the degree to which an individual is self-directed and active in the career decision-making process; 2) Curiosity is the desire to discover opportunities in one's social surroundings; 3) Self-confidence is the ability to plan and implement their future careers; and 4) Consultation demonstrates an individual's willingness to seek assistance with career decisions by asking for information or advice from others (Eliana et al., 2016).

The first dimension is with regards to individuals' concerns about their careers indicating that they have a future orientation, which is critical when planning. Eliana et al. (2016) stated that the first dimension demonstrates an individual's knowledge of the professional development and job transition responsibilities that must be addressed and the near- and long-term decisions that must be taken. Individuals should develop plans for themselves that are anticipatory, self-aware, engaging, and career oriented. Lack of career focus shows career ignorance, a lack of goals, and pessimism about the future.

According to Eliana et al. (2016) the second dimension encompasses curiosity, which is the desire to discover opportunities in one's social surroundings. Curiosity refers to the initiative in researching the workforce that results in knowledge-seeking behavior, such as an openness to new experiences, self-exploration, and reflection on the compatibility of self and job. Lack of interest might be seen as a lack of understanding of vocational options and an incorrect self-concept.

Eliana et al. (2016) explained that the third-dimension deals with confidence, which demonstrates an expectation of success in resolving complex challenges associated with decisions about post-secondary planning. Those researchers also stated that confidence reflects an individual's belief in his or her capacity to make sound vocational choices and choose a realistic career path. Self-confidence also affects their ability to successfully execute the behaviors necessary to overcome hurdles and overcome problems associated with decision-making and implementation. Those researchers determined that individuals require the confidence to pursue their interests and ambitions. The lack of confidence indicated the presence of impediments to goal attainment.

The fourth dimension, as described by Eliana et al. (2016), is consultation. For adolescents, consultation means seeking the assistance of school counselors, parents, or another trusted adult. Eliana et al. considered those actions to demonstrate adolescents' commitment to career planning. The objective is for adolescents to learn to select their career paths with discipline and awareness founded on a goal-oriented and structured approach.

**Career Construction and Adaptability**

According to Savickas (2013), career construction theory elucidates the interpretative and interpersonal processes through which individuals create themselves, impose direction on their professional conduct, and make sense of their careers. The conceptual framework, which is intended for usage in a multicultural society and global economy, gives a modern explanation for occupations and serves as the foundation for a career counseling model. The researcher stated that career-building theory examines how individuals form professions via personal and societal constructivism to attain those objectives. Individuals build representations of reality, but not reality itself, according to the career construction hypothesis. Additionally, the theory takes a

contextualist view of professions, conceptualizing growth as being driven by environmental adaptation rather than the maturity of internal structures. When professions are viewed via constructionist and contextual lenses, the emphasis is on self-construction.

Savickas (2002) improved Super's initial ten career proposals developed in 1953, making them more relevant to the professional development patterns of the time period. Savickas' career-building theory included six more premises to account for the ever-changing nature of career development demands. The following sixteen statements comprise career-building theory proposed by Savickas:

1. Using social roles, society and its institutions shape an individual's life. An individual's life structure is determined by social processes such as gendering and is composed of core and peripheral functions. The balance between fundamental duties, such as work and family, fosters stability, whereas imbalances cause pressure.
2. For most men and women, occupations serve as a central role and focal point for personality organization; however, for some, occupations serve as a secondary, incidental, or even nonexistent focus. In those cases, other life roles such as student, parent, homemaker, and citizen may be central. Personal choices for life roles are inextricably linked to the social activities that engage individuals which results in them being placed in uneven social positions.
3. An individual's career pattern—that is, the occupational level attained and the sequence, frequency, and duration of jobs—is determined by the socioeconomic status of the parents and the individual's education, abilities, personality traits, self-concepts, and career adaptability in relation to the opportunities offered by society.

4. Individuals vary in their occupational qualities, including ability, personality attributes, and self-concept.
5. Each occupation requires a unique set of vocational qualities, with tolerances wide enough to accommodate a diverse range of people.
6. Because of their vocational qualities and job needs, individuals are competent for a range of jobs.
7. Occupational success is contingent upon individuals finding appropriate outlets for distinguishing vocational traits within their job responsibilities.
8. The degree of enjoyment people experience from their job is related to their ability to put their occupational self-concepts into practice. Job happiness is contingent upon establishing a sort of profession, a work setting, and a style of life in which one may perform the roles that one's growth and exploration experiences have taught one to see as appealing and suitable.
9. Career building is primarily concerned with the development and implementation of vocational self-concepts in job positions. Self-concepts emerge because of the interaction of genetic aptitudes, physical make-up, opportunities to watch and perform diverse roles, and judgments of the extent to which role-playing outcomes meet the approval of peers and supervisors. The integration of occupational self-concepts into job positions entails a balancing of individual and societal elements. It develops through role-playing and feedback, whether in imagination, in the counseling interview, or in real-world activities such as hobbies, classes, clubs, part-time employment, and entry-level jobs.

10. While vocational self-concepts grow increasingly stable from late adolescence onward, allowing for some consistency in choice and adjustment, self-concepts and vocational preferences do alter through time and experience as people's living and working conditions change.
11. The process of occupational transformation may be described as moving through a maxi-cycle of professional phases that include periods of development, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement. The five phases are further split into periods defined by occupational development tasks, based on societal expectations that individuals encounter.
12. A mini-cycle of growth, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement occurs during career transitions and whenever an individual's career is destabilized by socioeconomic or personal events such as illness or injury, work location closures, and company layoffs, and job redesign and automation.
13. Vocational maturity is a psychological construct that refers to an individual's level of vocational development along a career development continuum ranging from growth to disengagement. From a social standpoint, occupational maturity may be operationally defined by comparing developmental tasks experienced to those predicted at a given chronological age.
14. Career adaptability is a psychological term that refers to an individual's capacity and resources for coping with ongoing and future vocational development challenges. Attitudes, beliefs, and skills — the ABCs of career construction – improve their adaptive fitness along the developmental lines of concern, control, conception, and confidence.

15. Career construction is triggered and generated by vocational development tasks.
16. At any level of career development, talks that explain vocational development objectives, exercises that improve adaptive fitness, and activities that clarify and verify vocational self-concepts can all help to encourage career construction (pp. 154-157).

According to Savickas (2013), the career construction theory establishes four global aspects of career flexibility and arranges them into a three-tiered structural paradigm. The four aspects of professional adaptability are concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, at the most abstract level. These aspects reflect the overall adaptability resources and techniques that individuals employ to cope with crucial tasks, transitions, and traumas as they build their professions. Savickas stated that at the intermediate level, the model expresses a different set of functionally homogenous variables for each of the four broad dimensions. Each collection of intermediate variables contains the precise attitudes, beliefs, and competencies—the ABCs of career construction—that influence the concrete adaptive behaviors employed to master developmental tasks, navigate occupational transitions, and resolve work traumas.

Savickas (2013) further stated that attitudes are affective variables or feelings that motivate action, whereas beliefs are conative variables or predispositions that guide behavior. Individuals' attitudes and beliefs influence their behavior, resulting in the formation of dispositional response tendencies. Moreover, competencies, which include understanding and problem-solving ability, refer to the cognitive resources used to choose and implement professional choices.

According to Savickas (2013), attitudes and ideas about one's disposition influence how skills are developed and used. Cognitive skills, in turn, influence the adaptive behaviors that

result in vocational growth and career construction. The third and most tangible level of the structural model of career adaptability is comprised of these coping strategies. Table 2.1 contains examples of actions associated with each dimension. Along with others, these coping activities constitute the adaptive functions of orientation, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. The last column in Table 1 summarizes the most likely professional difficulties associated with a deficiency in each of the adaptation resources**.**

**Table 1**

*Career Adaptability Dimensions*

| Adaptability Dimensions | Attitudes and Beliefs | Competence | Coping Behaviors | Career Problem |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Concern | Planful | Planning | Aware<br>Involved<br>Preparing | Indifference |
| Control | Decisive | Decision making | Assertive<br>Disciplined<br>Willful | Indecision |
| Curiosity | Inquisitive | Exploring | Experimenting<br>Risk-taking<br>Inquiring | Unrealism |
| Confidence | Efficacious | Problem solving | Persistent<br>Striving | Inhibition |

From Savickas (2005)

***Career Adaptability Defined***

According to Super and Knasel (1981), career adaptability is a state of readiness needed to cope with tasks that current or potential job positions can anticipate and the ability to adapt to unexpected jobs or changes in the work environment. Super and Knasel suggested that this perspective exhibited the appreciation between the individual and the environment and it removed any emphasis on the maturation or growth of the individual. Years later, Ebberwein et al. (2004) suggested the emphasis was on being forward-looking and proactive.

Savickas (1997) altered the definition to be the individual's state of readiness for predictable work activities, career positions, and career problems that are unexpected in career changes or circumstances and a consistency that allows for easy adjustment to adapt to the new environment. With the revised definition, Savickas began to consider the individuals' surroundings as a factor in their adaptability. Thus, the focus of the adaptability study was expanded from being prepared for career transition and managing unexpected changes to handle career adjustment and adaptation to a new environment with success. Later, Savickas (2005) formed a more cohesive definition of career adaptability. Thus, career adaptability became the state of readiness and resources required to respond to existing and expected career development tasks, including the attitudes, skills, and behaviors. Also included were the individuals' needs to align with work that fits them, and psychological resources for managing career change, new tasks, and job trauma.

Rottinghaus et al. (2005) provided another variation of the definition of career adaptability. They defined career adaptability to describe how the individual views his or her capacity to plan or adjust to changing career plans, especially in the face of unexpected events. The researchers' perspective included the individual considering career adaptability and their feelings of self-efficacy in making career decisions successfully.

The theory of career adaptability was revised many times based on previous studies (Johnston, 2018). Savickas (1997), through his research, developed a complete theory. As part of the career construction theory, he outlined a multifaceted theory of career adaptability that clearly understood an individuals' adaptive resources, responses, and outcomes. Additionally, according to Hirschi et al. (2011), within the career construction theory, career adaptability is conceptualized as attitudes, behaviors, and competencies that individuals use in matching

themselves to work that suits them, consisting of the four dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Johnston (2018) agreed with Savickas' (1997) proposal that career adaptability is substituted for career maturity in the life span, life-space concept to provide continuity within the three segments. Years later, Chen et al. (2020) noted that the global emphasis on improving youth career readiness called for mastery of understanding in the current trends of career adaptability as outlined in the career construction theory of Savickas.

## Dimensions of Career Adaptability

Savickas's (2013) work on career construction theory conceptualized resourceful individuals as a) becoming concerned about their future as workers, b) gaining personal control over their vocational future, c) demonstrating curiosity about possible selves and future scenarios, and d) building confidence to pursue their aspirations. Thus, career flexibility improves across four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence.

### *Concern*

The first and most critical feature of career flexibility is a concern for one's occupational future. Savickas (2013) explained that career concern's fundamental role in career construction is evident in the primacy accorded to it by crucial theories of vocational development. Career concern indicates that an individual has a forward-thinking attitude, which is essential to prepare for the future. The act of planning and optimism promotes readiness by predisposing individuals to become aware of the professional duties and occupational transitions they will encounter in the near and far future, as well as the choices they will make. Savickas proposed that the core of a career is considering one's work-life throughout time since a subjective career is not a behavior; it is a concept. Career development is facilitated by first recognizing that one's current occupational position originated from prior experiences, then linking those experiences to a

desired future through the existing situation. Individuals can relate their current activities to their vocational goals and ideas of future selves when they believe in the continuity of experience. Savickas stated that individuals can perceive how today's effort contributes to tomorrow's achievement when they have this sense of continuity. Individuals with proactive attitudes and a belief in continuity are more likely to engage in activities and experiences that develop their capacity for planning and preparing for the future. Career indifference is a lack of career concern that expresses apathy, pessimism, and an inability to plan.

***Control***

According to Savickas (2013), the second most essential feature of professional flexibility is control over one's occupational future. The considerable quantity of study on independence, internal locus of control, autonomy, self-determination, effort attributions, and agency demonstrates the essential role of control in career development. In balancing self and society, the dominant culture in the U.S., especially for those who have absorbed it, trends toward independence. As a result, the most widely used models and resources for career intervention presume that individuals determine professional choices autonomously. Savickas stated that career formation theory excludes independence as an interpersonal characteristic. On the other hand, career-building theory expressly recognizes that interdependence, or independence, may be advantageous regarding individualistic and collectivistic environments. Nonetheless, self-control is critical in both situations.

Savickas (2013) asserted that the career-building theory views control as a component of intrapersonal processes that promote self-regulation rather than interpersonal interactions impairing self-regulation. Control entails self-discipline on an intrapersonal level and the procedures of being conscientious, methodical, structured, and determined when completing

vocational development activities and transitioning into new occupations. Savickas stated its opposite is perplexity, rather than dependency. Individuals in control are more likely to engage in vocational development activities and negotiate occupational changes than avoid them. Individuals who find themselves with a restricted range of alternatives, for whatever reason, exercise career control by investigating the few available options to make them personally meaningful and by available fine-tuning options to perform them individually. According to the researcher, individuals with conscientious attitudes and a sense of personal responsibility are more likely to conduct occupational activities purposefully. Career indecision is sometimes referred to as a lack of career management and manifests as perplexity, procrastination, or impulsivity.

***Curiosity***

According to Savickas (2013), a sense of self-control arises when individuals take the initiative to study the sorts of jobs they might like to perform and the professional prospects available to them. Curiosity plays a critical role in career development, as evidenced by the extensive coverage it receives in prominent theories of vocational development under the rubrics of exploration and information-seeking behavior and their direct products of self-knowledge and occupational information. Career curiosity refers to an inquisitiveness about and investigating one's fit in the work environment. Savickas found that, when acted upon, curiosity generates a reservoir of information from which one may make self-adjusted decisions. Individuals go from naïve to knowledgeable because of systematic inquiry and reflection on random exploratory encounters. Individuals with curious attitudes are predisposed to scan their environment to gain knowledge about themselves and their circumstances.

Savickas (2013) proposed that individuals are motivated to attempt new things and have adventures when they believe in the importance of being open to new experiences and experimenting with possible selves and diverse roles. Attitudes and dispositions that encourage inquiry and openness result in experiences that enhance self-and occupational knowledge competency. Individuals who have ventured outside their communities have gained a greater understanding of their talents, interests, and values, as well as the needs, routines, and rewards associated with other jobs. Savickas further explained that this wider pool of information lends objectivity and reality to future decisions about how to relate to events. A lack of professional interest might result in an unrealistic view of the work environment and incorrect self-images.

***Confidence***

Savickas (2013) argued that individuals require confidence to act in their own best interests. Self-confidence refers to the expectation of success when confronted with difficulties and barriers. In career building theory, confidence refers to emotions of self-efficacy about one's capacity to effectively carry out a course of action necessary for making and implementing appropriate educational and occupational choices. Career choices necessitate the resolution of complicated challenges. According to Savickas, confidence plays a critical part in professional development, as evidenced by the considerable study on self-esteem, self-efficacy, and encouragement in theories of vocational development. Confidence in one's career develops via problem-solving in daily activities such as home duties, academics, and hobbies.

Additionally, Savickas (2013) argued that acknowledging one's ability to be helpful and practical at these tasks improves sentiments of self-acceptance. Expanded practical experiences instill confidence in the ability to explore new things. Individuals who have been shielded or excluded from categories of experience (e.g., math and science) struggle to approach such

activities with confidence and, as a result, are less interested in jobs that demand ability in those areas. Savickas suggested that misconceptions about gender, ethnicity, and social roles can create internal and external hurdles that impede confidence growth. A lack of career confidence can manifest as career inhibition, impeding the actualization of responsibilities and accomplishment of goals.

## Understanding Adaptability

Ginevra et al. (2018) explained the different distinctions of career adaptability. The general term adaptability is defined as a disposition toward being flexible and making career transitions involving cognitive skills and abilities, while having a proactive personality and thoughts of the future. They identified adaptive responses as behaviors and beliefs such as career planning, career exploration, and occupational self-efficacy helpful in coping with career development tasks and changing career solutions. Ginevra et al. found that adaptive results are the outcomes of adapting, including heightened career, identity, job satisfaction, long-term organizational commitment, and lowered job stress. For adolescents, adaptive results would consist of choosing a career path, selecting college majors and institutions, and committing necessary job training.

### *Rate of Adaptability in Adolescence*

Career adaptability identifies an adolescent's readiness to make educational and occupational decisions (Ozdemir & Guneri, 2017; Savickas, 1997), serves as a predictor of career decidedness, and, according to Ginevra et al. (2018), indirectly foreshadows a positive attitude and future orientation toward career choice. The career adaptability concept includes the developmental tasks and role transitions that individuals face and the coping skills in successfully navigating those transitions. Chen et al. (2020) contended that society expects

individuals to navigate the developmental stages successfully and perform career tasks that demonstrate career concern regarding expanding self-awareness, career exploration, and decision-making. In addition, individuals are expected to keep commitments, manage life roles, and disengage from roles appropriately.

According to Hartung et al. (2008), distinctions in adaptability are explained by the rate of change in adaptive behaviors. The range and speed of change can be used to determine the adaptability skills of an individual. Examining the range of behaviors indicates the limits of an individual's adaptability. Measuring the rate of behaviors can show the individual's ease of ability to situations.

Hartung et al. (2008) found that career adaptability is categorized by four dimensions of degrees: advancing, constricting, delaying, and thwarting. Advancing adaptability occurs when individuals complete various developmental tasks with increasing complexity degrees at a pace more significant than their counterparts. Constricting adaptability appears when individuals show a narrow range in the progression of developmental tasks but complete those tasks more expediently than their counterparts. Those researchers also stated that delaying adaptability describes the conditions where an individual completes various developmental tasks ranging in skill levels that have been completed more slowly than those done by their peer group. Finally, they found that thwarting adaptability is characterized by an individual completing a small range of developmental tasks slower than their peer group.

According to Hartung et al. (2008), achieving competence in the four dimensions of career adaptability leads to self-efficacy in solving problems in the vital dimensions of vocational development during childhood. In addition, they stated that looking to the future, taking responsibility for career decisions, exploring options, and exhibiting confidence in

decision-making help build viable adaptability skills to navigate for a lifetime. Savickas (2013) contended that career adaptability skills require developing certain attitudes, beliefs, and competencies related to career planning, choice, and adjustment, also known as the ABCs of Career Construction.

**Literature on Career Adaptability**

Scientific interest in career adaptability has expanded over the years. Several studies investigated many different facets of career adaptability (Chan et al., 2015; Duffy et al., 2015; Glavin, 2014; Hirschi & Valero, 2015; Maggiori et al., 2015). However, the literature revealed a need for further research in the adaptive skills of high school student-athletes. The first set of studies related to investigating adaptability tools and resources in working with adolescents. Those studies explored the validity and reliability of the Career Adapt-Ability Scale (CAAS) with students in different cultures (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The CAAS, where the validity was tested with school-age children, was verified in several countries such as China (Tien et al., 2014), Italy (Di Maggio et al., 2015), the Philippines (Tolentino et al., 2013), Switzerland (Johnston et al., 2013), and Turkey (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2014; Öncel, 2014). Those studies indicated that career adaptability's theoretical composition can be replicated in different contexts and that its construct validity can be proven (Johnston, 2018).

Researchers developed instruments to study career adaptability in adolescents based on Savickas' (2005) conceptualization of career adaptability. The instruments measured the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale's dimensions (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). Of those, the Career and Work Adaptability Questionnaire (CWAQ) (Nota et al., 2012). Career Maturity Inventory- Form C (CMI-Form C) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011), and the Student's Career

Construction Inventory (SCCI) (Savickas, 2013) were found to help study adolescents (Johnston, 2018).

The CWAQ studied the adaptability resources of high school students. Nota et al. (2012) found that the instrument was an effective and reliable measurement of career adaptability. Therefore, it could be an effective vocational guidance tool in analyzing the career adaptability of adolescence. The CMI-Form C measured the occupational and education choices of students (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011). That assessment provides a composite score for career choice readiness and scale scores for adaptability resources in the areas of career concern, curiosity, and self-efficacy in decision making.

Savickas (2013) stated that the CMI-Form C also provides a score for consultation that indicates an individual's interpersonal style in making occupational choices. The initial results support the reliability and validity of the tool. One study was identified to measure career resources. Savickas also stated the Student's Career Construction Inventory (SCCI), which measures adaptive responses, was instrumental in indicating adaptive readiness, adaptive resources, and adaptive results. The SCCI is replicable and can be used with high school students and undergraduate and graduate students. Porfeli and Savickas (2012) found that the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale-USA (CAAS-USA) performed to the models used internationally and was found to be valid, showing internal reliability.

Of the studies identified that examined the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale's reliability in high school students, only the study by Ryba et al. (2016) was conducted with student-athletes. Instead of investigating only the four dimensions of career adaptability, that study included the fifth element of dual-career concern in its measurements. The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale-Dual

Career Form (CAAS-DC) was found to be a reliable self-report tool for examining student-athletes' adaptability skills.

### *Career Adaptability in High School Students*

Savickas (1997) long ago established the concept as the ability to adjust oneself to fit new and changed circumstances in one's career planning exploration and making decisions about one's future. More recently, Hartung et al. (2008) confirmed that adolescents are expected to navigate developmental career stages and tasks to meet societal expectations to demonstrate that they can handle career concerns about growing self-awareness. Most recently, Barto et al. (2015) stated that career adaptability is a crucial concept in adolescent career development.

Ozdemir and Guneri's (2017) research found that adaptive skills enable students to cope with job-related developmental tasks and improve career development, career preparation, and career decision-making. Later, researchers believed that career adaptability promotes students' long-term development in education (Chen et al., 2020). Those researchers stated that the four career adaptability components, concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, serve as psycho-social resources or abilities that facilitate adjustment to various tasks or environments. Students can develop adaptability with self-exploration and discovery activities within the environment.

### *Contributing Factors to High School Students Career Adaptability*

Studies suggested a positive relationship between optimism and perceived social support when examining the literature on career adaptability and its contributing factors. Ozdenur and Guneri (2017) stated that the causal relationship between optimism and presumed social reinforcement to general self-efficacy was maintained over an extended period. They also found that individuals' standing within their social group can cause increased belief in one's abilities. Conversely, optimists believe in their capacity to conquer challenges. Moreover, confidence was

significantly correlated with students' career adaptability. Previous research indicated that optimists either experience more social support or believe that they do (Dougall et al., 2001). High school students who experience social support display more positive attitudes (Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005) and have a more efficacious self-perception, or are perceived as more socially desirable, resulting in more extensive social networks (Vollmann et al., 2007).

Consistent with the idea that relational support contributes considerably to lifetime adaptability, emotional support from family, teachers, and close friends strongly contributed to the four aspects of career adaptability (Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005). Regarding environmental causes, high school students who perceived more support from their parents, friends, or significant others demonstrated greater career adaptability. That observation was consistent with other results (Hirschi, 2009; Wang & Fu, 2015). However, these findings were contradictory to the findings of Yousefi et al. (2011) which did not find relational support to be a significant factor. According to Ozdemir and Guneri (2017), peer beliefs significantly influence career adaptability because adolescents want acceptance and reinforcement from their peers and so adhere to peer views to fit in.

Additionally, early research on the topic showed a positive correlation between general self-efficacy and career adaptability (Ryan et al., 1994). Other research by Morton et al. (2013) found that successful students tend to be more adaptable. However, the research on the relationship between general self-efficacy and job adaptability continues to be lacking (Hirschi, 2009; Öncel, 2014). Cartigny et al. (2021) found that an individual's belief in their ability to produce specific outcomes can increase the likelihood of positive career development behaviors such as exploration, strengthening the adaptive skill level.

Self-efficacy values have been found to impact the interplay between personal and environmental variables, such as motivation (Nauta, 2004) and social reinforcement (Keller & Whiston, 2008; Wang & Fu, 2015), as well as career-related variables such as adaptability (Zammitti et al., 2021).

Through general self-efficacy, research demonstrated an indirect link between confidence and social support, and job flexibility (Ozdemir & Guneri, 2017). High school students who are optimistic anticipate more social reinforcement and have higher overall self-efficacy, which correlates with increased career adaptability.

**Adaptability and Vocational Interest**

Career Adaptability may have a beneficial effect on the development of students' vocational interests. Yousefi et al. (2011) found that career adaptability is associated with exploratory behaviors such as self-exploration, experiential activities, desire to understand better, and aptitude for careers in the job market. Soresi et al. (2014) found that it is associated with a broader array of career interests and fewer foundational and environmental career barriers, indicating that career adaptability plays a substantial role in how adolescents construct their lives. High school graduates with greater career adaptability usually have a more comprehensive selection of occupational interests, particularly in fields requiring extensive education and promoting a higher social status (Ginevra et al., 2018).

**Career Decision-Making**

Since 1974, Super has proposed that, at the secondary level, career awareness, career exploration, and career guidance should continue to influence the student's career decision-making. Additionally, students should learn to make tentative career choices, tentative career plans, and initiate action steps to bring their plans to fruition.

According to Fogarty and McGregor-Bayne (2008), early research into the career development of athletes was focused on the athlete's indecision regarding a career path and lacked a theoretical background. They stated that the following studies examined athletes' career decision-making processes related to demographic values, athletic identity, career decision-making self-efficacy, and career locus of control. Moreover, the research on sports participation in high school athletes' career development processes is lacking. More recent research by Li et al. (2017) indicated that the vital academic factors that influence the successful transition of high school student-athletes to secondary education or the workforce are college and career readiness.

### *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in High School Student-Athletes*

In Fogarty and McGregor-Bayne's 2008 study, athletes were shown to have scored lower than other students on career decision-making self-efficacy (CDSE) because of a lack of direct career support and guidance. A student-athlete's confidence in making career decisions, or career decision-making self-efficacy (CDSE), is an essential component of the career development process. According to Burns et al. (2013), as a byproduct, those student-athletes tend to delay making career decisions such as selecting a college major, self-discovery of talents and skills, and accessing pertinent career information. Moreover, these individuals are unprepared to make informed career decisions and lack adaptive skills when faced with a career challenge that causes them to alter their plans. More recent research by Love (2019) revealed that students engrossed in their athletic world foster dependency on their coach and the sports community. Those student-athletes grow comfortable in a world where decisions are made for them, leading to low CDSE.

**Factors Influencing Career Development**

Earlier research identified the importance of developing educational programs that assist student-athletes in skill development, career development, and life planning (Fogarty & McGregor-Bayne, 2008). Li et al. (2017) confirmed that those factors include college and career readiness. Kuettel et al. (2020) stated that establishing dual career pathways with student-athletes has been shown to be helpful in balancing athletics and other areas of life. Key academic factors influence the successful transition of high school student-athletes to secondary education or the workforce. However, there is little research about the factors that influence the career planning processes of high school student-athletes. Lyseng et al. (2016) stated that early research into athletes' career development was focused on the athlete's indecision to decide on a career path; however, that research lacked a theoretical background.

According to Lyseng et al. (2016), career education helps guide and shape students' occupational development during all stages of growth. Career development comprises the behavioral processes and influencing factors that help shape a person's work-related values and formulate how they make choices about their occupations. Those researchers stated that career development also helps individuals understand themselves as career professionals and ascertain their competency in understanding career processes.

Lyseng et al. (2016) additionally stated that the purpose of career education is to inform students about potential careers and to develop skills that will allow them to control their occupational lives' continuing development. However, the implementation of career development practices has not been as straightforward. Also, some schools provide courses in career development and require experiential learning activities as a graduation requirement while others allow teachers who may or may not be trained in career development practices to address

students' needs. Lyseng et al. also found that school officials in Canada advocated for teachers' career education training opportunities and for the inclusion of career education into the regular curriculum to address the shortfall of resources and trained career professionals, an approach that helps students connect academic content to the world of work.

### *Career Development in High School Student-Athletes*

Student-athletes have the exact basic needs as their non-athlete counterparts; however, their participation in sports brings about a set of challenges for school counselors and career professionals (Burns et al., 2013). Student-athletes spend substantial time meeting their athletic commitments. Being successful in their sport becomes the focus of their efforts. When the student-athletes strongly identify with the role they play as an athlete, Menke (2015a, 2015b) suggested that the expectation on the part of researchers is that they will neglect other roles related to their student lives.

Burns (2013) suggested that students' athletic obligations harm their personal, academic, and career development. Athletes have a higher tendency to have difficulties than their non-athlete peers with career maturity, setting educational goals, and adjustment to college. Career decision-making self-efficacy plays an essential role in career development. CDSE is the athlete's confidence in their ability to make career decisions. Burns et al. (2013) stated that those athletes who have low CDSE procrastinate when making decisions about their college majors, learning about their talents and interests, and obtaining career information to help them make sound decisions. Therefore, they are ill-equipped to make sound career choices and have difficulties meeting career challenges. In addition, the inability to overcome barriers causes them to change careers when issues arise.

Burns et al. (2013) suggested that conflicting roles may contribute to the athletes' poor career decision-making skills. Also, spending ample time with teammates who are not focused on academic matters contributes to the separation of academic focus. Those researchers found that, as a result, athletes have more complex experiences than non-athletes regarding issues with career maturity, clarity of educational goals, and adjustment to the college setting's academic rigor.

### *Institutional Attitude*

As stated earlier, high school athletics has evolved from extracurricular activities to a business. Schools, school districts, and the community are investing increasing amounts of money into revenue sports such as football and basketball. Love (2019) found that constituents have ignored negative behavior by student-athletes and overlook poor academic performances to focus on stellar athletic performances. Winning brings notoriety and revenue, which causes institutions and communities to compromise their values related to academic success to prolong athletic success.

Fuller et al. (2017) suggested that teachers allow certain privileges to student-athletes because they represent the school at a high level of athletic competitiveness and do so positively. Those allowances include additional time to turn in assignments, permission to miss class time, and extra help with assignments. They further stated that teachers admire the time commitment and work ethic that goes into being a student-athlete, which facilitates them to allow extra time on assignments. Love (2019) stated that high school student-athletes receive preferential treatment because of their status as an athlete.

Administrators and coaches play a vital role in the privilege received by student-athletes. According to Fuller et al. (2017), one in ten instructors is subjected to external pressure to offer

student-athletes preferential treatment. Coaches and administrators coerce teachers to accept late work, give extra credit assignments, and provide additional tutoring to assist the student-athlete in remaining eligible for competition. In extreme cases, teachers are asked to change grades to prevent a student-athlete from failing. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), as outlined by Ajzen (1991), the pressure from leaders within the educational community would increase the likelihood that student-athletes would be allowed privileges that another student would not receive. Many years later, Fuller et al. (2017) found that the TPB indicates that individuals are more likely to perform a behavior if they receive social pressure to do so.

In addition to overlooking negative behavior and poor academic performance, school districts and communities are investing in multi-million-dollar facilities for their athletic teams (Love, 2019). School districts are more prominently receiving revenue from the broadcasts of high school sports. High school teams are being given discounts from large athletic companies to wear their gear. Also, local businesses are sponsoring the school's athletic departments in exchange for advertising in sporting venues. In addition, Love (2019) found that news outlets sponsor player -of-the-week awards and interview winners on the evening broadcasts. All those occurrences are signs that high school athletics is evolving into a very lucrative business.

### *The Role of Counselors*

School counselors are in a distinctive position to help students transition successfully from high school to college and the workforce. As a result, the counselor's role has been redefined by numerous educational reforms, from No Child Left Behind (2001) to Every Child Succeeds (2015) and various new counseling models and standards. Among those standards are models from the American School Counseling Association (ASCA). The ASCA model was

developed to provide a roadmap for school counselors in designing, implementing, managing, and evaluating a wide-ranging progressive school counseling program (Mason & Dye, 2017).

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (ASCA) (2014) provides counselors with information about the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students need to achieve academic success, college and career preparedness, and social/emotional development. ASCA also provides counselors with information about the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students need to achieve academic success, college and career preparedness, and social/emotional development (Li et al., 2017). The ASCA model suggests four program components to address student needs: guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system support. The components are intended to facilitate the students' improved academic achievement, career decision-making, and personal/social development (Mason & Dye, 2017). Strategically planned lessons and activities that focus on goal setting, study skills, time management, and careers to help meet students' developmental needs should be implemented by counselors. According to the ASCA, school counselors must manage an outcome-based comprehensive school counseling program whose primary focus is on teaching life competencies to students. This goal is to be accomplished using the ASCA mindsets, in conjunction with core standards developed by the states to facilitate student success.

The next ASCA (2014) component, the individual student planning program, is designed to help students access, plan for, monitor, and manage their personal-social, academic, and career development. Activities help students set short-term and long-term goals by developing life career plans from strength-based career development content encompassed in the guidance curriculum. Counselors are expected to work closely with students to help them explore and evaluate their education, career options, and personal goals.

The responsive services component requires that counselors provide individual and small group counseling, and consultations and referrals for students whose needs cannot be met by school counseling personnel (ASCA, 2014). A significant component of those services involves collaboration with teachers, parents, and community organizations. responsive services address issues that cause students' personal, social, career, and academic development barriers. Common issues addressed are academic achievement, career choice, school attendance, and dropping out of school.

ASCA (2014) stated that the System Support component is designed to hold the entire program together. It is comprised of activities in research and development, professional development, public relations, and community outreach, which help support and enhance projects within the other program components. Therefore, the system support component is one of the most critical factors of the model.

The school counseling core curriculum encompasses structured lessons that provide students with knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to promote development. ASCA (2014) requires that the school counselors provide the core curriculum to all students in collaboration with other professional educators and coordinate activities to help students reach their individual goals, including developing a college and career plan. Activities related to students' college and career plans occur during the individual planning process.

ASCA (2014) established lofty standards and provided guidelines that emphasize the school counselor's responsibilities in training college and career readiness students. School counselors are expected to make available information, tools, and perspectives to students, parents, and schools and serve as leaders and advocates to guide students' career goals and planning. According to the ASCA, the primary goal is for school counselors to provide

comprehensive programming to help students successfully transition from high school to college or directly into the workforce.

**Counselor Interventions to Promote Career Adaptability**

Research identified several key factors that assist students in skill development, life planning, and college and career readiness (Fogarty & McGregor-Bayne, 2008; Li et al., 2017). Li et al. (2017) stated that a student who believed that the counselor had tried to build a rapport with them had better career outcomes than those students who lacked a relationship with their counselors. Also, lower student-to-counselor ratios served as a predictor of greater student success with high-poverty populations. Student standardized test scores also had a positive correlation to career success. Lastly, other factors such as family support and career planning activities were among the nonacademic factors that promote career success in students. There is substantial research regarding the role of counselors and other significant figures in students' decision-making processes, institutional attitudes towards student-athletes, and athletic culture in secondary schools (Cabrita, 2014; Goldberg, 1991; Ozdemir & Guneri, 2017; Lee, 1983). Thus, the data provides relevant background but fails to delve into the direct influence of sports participation on high school athletes' career development processes.

Many researchers investigated to identify interventions to improve adaptability resources. Hirschi (2013) suggested that any career counselor's goal is to provide resources for clients to develop a tool kit to address career adaptability. Narrative counseling has been a popular intervention (Del Corso & Briddick, 2014; Del Corso & Rehfuss; Maree & Gerryts, 2014). Short-term vocational therapy has been used to increase career adaptability resources (Stauffer et al., 2013). Those studies identified utilized no pre-test. However, there were a few studies that examined changes in adaptability levels. In one, participants showed an increase in the career

adaptability domains after taking part in a designed program to increase adaptability resources (Koen et al., 2012). In another, later, study, Janeiro et al. (2014) found that a comprehensive course was a more effective intervention than a single-session intervention. Lastly, Cheung and Jin (2015) found that interventions that focused on career exploration facilitated substantial improvements in self-reflection and career exploration but minimal improvement in academic career courses aimed at fostering career exploration. The interventions resulted in substantial increases in self and environment exploration and marginal signs of career adaptability progress. Also, those researchers stated that facilitating future planning with high school students helped them increase adaptive skills before entering their post-secondary training or the workforce.

## Summary

Chapter Two consists of a comprehensive literature review outlining pertinent research on high school student-athletes and their challenges with dual-career pursuits. Due to the limited amount of literature related to the adaptive skills of high school student-athletes, the chapter additionally contains a review of areas associated with student-athlete development, such as identity development, career maturity, and decision-making skills. Also included is information on the institutional attitudes that contribute to academic challenges that student-athletes face and an overview of the role of counselors in the development of young student-athletes.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In today's global society, adaptive skills have become imperative in achieving vocational success. This study sought to identify the adaptive skill level of high school student-athletes by examining, from their perspective, the processes that they used to make career and life decisions. This chapter includes a description of the study's research design, the population studied, and the tools used to gather data. Next, the research procedures were examined to include recruitment, data collection, and analysis methods. Lastly, the study's methodological assumptions, limitations, and reliability were addressed.

## Research Design

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research began with establishing and using interpretive/theoretical frameworks that guide examining the research problems ascribed to a social or human problem by individuals or groups. Creswell and Poth defined qualitative research as having the following characteristics: 1) it is conducted in a natural setting, 2) multiple data collection methods are used, 3) the understanding is emergent, 3) the study is interpretive, 4) the holistic view is the researcher's perspective, 5) the reasoning is complex, and 6) it is introspective (pp. 43-44). Essentially, the emphasis is on developing a thorough grasp of the significance of the participants' actual experiences and extending them conceptually to a broader group.

Creswell (2013) placed a stronger focus on the process of qualitative inquiry, noting that research begins with assumptions and interpretive frameworks to influence the study of research problems addressing the meaning ascribed to a social issue by individuals or groups. Researchers stated that the data collection methods are transformational and convey the world's happenings

through a succession of representations, including field notes, interviews, discussions, pictures, recordings, and observation notes (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that a qualitative design should be employed when a topic or issue must be examined. It is beneficial for studying groups or populations impacted by difficult-to-quantify variables. Qualitative research is frequently utilized when complex, detailed explanations for an issue are required. The specifics can be acquired only by enabling people to tell their experiences in their natural context. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research empowers participants by allowing them to tell their stories, have their voices heard, and minimize the power dynamics between the researcher and the subjects in a study. By conducting a qualitative study, researchers can better understand the context in which participants negotiate the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that qualitative research is frequently utilized to supplement quantitative research findings by offering detailed descriptions that add additional significance. Finally, it is used to assist in the development of theories and to explain the causal links that exist between them.

A qualitative approach was preferable for this study. No qualitative studies examining the adaptive abilities of high school student-athletes were discovered during the development of the literature review. This type of examination offered important information regarding the participant’s knowledge of adaptive abilities, and their relevance in successfully making post-secondary, career, and life decisions (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a qualitative design enables the researcher to conduct an efficient and meaningful study that expounds upon the depth of individuals' personal experiences. While a mixed-methods strategy was possible, it would have been prohibitively time-intensive to finish the study within the allotted time.

**Phenomenological Approach**

Phenomenology is the process of expanding and deepening understanding of a human phenomenon and is intended to explain a topic about which little is understood, as was the case with the development of student-athlete career adaptive level (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Yüksel and Yildirim (2015), phenomenology was founded on constructivism and characterized by unique occurrences produced by a human being. It aims to establish and describe the phenomena while capturing the essence of individuals' lived experiences. The overarching goal of a phenomenological study is to understand and describe a particular phenomenon and capture the essence of participants' lived experiences with the phenomenon.

This study focused on student-athletes who played varsity revenue sports, their adaptive skills, and their ability to make developmentally appropriate postsecondary and career decisions. A qualitative phenomenological methodology was chosen to study the problem. It also examined participants' career adaptability by identifying their growth along the dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Because this study allowed in-depth and descriptive findings based on participants' experiences, a qualitative phenomenological study was the most appropriate data collection method.

The research subjects were chosen because they had firsthand experience with the phenomena and volunteered to discuss it. The phenomenological method was critical because it enabled learning from the experience of others. Due to the scarcity of data on student-athletes adaptive skill levels, this method was intended to provide an in-depth examination of the development of critical life skills and those who aid in their development. Additionally, the participants' input was anticipated to have significant implications for career counselors to

provide crucial data for creating interventions that will aid student-athletes in developing adaptive abilities that enhance life success.

**Subjects**

When performing a qualitative study, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested that purposeful sampling was the best to identify participants. Purposeful sampling is selecting participants that would likely assist the researcher in understanding the problem and the research question. For example, the researcher chooses participants representing different perspectives of the same issue, or because the cases are ordinary, available, or unusual.

Creswell (2013) identified four aspects to consider when planning research: 1) where the research would take place (setting), 2) who would be interviewed (the participants), 3) what the participants would be interviewed about (events), and 4) the evolving nature of the events performed by the participants (the process).

The purposeful sampling criteria for participants in this study was as follows:

1. student-athletes,
2. at least 18 years of age,
3. who participated in a revenue varsity sport (football or basketball) for at least three years,
4. graduated high school in June of 2022, and
5. agreed to participate in this study.

Creswell suggested a five- to thirty-five sample size for phenomenological investigations. Therefore, this study had twelve participants who volunteered to participate.

## Instrumentation

This study utilized a qualitative methodology, using a phenomenological approach. The project was a descriptive study that examined how college freshman perceived their adaptive skill development as high school student-athletes, the preparative activities they participated in, and the individuals who assisted in the formation of said adaptive skills. A qualitative method provided the participants' views, adding dimensions to the data that cannot be provided in a quantitative study.

### *Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were the primary means of data collection. The qualitative interview consisted of twelve open-ended questions (Appendix A) to address each of the four dimensions of career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). The questions were adapted from the structured interview format found in Savickas' (2013) study. To provide clarity on the perception of student-athletes adaptive skill development, participants were asked to describe their thoughts and actions regarding their post-secondary plans and career goals in narrative form. They were asked to explain their action steps for addressing areas of concern.

### *The Career-Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS)*

The CAAS (Appendix B) contains 24 items used to measure the four dimensions of career adaptability, including Concern (4 items), Control (6 items), Curiosity (6 items), and Confidence (6 items). The assessment, available through open access, provided additional categorization of individuals for data triangulation purposes. Completing the survey took the participants approximately 20 minutes.

## Process

In qualitative studies, the researcher takes on the role of a participant. Establishing rapport with people is critical for efficient data gathering. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), researchers must secure study participants, establish relationships with them, protect the integrity of the research, defend against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect poorly on the organization or institution, and deal with new, challenging issues. The following ethical guidelines were applied.

### *APA Ethical Guidelines Regarding Research.*

Before the study's execution, the American Psychological Association's ethical guidelines for research projects require that institutional approval be obtained to ensure that the information submitted about the research is accurate and that the investigation is conducted in agreement with the official research procedures (APA, 2017). Informed consent is required from participants and should include:

1. the purpose of the research, which incorporates the expected length of participation and the procedures
2. an explanation of participant’s right to refuse to participate, and to discontinue involvement once it has begun
3. an explanation regarding consequences of refusing participation or withdrawing
4. information regarding potential risks and benefits of participation
5. boundaries of confidentiality
6. participation incentives
7. a point of contact to answer questions regarding research procedures and participants rights (APA, 2017, Section 8.2).

The APA also requires that informed consent be obtained from participants regarding the use of audio-visual equipment before the research process begins. This information can be found in the Video Recording Consent Form (Appendix C).

Following the guidelines that inducements for research participation should not be excessive, the participants in this study were offered a small token of appreciation in the form of ten-dollar gift cards usable at Chick-fil-A (a restaurant). After the interview ended, participants were given the option of picking up the card in person at a specified time or having it mailed to them.

According to APA (2017), when reporting the result of the research, the researcher is bound to ethical standards to describe the findings accurately. In addition, the findings given should be authentic in nature, and proper attribution should be provided for data used from other sources. Attributions were given to those who have substantially contributed to the body of work.

***Institutional Review Board***

Clearance from the National Louis University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and consent from participants were sought. The participants' confidentiality and anonymity were protected in the following ways:

1. All personally identifiable information was deleted from the data.
2. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym for reporting the findings.
3. All papers containing personally identifiable information were stored in a locked file cabinet accessible only to the researcher, for a minimum of three years.
4. Video recordings were held in a password-protected Google Drive folder and deleted once the researcher completed the study.

5. The transcript was stored in a password protected cloud folder and was only used in its electronic form.

6. The researcher is the only one who knows who participated in the study.

7. All video recordings took place in a quiet setting free of spectators.

## Research Procedures

### *Recruitment*

After approval was received from the IRB for the proposed study, the link to the recruitment flyer (Appendix D) was provided to the coaches of revenue sports (football, girls' basketball, and boys' basketball) in Richland School District Two to be sent out via their personal Instagram and Twitter accounts. The recruitment notice (Appendix E) and flyer were also sent out via the Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook accounts of the project's researcher. The participant pool was comprised of high school seniors graduating in June 2022. The participants were obtained by purposeful sampling techniques. The study criteria required student-athletes who participated in football or basketball for a minimum of three years and who were at least 18 years of age.

### *Signing the Consent Forms*

Those twelve student-athletes who met the criteria and were interested in participating in the study completed the online informed consent and video recording consent forms using the QR code on the flyer. Instructions outlined at the top of the document were to read the document carefully before signing and to contact the researcher if there were any questions. The researcher's contact information was included. When the signed video recording consent (Appendix C) and informed consent (Appendix F) were received, copies were printed, placed in a folder marked with the participant's assigned number, and placed in a locked file cabinet only

accessible to the researcher during the research process. The link containing access to the CAAS was then emailed to the participant for completion. Instructions on how to complete the CAAS were included at the top of the form (See Appendix B). The researcher's contact information was listed so that participants could contact her if there were any questions. The CAAS was printed and enclosed in the envelope with the participants' informed consent and video recording consent forms and placed in a locked file cabinet for safe keeping. Participants were sent the link to the calendar with identified timeslots for scheduling a time for the interview portion of the study along with the CAAS.

### *Google Calendar Booking*

When the student-athlete booked the appointment, the researcher received a notification, via email, to accept the appointment. Once accepted, the participant received confirmation of the appointment. The calendar information included a date, time, and location where the student-athlete should appear to meet for the interview.

**Email Reminders.** Email reminders were scheduled to be sent to participants a day before, one hour before, and ten minutes prior to the scheduled appointments. Google Calendar automatically generated the reminder messages, sending only the appointment title, date, time, and location. That information could not be edited by the researcher or the message recipient.

### *The Interview*

To meet at the appointed interview time, participants were provided with the steps to join the Google Meet (Appendix G) as an attachment in the reminder email. Each reminder email contained Appendix I as a reminder to participants. At the appointed interview day and time, the researcher accessed Google Calendar and clicked on the appointment title. Once the microphone

and the camara were on, the researcher greeted the participant and provided the following information:

1. In this interview you will be asked to discuss your perception of your adaptive skill development, how you make decisions about your post-secondary goals, and your thoughts about your future career outside of sports.
2. I would like to remind you that participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you may stop participating at any time or refused to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable without any consequence or penalty.
3. Your responses in this study were kept confidential and anything that you say will be presented without identifying information.
4. Please be reminded that the results of this study will be revealed in a group setting to include all the participants who completed the interview process. Your identity was kept confidential until that time. You have the option to refuse to attend this session if it made you uncomfortable.
5. For your participation in this study, you will receive a Chick-fil-A gift card which was provided to you following the completion of the interview. You will either pick it up from the researcher at a mutually agreed upon time or have it mailed to the address you provided.
6. This Google Meet will be recorded for the purposes of verifying the transcript which were be produced by the Scribbl.

The researcher then gave the participants an opportunity to ask questions after which the record function was activated in Google Meet and the interview began. Next, the closed caption function on the Scribbl tool bar was activated to begin the transcription of the interview. The

participants were asked the questions outlined in Appendix F. If clarification of any statements was needed during the interview process, the participant was prompted: “Tell me more about that” or they were asked if they could explain further. The participants were asked follow-up questions to thoroughly explain concepts that they spoke about that were unclear.

The participants were thanked for their time at the end of the video and read the debriefing statement (Appendix I). They were asked if they wanted to pick up their gift card or have it mailed to an address which they provided and were reminded that they would receive a Google invitation to learn about the study's findings once the data analysis was complete. Participants were made aware that their participation in the results reveal was entirely voluntary. If participants were concerned about protecting their privacy, rather than participating in a group setting for the reveal session, they were instructed to request the information to be sent to them via email.

Participants were invited to a Google Meet in which the results of the study were discussed. Those who were unable to attend the results reveal were sent an email (Appendix J) containing a copy of the results and instructions to email the researcher if they wanted to make any comments or had any questions. The meeting, like the interview, was recorded, and Scribbl was used to document the conversation. Finally, the participants were asked if they had any questions that they would like answered at that time. When all questions were answered, the participants were thanked once more, and the Google meet came to an end. As each participant’s interest form was received, the researcher assigned them a pseudonym. To protect the participant’s confidentiality and anonymity, this pseudonym replaced the participant’s name in all data collection and presentation of the findings.

### *The Transcript*

Once the video call ended, a message appeared that stated that the call was ended for everyone. The next screen that appeared was a Google document with the transcript from the interview, entitled "Google Meet Transcripts, By Scribbl." The transcript had each participant's name, the time, and the remarks made. However, to protect anonymity, the title of the document was changed to the reference number of the participant while the data recorded remained unchanged. Participants' names were replaced with the assigned number throughout the entire interview transcript. Google automatically saved the document.

**Checking the transcript for accuracy.** The video was viewed and checked against the transcript to ensure that the participants' responses were recorded accurately. If there were corrections needed, the missing comments were typed in blue font to identify them as corrections. Once the transcript had been corrected, the document was saved. According to IRB guidelines, the video recording was deleted once the transcript was corrected.

## Data Processing

The transcripts were reviewed several times to identify key words and phrases to be used as codes. There were four codes built into the design of the study; they were the dimensions of career adaptability (concern, curiosity, control, and confidence). Also, key components of the interview questions were used as codes. Participant remarks to indicate functioning within the four dimensions were noted, as well as any other emerging trends. Dedoose was used to assist in the coding process. Dedoose is a web-based software used to help organize data for coding in qualitative research.

### *Adding and Linking the Descriptors*

After each interview document was uploaded in Dedoose, descriptors were added to the transcript. The researcher added demographics for each participant to add to the quality of the descriptive data. All descriptors were linked to the appropriate participant data for identification purposes.

### *The Coding Process*

The transcripts were examined to identify meaningful words and phrases to indicate characteristics of the four dimensions of career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). In addition, other reoccurring trends were identified to help provide understanding of the phenomenon. When all trends were identified, they were assigned to the appropriate code to convey meaning.

## Data Analysis

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the method utilized to analyze phenomenological data is precise and organized. The researcher described participants' experiences with the phenomenon under investigation, compiled a list of significant statements and organized them into themes, wrote a detailed description of the participants' encounters with the phenomenon, explained how the phenomenon occurred, and wrote a composite description of the phenomenon. Within those criteria, an adaptation of Moustakas's (1996) approach was suggested for providing rich, comprehensive data on a particular phenomenon. Therefore, the semi-structured interview questions (Appendix A) were designed to gauge the participants’ perceptions of their adaptive skill development, the process they used when making career decisions, and how they went about solving problems that hindered their post-secondary success.

In addition, the interview provided a deeper understanding of the importance student-athletes place on developing adaptive skills and allowed them to share their views on preparing for life outside of sports. Student-athletes were encouraged to provide additional detail by the prompt "please explain" or "can you give an example?" Furthermore, their responses were intended to help career counselors develop interventions to assist other young athletes in preparing for a successful life and career outside of sports.

### *The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale Scoring*

The CAAS was scored manually. As seen in Table 2, the ranking method proposed by Wright and Frigerio (2015) was utilized to assess participants' career adaptability on a high, medium, or low scale.

**Table 2**

*CAAS Scoring Ranges*

| Factor | Lower Range | Middle Range | Higher Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| Concern | Below 15 | 15 – 24 | Above 24 |
| Control | Below 18 | 18 – 26 | Above 26 |
| Curiosity | Below 15 | 15 – 24 | Above 24 |
| Confidence | Below 17 | 17 - 25 | Above 25 |
| Adapt-Ability | Below 70 | 70 – 95 | Above 95 |

The ranges were determined by adding questions 1 through 6 to indicate a concern score. Questions 7 through 12 scores demonstrated a level of control. The scores of items 13 through 18 were used to indicate a level of curiosity. Lastly, the responses to questions 19 through 24 indicated a level of confidence. The final score for career adaptability was the sum of all the

dimension scores. The maximum total score participants could have obtained on the scale was 120. The maximum score in each section was 30.

**Methodological Assumptions**

Qualitative research is characterized by processes that require the researcher and participants to work together. This research method was designed to highlight the participants' viewpoints of the events being examined. In phenomenological analysis, the assumption exists that the participants have lived experiences related to a given phenomenon and other individuals. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collection methods were implemented electronically, and the researcher served as a critical tool in the interpretative process. Other assumptions included:

1. The participants understood the interview questions that were asked and freely answered them without hesitation.
2. The participants answered the interview questions truthfully and candidly.
3. The inclusion criteria assured that the participants had all experienced the same or similar study phenomenon.
4. The participants had a sincere interest in participating in the study.

**Limitations & Delimitations**

When conducting qualitative research there are several limitations. One of the major disadvantages of doing qualitative research is that it is time-consuming because it deals with human interaction for data collection purposes (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Also, the sample size is often small, which brought into question the generalization of results to the broader population being studied. In addition, a small sample size could have posed issues when trying to achieve data saturation. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) further suggested that most

qualitative studies could not be replicated to the letter because of the conditions under which the research was conducted.

The study's limitations were defined by participants' capacity to offer meaningful, thorough responses to the questions posed. Additionally, the willingness of student-athletes to participate in the study without incentive was in doubt. In addition, given that the schools included in the sample group had a predominantly African American population, the findings may not be generalizable across cultures. Moreover, there was considerable doubt about the generalizability to females, given that revenue sports were overwhelmingly male dominated.

Another limitation of the study was the potential for technical problems. Since the interviews were held on the Google Meet platform, several considerations were made. Self (2021) suggested that the participants must have a strong internet connection. A weak connection could have caused the interview to need to be restarted or rescheduled. There was also the possibility of poor video or sound quality, thereby resulting in miscommunication during the interview. In addition, poor internet connection could have impacted participant response rate. Saarijärvi and Bratt (2021) stated that researchers should pay particular attention to confidentiality issues when utilizing virtual interviews as it may be possible for another individual to be present with the participant who did not appear on camera. They also contended that an outside presence could have influenced the participants’ responses to interview questions.

Several delimitations defined the scope of this study. First, the focus of this study was specifically on the experiences of high school student-athletes. Within that group of participants, only those student-athletes who participate in a revenue sport (football or basketball) were included. The study's findings did not apply to all student-athletes, as the time required for physical exercise was less demanding for some. Although non-student-athletes could have

commented on their experiences with adaptive career skills, choosing to focus on the high school student-athlete's specific experiences was a requirement for this study.

Second, the study only included high school student-athletes who were 18 years of age or older and were class of 2022 seniors who graduated in June. Third, all the student-athletes were from the Midlands of South Carolina. Last, the interview took place on the Google Meet virtual platform.

The student-athletes who agreed to participate received a small incentive. Guidelines for completing research dictated that the incentive should not be to the extent that it would entice participants to agree to participate regardless of the potential risks. Because of that requirement, a minimal incentive of a Chick-fil-A gift card worth ten dollars was provided to each participant following the completion of the interview. Participants were given the option to pick up the card from the researcher at an agreed upon time or have the card mailed to them.

**Trustworthiness and Confirmability**

Amankwaa (2016) stated that every study must be trustworthy and confirmable. In qualitative research, a project is deemed trustworthy if it demonstrates credibility or belief in the veracity of the findings. This study presents thick, rich descriptions of the participants' stories, which were intended to increase the truth value of the study (Noble & Smith, 2015). According to Amankwaa, using lengthy descriptions helps achieve trustworthiness. A detailed description of a phenomenon helped the researcher assess the amount to which the findings reached are transferrable to other times, locations, circumstances, and individuals.

The term "confirmability" refers to the absence of researcher bias. The researcher maintained a journal of the observations and decisions made during the interview process. The journal provided an examination of the researcher's perspectives on the information gathered

during the data collection process (Noble & Smith, 2015). In accordance with Amankwaa (2016), confirmability was achieved by using triangulation. Triangulation included obtaining facts from several sources to improve understanding. In this study, the CAAS was used as another data source to provide additional information on the adaptive skill level of participants.

### *Results Reveal*

As another means of confirmability, the participants were invited by Google calendar invitation to the results reveal at the conclusion of the study to review the findings and make comments regarding the accuracy of the data. Because the participants were in their post-secondary locations and may have been unable to travel back to the Midlands area to an in-person discussion, they were invited to a Google Meet to review the results. As with the interview, the meeting was recorded and Scribbl was used to document the conversation. The meeting lasted approximately an hour, during which the study was recapped, and the findings disclosed. Those who could not attend in person or electronically received an email (Appendix I) with the results attached and were given an opportunity to comment as well, via email. All participants' comments were noted and considered for future research and projects.

## Summary

This chapter included the methods and procedures that were utilized to examine high school student-athletes' perception of their adaptive skill levels. The way student-athletes made career-related decisions was studied through a phenomenological approach. The student-athletes completed the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale which was self-reported. The scale provided insight into their career adaptive skill levels. Later, the student-athletes shared their experiences through an interview with the researcher that lasted approximately one hour. Google Calendar and Google Meet were used during the research process to help organize procedures and collect the

data. The Scribbl application was used as an add-on to Google Meet to transcribe the interviews. The researcher used Dedoose software to assist in coding the data and in analysis procedures.

The next chapter contains a description of the data analysis and coding processes. A description of the participants' views regarding their adaptive skill levels as it relates to the four dimensions of career adaptability (concern, curiosity, control, and confidence) is provided. In addition, information regarding trends in participants' career decision-making processes, awareness of adaptive skill levels, and preparation for the future are outlined.

# CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study investigated the phenomenon of the adaptive skill development of high school student-athletes relative to the four dimensions of career adaptability (concern, curiosity, control, and confidence). Twelve student-athletes completed the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2011), an assessment with self-reported competencies in adaptive skill development along the four dimensions (concern, curiosity, control, and confidence). In addition, the student-athletes provided data relative to their perception of their adaptive skill development in a semi-structured interview format. This chapter outlines the results of the Career-Adapt-Ability Scale and the findings from the interviews, which detail the student-athletes' perceptions of their development, the processes they used in making sound career decisions, the individuals who assisted them in career decisions, and how they felt their participation in athletics has affected their ability to make sound decisions. The chapter concludes with a summation of the key findings and themes revealed through the process of investigating the research questions.

## Researcher's Experience with the Phenomenon

Having been a student-athlete through high school and college, I always found great pride in the distinction. The position came with a certain status and responsibility that was humbling and rewarding. It was a role of leadership within the student body in which one was required to be an example of scholarship and conduct befitting the privilege of representing your school and community. I always believed that student-athletes were representative of the best that the school had to offer in the classroom and on the playing field.

My parents made sure that I understood that academics came first, and that academic success was a requirement to participate in athletics. Making average grades was unacceptable. My coaches expected me to get good grades as well as perform on the court. There were rules

and regulations set forth by the high school league offices and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) that mandated a minimum C average for every student athlete. Since then, it seems as though those expectations faded for future generations of high school-student athletes.

High school athletics became revenue-producing, which caused the focus to turn from the development of young adults to the production of a huge entertainment industry. Parents, coaches, school administration, and the community began to lower the standard for athletes who were high performing. Teachers began to require less of them in the classroom and provided extra time to turn in assignments. Coaches demanded more and more of the athlete's time to be spent in practice and extra training sessions, leading to less time devoted to schoolwork.

For years, in my role as a career development facilitator I noticed high performing athletes struggle to meet graduation requirements. Many of them had to attend junior colleges because they failed to meet the requirements of four-year institutions. Several of them failed to meet academic requirements during their first semester in college and did not return to school after the winter break. Failing to develop the necessary skills to be successful in college, these former high school student-athletes returned to the community reveling in stories of past athletic accomplishments, but without viable plans for their futures.

Having been a former high school student-athlete, I began to compare myself to those student-athletes with whom I worked as a career development facilitator. How were we so different in our understanding of the necessity to prepare for life? Did they understand that to reach their goal of playing college athletics required that they had to have the credentials to get into the school? What about those who did not get recruited to play college athletics? How would they prepare for their next stage in life? What did they think about how the demands of high

school athletics affected their preparation for a life outside of sports? Did the student-athletes see a problem, and if they did, what do they think they need to address it? These questions provided the motivation for this study.

## Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study aimed to comprehend the adaptive abilities of high school student-athletes at an urban high school in South Carolina's Midlands from their perspective. The study focused on student athletes' adaptive ability level, which is important for developing strong life and career abilities. According to Liang (2020), career flexibility may have significant implications for treatments that support adolescents' successful transitions into adulthood and advance their well-being throughout their lives. For career and guidance counselors to plan and implement career programming to improve the quality of post-secondary career decisions that student-athletes make, it is necessary to provide insight into the formation of adaptive abilities. Twelve student-athletes from an identified pool of individuals experiencing the phenomenon volunteered to participate in the study.

## Research Questions

RQ 1: How do high school student-athletes perceive their career adaptive skill levels?

RQ 2: How have high school student-athletes made choices about their future careers?

RQ 3: How do high school student-athletes solve problems that could hinder post-secondary success?

## Participant Information

The participant pool, derived through the selection process of purposeful sampling, comprised 32 student-athletes who completed the interest form. Of those, only 12 male student-athletes who were between the ages of 18 and 19 years old and participated in high school

football for at least three years completed the study. Eleven of them were Black, and one was White, as outlined in Table 3. At the time of their participation in this study, all of them had hopes of playing football at the collegiate level.

**Table 3**

*Demographics*

| Participant | Age | Gender | Race | Sport |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Peter | 19 | Male | Black | Football |
| Andrew | 18 | Male | Black | Football |
| Bart | 18 | Male | Black | Football |
| James | 18 | Male | Black | Football |
| John | 18 | Male | Black | Football |
| Matthew | 18 | Male | Black | Football |
| Jud | 18 | Male | Black | Football |
| Simon | 18 | Male | Black | Football |
| Phillip | 18 | Male | Black | Football |
| Paul | 18 | Male | Black | Football |
| Nate | 18 | Male | Black | Football |
| Matthias | 18 | Male | White | Football |

This table shows the demographic breakdown of participants in the study.

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the participants' names were removed from the data collected. A pseudonym was assigned to each participant. Only the student-athletes who completed the CAAS and submitted to the interview are referenced in this study using the name assigned them.

## Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were reviewed several times to identify key words and phrases that could be used as codes. The study's design included four codes that represented the dimensions of career adaptability (concern, curiosity, control, and confidence). Key elements of the interview questions were also used as codes. Participant comments indicating functioning within the four dimensions, as well as any other emerging trends, were recorded. Dedoose was

used to help with the coding. Descriptors were added to the transcript after each interview document was uploaded in Dedoose.

The transcripts were analyzed to identify meaningful words and phrases that indicated characteristics of the four career adaptability dimensions (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). Other recurring trends were also identified to aid in gaining an understanding of the phenomenon. After identifying all trends, they were assigned to the appropriate code to convey meaning.

In accordance with recommendations from Creswell (2013), the researcher wrote a detailed description of the participants' encounters with the phenomenon, explained how the phenomenon occurred, and scribed a composite description of the phenomenon. Within those parameters, an adaptation of Moustakas' (1994) approach for providing rich, comprehensive data on a specific phenomenon was utilized. As a result, the semi-structured interview questions (Appendix F) were created to assess participants' perceptions of their adaptive skill development, the process they used when making career decisions, and how they dealt with problems that hampered their post-secondary success.

Furthermore, the interviews provided a deeper understanding of the importance student-athletes place on developing adaptive skills, as well as an opportunity for them to share their perspectives on preparing for life outside of sports. The prompts "please explain" or "can you give an example?" encouraged the participants to provide more detail. Furthermore, their responses were meant to assist career counselors in developing interventions to help other young athletes prepare for a successful life and career outside of sports.

## Perceptions of Student-Athletes

The data review outlines the participants' perceptions regarding their adaptive skill development and was categorized into themes based on the four dimensions of Career Adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). The data contained secondary themes revealing the student-athletes' methods for making career choices and how they addressed barriers to their post-secondary success. In addition, the data explained the participants' perspectives on how involvement in sports influenced their adaptive skill development. Additional insights were gained into the student-athletes' desire to have careers in which they could earn lucrative salaries, and the people they felt were most influential in their preparation for post-secondary success.

### Ability to Make Career Decisions

Being able to make developmentally appropriate career decisions is a critical indicator of an individual's level of career adaptability. Each of the participants expressed a level of confidence in making developmentally appropriate career decisions. However, two of them expressed some concern regarding their career processes. Of the two, one participant felt comfortable making the decision but stated that he would need additional support. The other participant expressed confidence in deciding his next steps but was unsure about his ability to execute the steps needed to reach his goal without assistance. Overall, participants reported that they felt confident they had the ability to make an appropriate decision regarding their post-secondary plans.

**Table 4**

*Ability to Make Career Decisions*

| Characteristic | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Confident in making career decisions | 9 |
| Confident in decision, but may need assistance | 2 |
| Confident in the decision but unsure of the necessary skill level to succeed | 1 |

*Note.* This chart indicates the participants' overall comfort level in making career decisions.

Nine of the participants indicated that they felt confident that they could make the appropriate career decision. Peter stated, "I feel pretty confident about making those decisions because I feel like my parents molded me into the type of person who could make good decisions for himself." Two participants stated they felt confident but may need assistance. Bart stated, "I think I can make my own decisions, but I will probably need some help along the way." The remaining participants felt confident about making career decisions but were unsure if they were prepared to execute the necessary career tasks. Jud stated, "I know what I am going to do, but I'm not sure I'm prepared."

**Frequency and Depth of Career Thought**

Thoughts about the future are an indicator of the concern an individual has about their future. As shown in Table 5, most participants expressed that they thought of their future careers daily. However, two participants thought of the future occasionally. One of those two stated that he tried not to think about it much at all so he would not experience stress. The other stated that it was an occasional thought, and he tried to stay focused on the present. The thoughts about their careers ranged from the types of occupations they would have to provide for themselves and their family. Only one participant stated that they thought about careers related to sports.

**Table 5**

*Frequency of Career Thoughts*

| Characteristic | Frequency |
|---|---|
| All the time | 10 |
| Occasionally | 1 |
| Tried not to think about it | 1 |

*Note.* This chart indicates the student-athletes' frequency of career thought.

When the question was posed to participants about how often they thought about their career outside of sports, Paul stated that he thought about their future career "all the time." However, one participant stated he did not want to focus on their careers. Matthias stated, "I try not to think about it." Other participants stated that they thought about their careers infrequently. Peter stated he had that type of thought, "Every now and then."

**Table 6**

*Topics of Career Thoughts*

| Characteristic | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Business Ventures | 3 |
| Making the right career choice | 2 |
| Career Success | 2 |
| Having a career in or around sports | 2 |
| Reaching post-secondary goals | 1 |
| What type of career | 1 |
| Available resources | 1 |

*Note.* This chart indicates the student-athletes' areas of career thought.

The content of the thoughts shared by participants indicated the level of concern over their future careers. Three student-athletes thought about businesses that they either currently have or wanted to pursue. James stated, "I think about my career every day. How can I be successful in my business, and how can I get to the next level." Peter stated, "I want to own a shoe company, so I love looking at shoes. I think of it like a lot."

Two participants wondered if they made the right career decision. Jud said, “I think about whether I should do something else.” An additional two participants thought about career success. Simon shared, “I want to be in the highest position in a job that I can.” Andrew stated, “I think, how can I get there? How can I get to a place where I’m successful?”

Another two participants thought about careers in or related to football that they could pursue. John stated that “I’m thinking like, what’s related to football that I can do after full body to make me money, like sports medicine or physical therapy.” (*Full body* refers to playing football in full dress uniform. The participant is referring to game day competition.)

One participant thought about how they would get to their post-secondary destinations. Andrew stated, “I think about how I am going to get to college.” Another participant thought about the type of occupation they would have; Matthias stated, “I think about what I would be doing.” A single participant thought about the resources available to assist him in succeeding in high school and college. Bart expressed his thoughts on resources stating, “I wonder what’s at high school and what’s at college that can help me reach my goals.

**Career Concern**

Table 7 outlines the level of apprehension that participants experience related to their future lives and career choices. When examining participants’ concerns regarding their future, one-third reported having no career concerns. Three of the twelve participants were concerned about their immediate next step. The remaining participants had concerns about being prepared for what was ahead of them and maintaining order in their lives.

**Table 7**

*Concerns Related to Career Goals*

| Area of Concern | Frequency |
|---|---|
| No concerns | 4 |
| Acceptance to college | 3 |
| Selecting the wrong career | 2 |
| Having a Plan B | 1 |
| Staying organized in life | 1 |
| Unexpected Life Events | 1 |

*Note.* This table details the concerns that student-athletes shared about planning for their future.

Four participants expressed having no concerns regarding their future careers. Phillip stated, “I don’t know. I never thought about it. I just go with the flow.” Three participants were concerned with getting accepted into college. Bart shared, “Right now, my concern is getting into college.” Two participants were concerned with selecting the wrong career. Jud stated, “Just the usual concerns that the job might not work out. Maybe I won’t enjoy it, or it will take too much time away from my family.” One participant was concerned with having an alternate plan. Matthew stated, “I don’t want sports to be my only plan. I want to go to college and start my new career in business.” Another participant was concerned with maintaining order in his life. Paul shared, “One of my concerns is like [*sic*] having things all over the place, forgetting things, and not writing things down. Just being organized.” Lastly, one participant expressed concern over events that were out of his control. Matthias stated, “I just have concerns, there’s just a lot of unknowns, right?”

**Career Preparatory Activities**

The following information outlines the activities participants were engaged in that they believed facilitated career preparedness as shown in Table 8. A significant number of participants stated that their participation in sports helped them develop traits and qualities that

would be beneficial in making good career and life decisions. Some participants identified technical training and coursework as important to their skill development. Two participants identified career exploration activities as a precursor to their skill development, while one identified participation in a community organization as assisting his skill development.

**Table 8**

*Career Activities*

| Activity | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Football | 4 |
| Football and Coursework | 3 |
| Career exploration activities | 2 |
| Academic coursework or skill training | 2 |
| Character development activities | 1 |

*Note.* Table 7 shows the types of activities that the student-athletes consider to be preparatory in their career planning.

Four participants identified football as an activity that helped them develop the ability to make appropriate career decisions. Phillip stated, “Football brings us into a brotherhood, and our coach helps us with that by teaching us the way of life and what we need to do when we grow up.” Three participants stated football and courses offered at the school helped prepare them to make good career decisions. Jud stated, “I was in the barbering class, so that’s what helped me decide what I wanted to do and football.” Two participants engaged in career exploration activities, such as job shadowing. Simon shared, “Over the summer, I went to visit my auntie because she does sports medicine. I went to go do a study with her over the summer.” An additional two participants stated that coursework or offerings at the school help them develop the knowledge and skills to make sound career decisions. Matthias shared, “I took five advance placement courses.” One participant stated that character education activities help them develop the skills to make sound career decisions. Peter stated, “I would say Boy Scouts, and I’m an

Eagle Scout. I feel like, over the years, I learned so many new things that will help me through life."

**Strategies for Decision-making**

Participants were asked to share the strategies and methods used when making important decisions regarding their career paths. When making important career decisions, participants used consultation with a trusted adult more than any other method. Other strategies used by participants were researching the topic they needed to decide about and looking at the positives and negatives of a situation before making a decision. But, again, participants relied heavily on the counsel of a trusted adult to help guide them in making career decisions as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9**

*Decision-Making Activities*

| Decision-Making Activities | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Consulted a parent or trusted adult | 7 |
| Research | 2 |
| Consulted a parent or trusted adult & Research | 2 |
| Examined Pros & Cons | 1 |

*Note.* Table 8 represents the strategies used by the student-athletes when making important decisions about their career.

Seven participants conferred with a parent or other trusted adult when making important career-related decisions. James stated, "My counselor and parents help me with that." Two participants researched information to assist them in making important career decisions. Simon shared, "I always make sure I am doing things right by studying and learning things I need to know about careers. I like to know how I can go and do it if it's what I want to do." Two participants stated that they consulted a trusted adult and investigated themselves to make informed decisions. Matthew stated, "I kind of look up the rates and things like the amount of money, like I could get from doing that kind of work and how long it would take because

sometimes it takes like years and months to do." He continued to say, "Then I talk to my mom and other people in my life so they can help me." One participant stated they considered the positives and negatives associated with the decision before determining what to do. John shared, "Taking notes, weighing the pros and cons of things."

**Re-Evaluating Goals**

Successfully assessing a situation and adjusting is vital when navigating life. This is particularly helpful when making career choices because the requirements of the world of work change with trends in technology and the demands of society. The following information was gathered from participants detailing instances when they were required to adapt their career or post-secondary plans. Most of the participants reconsidered their career goals for reasons such as education and training requirements, the influence of parents or trusted adults, and doubt in their satisfaction with the career choice. Four of the participants stated that they did not have to rethink an educational or career goal. Once the goal was set, they focused on the task.

**Table 10**

*Assessment of Career Goal*

| Goal Assessment | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Changed Career Goals | 8 |
| Have Not Changed Career Goals | 4 |

*Note.* The chart indicates the number of student-athletes who adjusted their goals.

Eight participants reconsidered their post-secondary selections or career choices. One chose another career path because of the course requirements and length of training. Simon shared, "Two years ago, I was thinking about going into the medical field or doing engineering, but the schooling and all, it's a lot. So, I had to rethink what I wanted to do." Another had difficulty selecting a college to attend. John stated, "There was a lot of rethinking because one

day I'd be set on one school. The next day, I'd hear something about the other school and be set on that school." One participant did not make any changes to his career plans. Jud stated, "I just think a lot about if I am choosing a career because it's what my dad wants or if it is what I want. I think about it a lot, but right now, I'm gonna [*sic*] stick with it."

Another participant had a growth spurt which increased his physical ability to go after his goal. Phillip shared, "When I stayed at six foot for the past four years, I think a career choice in the NFL may not work, so you know. I need a backup plan just in case." Another participant reconsidered participation in sports. Bart shared, "I had to rethink football because it was kind of interfering with my schoolwork." Two participants stated that they had to adjust their career plans because of COVID. Peter experienced academic challenges during the virtual school phase during the pandemic. During that time, he was able to strengthen his communication skills so that he could effectively convey his academic concerns. Peter stated, "I feel like during COVID, I had to adapt when we were at home during virtual school because I'm more of a visual learner. Our teachers would just tell us what to do. They didn't show us how to do it. I knew if I was going to keep my grades up, I was going to need help." Peter continued, "I would just email and ask questions and things like that. I feel lucky I got communication skills better with my teachers [*sic*]." The researcher stated, "So you improved your skills so that you could better communicate with your teachers." Peter responded, "Yes." Four participants stated that they have not had to make any adjustments to their career plans. Andrew stated, "Not really, because usually when I make a plan, I go for it, and it's really no backtracking."

**Establishing a Backup Plan**

Establishing career goals is a vital element in preparing for a successful life. Participants in this study were asked what backup plans they had considered if their first option was

unavailable. Most participants in the study identified an alternate plan or consulted a parent or trusted adult to assist them in identifying options when their first option did not work out. Approximately one fourth of the participants took steps to address the barriers to completing their career goals. Conversely, a small percentage of participants had no barriers, as referenced in Table 11.

**Table 11**

*Method of Career Planning*

| Method of Goal Adjustment | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Alternate Plan | 4 |
| Consulted a Parent or Trusted Adult for Advice | 4 |
| Utilization of Problem-Solving Strategies | 3 |
| No Concerns/ No Plan Changes | 1 |

*Note.* Actions are taken by student-athletes when adjusting their career goal.

Approximately four participants identified an alternate plan when their first option was not viable. Simon stated, “I thought about the Army or the family business as backups.” An additional four of the participants consulted a parent or other trusted adult for advice and did research when needing to facilitate career options. Matthew shared, “I would just like research or like ask people like [*sic*] what they would do. Like [*sic*], get ideas from them so I can translate it to like what I’m trying to do.” Three participants chose to use problem-solving strategies to address barriers to their career goals. Paul stated, “I was having problems getting my work done. What I did was when [*sic*] I got the homework and the classwork, I would try to do it in class, and then if I had anything left over, we would have study hall. After practice, I make sure I see my desk and eliminate electronics until I got my work done.” One participant either had no concerns or stayed with their plan despite their concerns. James explained, “I haven’t had any concerns about what I am going to do after high school because I have my businesses set up.”

**Knowledge of Chosen Career Path**

The ability to make an informed decision is the precursor to success in any area of life. Participants in this study were asked what information they had gained about their chosen career path and how they came about it. Most participants gained labor market information about their chosen career paths from a parent or trusted adult. Many participants did not have any specific information regarding the careers they had chosen to pursue. A few participants received technical skills in their chosen career paths through coursework at school. One participant had not settled on any career but was familiar with the family business. A breakdown of the knowledge that participants had regarding their chosen career field can be found in Table 12.

**Table 12**

*Knowledge of Chosen Career Path*

| Level of Career Knowledge | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Basic Labor Market Information | 5 |
| Minimal Information | 4 |
| Technical Skill Training | 2 |
| Undecided About Career Path | 1 |

*Note.* This chart indicates the number of participants that had any type of career information regarding their chosen career paths.

Five participants learned basic labor market information about their career choice from a parent or trusted adult, including education and training needed, job tasks, and salary potential. Simon shared, “I know welding is a high-paying job.” Phillip shared, “I want to get the best degree in college so that I can get a high paycheck from this teaching business. I learned this from my Econ teacher.” Paul explained, “I went for an official visit, and they talked me through the education needed for my degree. They really broke down everything like NIL (Name, Image & Likeness) and how much I could earn.” Four participants had very little information regarding

the area they had chosen to pursue a career. Peter stated when asked about owning a shoe company, “I don’t really know a lot about opening a shoe business, but what I do know is it’s gonna [*sic*] take a lot of time and dedication to get your own business rolling.” Two participants received technical skills in their chosen career field. Nate stated, “I looked into engineering when I was a freshman, and I’ve been in love with it ever since. I’m in my fourth year of engineering classes. One participant was undecided regarding his career path but had some information on the family business. Matthias shared, “I’m not fully decided, but business-wise, my dad has a company where he develops small businesses. So, you know, growing up, I’ve seen it a lot, and I am really intrigued with it.”

**Confidence in Career Choice**

There are many components to consider when choosing the most appropriate career. In addition, one must consider the technical skill required, earning potential, location, and career benefits. The following information was gathered in examining the participants’ thoughts on the appropriateness of their career choices. Just over one third of the participants were confident that they had chosen the correct career path because they enjoyed it, they liked the components of the training, or they already had amassed some technical skill in the area. Equal proportions of the participants felt that they had chosen the correct career path because of the earning potential, as were those who were unsure of a career path. Finally, one participant believed that his career path was his destiny. Those categories are found in Table 13.

**Table 13**

*Reason for Confidence in Career Choice*

| Reason for Confidence in Career Choice | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Love for the career field, preparation for, and skill in performing career tasks | 5 |
| Salary Potential | 3 |
| Destiny | 1 |
| Unsure of Career Choice | 3 |

*Note.* The chart shows the reasons student-athletes are confident in their career choice.

Five participants believed they had selected the right career path for them because it was something they loved, would enjoy the coursework in pursuing, or had some skill in doing. Andrew stated, “I love Math, and I like hands-on.” Nate shared, “I’m always working with my hands, and you know, engineering gives me a challenge to think. I think I could make a positive difference when it comes to working with engineering.”

Three participants stated that they were confident they chose the right career path because of their earning potential. James shared, “It brings good profit.” Matthew stated, “You can make a lot of money out there putting your own product out there.” One participant stated he has chosen the right career path because they are destined to have a career in athletics. Paul shared, “I’ve been really stressing it since I was a little kid. I know this path. I just feel like this is something that I’ve been destined for, really.” The three remaining participants were unsure of a career choice. Matthias stated, “I’m not sure what I’m going to do. My grandparents still tell me, ‘Who knows.’”

**Challenges to Post-Secondary Success**

Preparing for college can be a daunting task for many student-athletes. In this study, participants were asked to describe the challenges they faced when preparing for their post-secondary training. Half of the participants responded that they were having an issue with the

aspect of preparing for college. Academic issues were the root of most of the issues related to college. A small percentage found difficulty in deciding on an area of study. Additionally, a small percentage were concerned with starting a business and getting prepared for life after college. Additional details can be found in Table 14.

**Table 14**

*Challenges to Post-Secondary Success*

| Challenges to Post-Secondary Success | Frequency |
|---|---|
| College Entrance | 5 |
| Deciding on a Major | 2 |
| Funding a Business | 1 |
| Life Preparation | 1 |
| No Problems | 3 |

*Note.* Barriers that student-athletes identified to their post-secondary success.

Five participants stated that college entrance, scholarships, and eligibility requirements posed a challenge. The issues ranged from low GPAs to getting acceptances and scholarship offers. Andrew shared, “I’m waiting on acceptances.” Jud stated, “One problem is my eligibility to go to school and play football. I haven’t been doing good [*sic*] in school for the past two years because of COVID.” Phillip explained, “Coming into high school, I wasn’t the best student. My grade situation was a problem.” Two participants had difficulty settling on a course of study in college. John stated, “A problem I’m facing in preparing for college is picking a major.” Two separate participants had concerns related to funding a business and life preparation tasks in general. Matthew stated, “I just know the amount of money it takes to start a business, so that’s a problem.” Matthias shared, “Preparing for a life outside of college. I will just say the growing. Just how quick everything’s coming.” Three participants reported having no problems with their post-secondary planning. Bart stated, “I ain’t [*sic*] come to no problem yet.”

**Student-Athlete's Perception: The Effect of Sports Participation**

Being a student-athlete requires a commitment and determination that is admirable in a young adult. Yet, often, the demands on a student-athlete's time can be detrimental to skill development in other areas. Therefore, participants in this study were asked their opinion on how participation in sports affected their adaptive skill development. The summary of answers can be found in Table 15.

**Table 15**

*The Effect of Sports Participation*

| Effect of Sports Participation | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Development of Leadership, Decision-making & Maturity | 9 |
| Taught Life Lessons | 1 |
| Positive Social Outlet | 1 |
| Development of Leadership & Detrimental to Academic Success | 1 |

*Note.* The chart details the student-athletes' perception of the benefits they gained from sports.

Each participant stated that participation in sports had helped them develop positive character traits and skills that are transferrable to other areas of their lives. Nine participants stated that participation in sports helped them develop leadership and decision-making skills while they matured and persevered. Matthias stated, "It's matured me like eight years. There's so much responsibility that comes with it. As the quarterback, I'm the leader." Peter shared, "My leadership is what happened to me. That's gonna [*sic*] translate." John explained, "It helped me make quick decisions in sports and related to life period." Phillip stated, "It's teaching me how to become a man in life." Three participants shared that participation in sports helped them to learn valuable life lessons and provided a positive outlet for them during high school. Simon said, "They tell [*sic*] me a lot of life lessons and stuff that will help me in the future." Jud shared, "It

just kept my mind off things. It kept me active and out of the house and kept me out of stuff that I shouldn't be doing."

Matthew also identified the challenges that he faced through sports participation. He shared, "It wasn't affecting me in a good way. I put so much time in. You forget about the other goals that you want to do. So, you kind of just gotta [*sic*] know, give each of them some time and figure it out. You have time for sports and other things you want to pursue."

## Self-Reported Career Adapt-Abilities Scale

The paper-and-pencil self-reported Career Adapt-Abilities Scale was completed by each participant (CAAS). The CAAS was scored by hand. There are four dimensions to career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). Table 2 shows the score ranges. The ranges were calculated by adding questions 1 through 6 to indicate a level of concern. The answers to questions 7 through 12 demonstrated a level of control. The scores of items 13 through 18 were used to indicate the level of curiosity. Finally, responses to questions 19–24 indicated a level of confidence. The total of all dimension scores was used to calculate the final score for career adaptability. The maximum possible total score on the scale for participants was 120. Each section had a maximum score of 30. The results of the scale for participants in this study are shown in Table 16. The skill level ranking of participants can be found in Table 17. For an explanation of the score ranged refer to Table 2.

**Table 16**

*Self-Reported CAAS Scores*

| Participant | Total CAAS | Concern | Control | Curiosity | Confidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Peter | 78 | 18 | 23 | 14 | 23 |
| Andrew | 107 | 26 | 27 | 24 | 30 |
| Bart | 100 | 18 | 25 | 28 | 29 |
| James | 101 | 24 | 27 | 25 | 25 |
| John | 98 | 19 | 28 | 28 | 23 |
| Matthew | 109 | 30 | 22 | 26 | 26 |
| Jud | 107 | 27 | 27 | 24 | 29 |
| Simon | 95 | 23 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Phillip | 120 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| Paul | 120 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| Nate | 117 | 29 | 30 | 29 | 29 |
| Matthias | 97 | 26 | 24 | 24 | 23 |

Note: This table shows the participants' overall self-reported CAAS and individual dimension scores.

**Table 17**

*Self-Reported CAAS Total Score Ranking*

| Dimension | Low | Medium | High |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall Score | | | 12 |
| Concern | | | 12 |
| Control | | 1 | 11 |
| Curiosity | | 1 | 11 |
| Confidence | | 1 | 11 |

*Note.* The chart depicts the career adaptability level ranking reported by each participant.

All participants rated themselves in the highest range of overall career adaptability and in the dimension of concern. In the other dimensions, control, curiosity, and confidence, eleven participants reported high skill levels, while three participants reported skill levels in the medium range.

## Interview Responses and the Four Dimensions

The interview questions used in the study were designed to learn which actions participants executed that demonstrated their adaptive skill level. Competencies in the four dimensions (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence) are measured by behaviors that exhibited a purposeful intention towards the execution of career-related tasks. Participants indicated on the self-reported CAAS that they thought they had a high level of career adaptive skills, suggesting that they experienced no issues in making developmentally appropriate career decisions. For a high school student-athlete, that would entail selecting a career path including the education and training necessary to reach their career goals.

Control involves the individual's self-discipline in making conscious decisions about one's future career and occupational transitions. Curiosity refers to the inquisitive nature of the individual and demonstrated events of exploration to determine one's place in the world. Confidence is interpreted by the individual's expressed belief in their ability to make appropriate educational and vocational choices. Lastly, Control is the self-reported ability to define one's own destiny. The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) results follow.

### Concern

Concern is the first dimension of career adaptability and is demonstrated by a sense of future orientation and the need to prepare for upcoming events. The twelve participants expressed general concern by stating that they had always considered their career paths. Some participants exhibited a higher level of involvement by demonstrating their understanding of the steps required to lay the groundwork for their post-secondary success and describing behaviors that indicated a desire to prepare themselves for future life and career tasks. Furthermore, several participants made concerted efforts to prepare for a career path, as shown in Table 18.

Three participants exhibited indicators of optimism. There were no participants who lacked an indicator of career concern. Eight participants had an indicator of the awareness of tasks necessary in the present and the future. Peter shared, “It's gonna [*sic*] take a lot of time and dedication to get your own business rolling. And you must be persistent and keep, like, going at it. Pushing at it. To get something that you want to last.” Jud stated, “I need to get better at putting together a plan as the year goes on and make sure I’m prepared for when I graduate and go off to college and stuff.”

Eight participants shared indicators in the sub-categories of awareness of tasks present and future, and preparation. Andrew stated, “I’m taking classes that I need for my career.” Bart shared, “I’m making sure my grades are up to par. And just making sure my SAT & ACT scores are up by staying after school for tutoring.”

Nine participants revealed plans of preparation for their post-secondary education and/or training. Simon shared, “I just started finding things that I was interested in and looking them up and learning things about them. And it’s like doing a lot of research on the careers that was possibly suited for me.” Phillip stated, “I gotta [*sic*] think about what I’m going to do for my future and how would I do it.”

One participant displayed optimism and awareness of necessary tasks, present and future. James said, “I don’t really have concerns about it. I just want to keep going and be successful at what I do. I put a lot of effort into my two businesses to make sure they are successful.”

Indicators of optimism and preparation present and future were displayed by two participants. Paul shared, “I just know things are gonna [*sic*] plan [*sic*] out the way that they should plan out. So, it’s never a time where I really overthink anything that’s going in a negative way.” He further stated, regarding his preparation for his post-secondary training, “I have a

scholarship to ECU, so I went up for an official visit and they talked me through and about things with my family about the education there, campuses, the football and the facilities."

Five participants had indicators of awareness of tasks and preparation. Bart shared, "I have to get accepted into school. I'm making sure my grades are up to par. And just making sure my SAT and ACT are up by staying after school for tutoring." Nate stated, "I have to make sure I have connections. You know if I ever need help. I've been taking engineering classes for three years."

**Control**

The aptitude to make purposeful decisions and decisive actions in performing vocational development and negotiating occupational transitions is control, the second dimension of career adaptability. When making career decisions, it is distinguished by conscientious attitudes and a belief in personal responsibility. The ability to create a career story, displaying self-determination beliefs, and displaying a decisive and compromising attitude in career decision-making are behavioral indicators of control. Details of participant data in this dimension can be found in Table 18.

Six participants were able to articulate a career story and provide multiple career options. Peter shared, "I feel like I could be, like, a good coach. Also, all my coaches telling me that, my family tells me that, just because of how I think and how I love the game so much." He continued to state, "They feel I would be a good coach, I do, too. I feel like I could be a recruiter or agent something like that." John also shared career alternatives when he stated, "Like, if it came down to it, I'll probably say the military. Or just entering the workforce."

Self-determination beliefs were described by three participants. Paul stated, "I just feel like this is just something that I've been destined for really, but I just know, this was something I

wanted to do, so that's the path I'm trying to take." Phillip shared, "Oh, very high. I have a strong belief that I want to continue to play football in college and then earn my degree and teach it."

Six participants displayed an attitude of decisiveness and compromise. Nate stated, "I don't really have a time whenever that I had to rethinking [*sic*]because, you know, I want to stay committed to what I want to do." Matthew stated, "I go to college and start like my new career. I want to get into business. So, I can be able to be entrepreneur because right now, I got a business where I like design clothes and shoes and things like that." Matthias showed an attitude of compromise by his statement, "Maybe I'm not you know, gonna [*sic*] go to Harvard if you know, football doesn't work out because you know I wanted to play football there and you know who knows that still could work out."

Two participants had control indicators in career story, self-determination beliefs, and attitude of decisiveness and compromise. Jud shared his career story by stating, "I want to be a sports management owner, and then when I get my degree in business management, I want to open up a barber shop." He displayed self-determination beliefs by his comment, "I just know what my goal is, and how I am going to get there." Jud was decisive in his post-secondary plans that was evidenced by his statement, "I want to go to State, and I want to major in business management, and I want to minor in sports management." (The participant was referring to South Carolina State University).

Two participants shared indicators of career story and attitude of decisiveness and compromise. Matthias stated, "I used to want to be a doctor because I am good in math and science. But I like real estate development. I think about where it would be and where I would work. I definitely like business." No participant shared the indicators of self-determination beliefs and attitude of decisiveness and compromise. Three participants displayed no complex

indicators of control as no statement could be identified in the data that addressed any of the sub-categories.

**Curiosity**

Curiosity is the third dimension of career adaptability, defined as an eagerness to learn about new things and the fit between oneself and the world of work. The concept is demonstrated by enquiring behaviors when considering career options. The data collected revealed indicators of information-seeking behaviors and strategies for making career decisions. The details are listed in Table 20.

Ten participants expressed information-seeking behaviors. Peter, who is interested in owning his own shoe business stated, “I look at shoe companies online. I love looking at shoes. I look up information on shoes and then email the company to ask questions. I’m scrolling on Instagram looking at new shoes and stuff like that.” Andrew, who is interested in engineering shared, “I researched how much I could make. I know they make about 70 thousand dollars a year.” When asked about information-seeking behaviors, Matthew shared, “I got research off websites and looking at different types of websites that people have done like for the business I wanted to do, and then I’ve been asking people.”

Four participants revealed information-seeking behaviors and strategies for making career decisions. John shared, “I wondered how I could use this to make me money outside of sports. I look at what’s related to football that I can do to help me make money like sports medicine or physical therapy or something like that.” He continued, “I solve problems by weighing the pros and cons of things that I want to do after high school.” One participant stated neither information-seeking behaviors nor strategies for making career decisions.

**Confidence**

The fourth dimension of career adaptability is confidence. Confidence is defined by an individual's belief that they can make successful career decisions. Confidence reflects feelings of self-efficacy about one's ability to successfully navigate a plan of action required to make and implement appropriate educational and vocational choices. The two sub-categories where participants could show competency in this area are self-efficacy beliefs and problem-solving competencies. The response details are found in Table 18.

Nine participants displayed self-efficacy beliefs. Bart stated, “I believe I made the right career choice because I like to be hands-on with stuff and you know, engineering is kind of basically filled with designing.” Nate shared that he was confident in his career plans by stating, “I don't really have a time when I had to change plans. I want to stay committed to what I want to do.” Matthias expressed belief in himself by sharing, “I want to blaze my own path. I don't want to be a follower.” Seven participants expressed problem-solving competencies. When asked about a time when he had to address a barrier to his career plans, Phillip shared, “I was not the best student, and it was going to be a problem. I've been studying a little bit more and keeping up with my assignments. Now, I'm passing all my classes with good grades.” Five participants expressed belief in themselves and relayed problem-solving strategies. Paul shared, “I just feel like playing football is something that I've been destined for, really, I just know, this was it, I know this was something I wanted to do, so that's the path I'm trying to take.” When discussing a problem, he faced in meeting his goals, he stated, “Organization really, just keeping my things in order.  That's one thing. I had a problem on.” Paul continued, “It really is just like schoolwork and then practice, then not come in until late and being too tired to do my homework. That's just something that I had to work on. I had to be more organized in my day.”

**Table 18**

*Participant's Attitudes, Behaviors and Competencies of Career Adaptability*

| Indicator | Peter | Andrew | Bart | James | John | Matthew |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Optimism | | | | X | X | |
| Awareness of Tasks | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Preparation | | X | X | | X | X |
| No Concern Indicators | | | | | | |
| Career Story | X | | | | X | X |
| Self-Determination Beliefs | | | | | | |
| Attitude of Decisiveness and Compromise | | | | | | X |
| No Control Indicators | | X | X | X | | |
| Information-Seeking Behaviors | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Career-Decision-Making Strategies | | | | | X | |
| No Indicators of Curiosity | | | | | | |
| Self-Efficacy Beliefs | | X | X | X | X | |
| Problem-Solving Competencies | | | X | X | X | X |
| No Confidence Indicators | X | | | | | |

Note: This table shows the participants' described competencies in four dimensions (Concern, Control, Curiosity and Confidence)

**Table 18 (continued).**

*Participant's Attitudes, Behaviors and Competencies of Career Adaptability*

| Indicator | Jud | Simon | Phillip | Paul | Nate | Matthias |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Optimism | | | | X | | |
| Awareness of Tasks | X | | | | X | X |
| Preparation | | X | X | X | X | X |
| No Concern Indicators | | | | | | |
| Career Story | X | | X | | | X |
| Self-Determination Beliefs | X | | X | X | | |
| Attitude of Decisiveness and Compromise | X | X | X | | X | X |
| No Control Indicators | | | | | | |
| Information-Seeking Behaviors | | X | X | X | | X |
| Career-Decision-Making Strategies | | | X | X | X | X |
| No Indicators of Curiosity | | | | | | |
| Self-Efficacy Beliefs | X | X | | X | X | X |
| Problem-Solving Competencies | X | | X | X | | |
| No Confidence Indicators | | | | | | |

Note: This table shows participants' described competencies in the four dimensions (Concern, Control, Curiosity and Confidence)

## Results Reveal

The results reveal was held via Google Meet on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 6:30 pm. The meeting lasted approximately one hour. All participants were emailed the Google link with a synopsis of the results, analysis, and their individual results, found in Tables 3, 22A, and 22B. Participants were instructed to leave their cameras off during the meeting to protect their identity. Peter, John, and Paul were the participants in attendance. A summation of the study, the purpose and the research questions were provided for participants as well as a brief overview of the procedures. The researcher shared the results of the CAAS and responses of the interview. During that briefing, a comparison and contrast was made between the self-reported responses of the CAAS and the attitudes, behaviors, and competencies identified in the interview responses. The researcher pointed out the differences in the demonstrated skill levels in the four dimensions (concern, control, curiosity, confidence) from the reported skill level from the CAAS.

Peter, who recorded a CAAS score on the middle level, only described four indicators of attitudes, behaviors, and competencies of career adaptability during his interview. When the data was explained to him, he verbalized that he could understand that his CAAS score was higher than it should have been. Peter wanted resources so that he could strengthen his career skills. He was referred to the career center at Erskine College to ask about participating in an internship or job shadowing with a business owner so that he could gain some practical experience. A suggestion was also made that he takes a more active role in researching the shoe business and what it would take to get it started.

John, who recorded an overall CAAS score in the lower end of the high range demonstrated seven indicators of career adaptability. Because he did not show strong competencies in the control dimension, he agreed that his CAAS score in that area was not as

strong as he reported, however, he still felt confident in his adaptive skill level because of his career preparation.

Paul reported a perfect score on the CAAS. His demonstrated attitudes, beliefs, and competencies in career adaptability indicated that he could improve his skills in the dimensions of concern and control. When reviewing the data, he also agreed that his CAAS score was higher than his indicated skill level. However, he was still confident in his adaptive skills and felt that he could make decisions that would be in his best interest.

Peter, John, and Paul were encouraged to read through the materials provided to them and to email the researcher if they had any additional questions. Participants were asked if there were any additional questions or comments before ending the meeting. Having none, the researcher thanked them for participating in the study and wished them well with their athletic and academic endeavors. The meeting then ended for everyone.

## Summary

Twelve student-athletes participated in the data collection process for this study. Each of them was interviewed and completed the CAAS. Most participants reported being confident in their ability to make age-appropriate career decisions and demonstrated a general concern about their future careers. Many were concerned with getting admitted to college, where they expected to participate in sports. Many participants experienced instances when they had to reconsider or adjust their career plans. According to the participants, they relied on the counsel of parents and a trusted adult to help them. The level of knowledge that participants had in their chosen career field ranges from very little to having technical skills in those areas. However, a significant number of participants revealed that they possessed minimal knowledge of the area that they had chosen to pursue.

Participants reported academic issues as a barrier to post-secondary success that they addressed by going to tutoring, improving their study habits, and getting assistance from counselors and teachers. Each of them believed that participation in sports helped them mature while developing decision-making and leadership skills. Only one participant identified a negative effect caused by his sports participation, and that was the amount of time required for training and competition interfered with the ability to study for classes.

Data collected from the interview responses was sorted into themes related to the four dimensions of career adaptability. The excerpts were used to provide a clearer understanding of the practiced skills of the student-athletes. In the dimension of concern, most participants exhibited more than one indicator. Participants' responses indicated an awareness of the necessary tasks that they would have to complete and had begun some form of preparation for their post-secondary lives. Regarding the activities indicative of career control, most participants shared examples of a career story, self-determination beliefs or an attitude of decisiveness and compromise. There were three participants who showed no indicators of career control. Only half of the participants expressed skill in the third dimension, curiosity, in which information-seeking behaviors and decision-making strategies are criteria for competency. Conversely, each of the participants expressed belief in their ability to make sound career decisions and to resolve any issues that arise.

Chapter Five contains an overview of the study, a summary of the findings to include the comparison from the self-reported CAAS, and the responses collected from the interviews regarding demonstrated skills in each of the four dimensions of career adaptability. Common themes will be summarized. In addition, the limitations of the study will be highlighted and

recommendations for future research will be shared. Chapter Five will conclude with final thoughts about the phenomenon.

# CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In this phenomenological examination of high school student-athletes' perception of their adaptive skill development, twelve student-athletes retrospectively looked at their high school activities that led to their career skills. The study aimed to gain information that would assist school and career counselors in providing interventions to help strengthen student-athletes' knowledge and skills to enable them to succeed in their post-secondary endeavors and a career outside of sports. In addition, the study brought about awareness of how student-athletes perceived their adaptive career levels, the process by which they made decisions about their future careers, and the strategies used to solve career-related problems.

The framework was based on the career construction theory by Savickas (2005), which states that individuals construct careers by assigning meaning to vocational behaviors. Career construction theory highlights attitudes, beliefs, and competencies (the ABCs of career construction) that promote problem-solving strategies and coping behaviors that individuals use to integrate their vocational self-concept into work roles. These attitudes, beliefs, and competencies indicate an individual's adaptive skill level related to the four dimensions of career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence).

Each participant completed the Career Adapt-abilities scale, a self-reported career skills assessment, and an interview designed to identify the attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that foreshadow competency in the four dimensions of career adaptability. This chapter will discuss and analyze significant trends in the data, implications in the practice of school and career counselors, and suggestions for future research.

**Self-Reported CAAS**

The overall scoring on the CAAS for each participant indicated that they believed they possessed the skills to make developmentally appropriate career decisions related to their post-secondary education and training. The breakdown of the scoring ranges can be found in Table 2. Examining the CAAS scores, two participants submitted the highest possible overall scores. The nine remaining participants rated themselves in the broad high range, but the dimension scores ranged from medium to high. Finally, one participant reported a score in the medium range, with dimension scores ranging from low to medium. The overall CAAS score, and dimension scores can be found in Table 16.

Athletes in general have a high opinion of their capabilities and an expectation of succeeding. They are conditioned from an early age to believe that they can achieve great feats and not to accept weaknesses that will prevent them from being triumphant. Eleven of the twelve participants reported scores on the CAAS in the high range of abilities. Two participants reported a perfect score on the assessment. When comparing the self-reported CAAS scores to the attitudes, behaviors, and competencies identified in the interview data, the researcher found that the participants lacked the competencies to indicate a high ranking in career adaptability. Those findings are found in Table 18.

**Indicators of Competency in the Dimension of Concern**

According to Savickas (2013), when assessing an individual's competencies in the dimension of concern, one should look for signs of planning. Planning activities should be evident, and the individual should show coping behaviors of awareness, involvement, and preparation. Matthew, Phillip, and Paul reported the highest score possible in the concern dimension. According to the self-reported CAAS score, Matthew believed he scored in the high

range of skills in the concern dimension. When comparing the data obtained from his interview responses, the participant articulated plans for his future and outlined a plan to address his goals. That participant's planning confirmed a high level of concern for his future. Phillip expressed that he was thinking about his post-secondary plans but showed no planning activities for his next phase in life, which indicated that the participant executes at a skill level lower than the one he reported on the CAAS. Paul's responses revealed he was thoughtful and optimistic about the future. Making plans for his post-secondary education, Paul actively sought information about the available resources at the college of his choice. The participant's responses displayed an attitude, belief, and competence in the concern dimension, supporting his view that he possessed skills in the high range of the concern dimension.

Andrew, Jud, Nate, and Matthias had self-reported concern dimension scores in the high range. The interview data was examined and both Andrew and Matthias indicated attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in planning and preparation. Both participants expressed an awareness of the foundational tasks that needed to be completed to achieve their post-secondary goals and were actively preparing for the challenge. The behaviors outlined in the data indicated a high skill level in the dimension of concern. Jud and Nate expressed awareness of tasks necessary to reach their post-secondary goals but did not report any planning activities. Their responses indicate that they possessed some skill in the concern dimension but that the skill was weaker than they had written on the CAAS.

The remaining participants reported a CAAS score in the middle range. Only Bart displayed attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that indicated a higher skill level than reported on the CAAS. Bart identified tasks necessary for his post-secondary success and made plans to reach

his goals. The other participants displayed a level of thoughtfulness but reported no plans or actions that would lead to goal attainment at the next level.

**Indicators of Competency in the Dimension of Control**

Individuals possessing adaptive skills in the dimension of control should exhibit decisive decision-making and be purposeful and willful toward their career goals (Savickas, 2013). Phillip, Paul, and Nate reported that they had the highest level of adaptive skill in the dimension of control. Examining the data collected from their interviews, Phillip reported self-determination beliefs and decisiveness in career choice, indicating a high skill level in the control dimension. Nate only demonstrated an attitude of decisiveness and compromise, indicating a lower adaptive level in the dimension of control. On the other hand, Paul, showing self-determination beliefs but no decisiveness in his actions, displayed a lesser skill level than what was reported on the CAAS.

Andrew, James, John, and Jud reported a score in the high range of control on the CAAS. Only Jud showed indications of decisiveness, self-determination, or conviction in his career goal. His interview responses support his reported skill level in control of the CAAS. Neither of those other three participants showed any decisiveness or decision-making activities in their responses, signifying a lower skill level in the dimension reported on the CAAS.

The remaining participants (Peter, Bart, Matthew, Simon, and Matthias) reported a skill level in the middle range of control on the CAAS. The data collected from the interviews indicated that Peter and Bart expressed no signs of self-determination or decisiveness in their career decisions, suggesting that their skill level in the dimension of control could be at the lower end of the scoring range rather than at the middle. Matthew, Simon, and Matthias expressed

some career interest but needed to express conviction in their choices; their responses signified less developed skills than reported on the CAAS.

**Indicators of Competency in the Dimension of Curiosity**

Indicators of inquisitiveness, exploration, and investigating are required to assess adaptive skills in the dimension of curiosity (Savickas, 2013). Phillip and Paul reported the highest possible score in the dimension of curiosity on the CAAS. Referencing the data collected from the interviews regarding the demonstration of inquisitive behaviors, the researcher found that Phillip demonstrated information-seeking behaviors and strategies for making career decisions related to his career path, indicating a level of competency in the dimension. Even though Phillip was identified as having both indicators, because he relied heavily on the guidance of a parent or trusted adult which indicates that his competency level is lower than his self-reported high rating on the CAAS. Paul, also describing both indicators, sought the counsel of a trusted adult as his information-seeking behavior. He was able to put a plan in place to address his educational needs independently but consulted a parent or trusted adult to confirm his decision. As with Phillip, Paul's dependence on others indicates that his skill level in the dimension of curiosity is lower than indicated on the CAAS.

Participants Bart, James, John, Matthew, and Nate reported scores in the highest range on the CAAS. In addition, each participant, except Nate, expressed information-seeking behaviors and exploration activities in their interview, which lends credibility to their self-reported scoring of the high range on the CAAS. However, Nate's responses to the interview questions contained no evidence of inquisitiveness, exploration, or experimentation, which suggests that his skill level in the dimension of curiosity is lower than was reported on the CAAS.

Andrew, Jud, Simon, and Matthias reported a score in the medium range on the CAAS. Jud was the only participant whose data did not support the scoring in the medium range in the dimension of curiosity. No indicators were found in the interview to suggest that Jud exhibited any information-seeking, exploration, or experimentation behaviors.

Peter, who reported minimal skills in curiosity on the CAAS, did display information-seeking behaviors, recorded during the interview process. This finding indicated that the participant was more inquisitive about his career path than he believed.

**Indicators of Competency in the Dimension of Confidence**

Skills in confidence are indicated by the ability to solve a problem effectively. Andrew, Phillip, and Paul reported that they had the highest skill level in this dimension on the CAAS. Examining the data collected from the interview, Andrew believed he could effectively manage any barriers he was presented with but displayed no problem-solving strategies. This finding indicated that Andrew displays fewer adaptive behaviors in the dimension of confidence. Phillip showed a problem-solving approach but did not consistently express his faith in finding solutions to barriers, indicating that his competency in confidence was lower than reported on the CAAS. However, evidence of self-efficacy and problem-solving abilities in the data collected from Paul's interview signified that his self-reported score on the CAAS was within the range of his demonstrated skill.

Bart, Matthew, Jud, and Nate reported CAAS scores in the high range. Bart and Jud expressed both self-efficacy beliefs and problem-solving strategies in the interview, supporting their high scoring on the CAAS. Matthew indicated no self-efficacy beliefs, but he did describe problem-solving strategies during his interview, suggesting that his skill level in the dimension of confidence is lower than what was reported on the CAAS. Nate, who expressed self-efficacy

beliefs during his interview, displayed no indications of problem-solving abilities representing a lower competency in the confidence dimension than what was reported on the CAAS.

The remaining participants (Peter, Andrew, James, John, Simon, and Matthias) reported a score on the CAAS in the medium range. The data about Peter showed no indicators of self-efficacy beliefs or problem-solving strategies, which indicates that the adaptive skill reported on the CAAS in the dimension of confidence is higher than the participant's actual adaptive skill level. James and John both had indicators of self-efficacy and problem-solving strategies in data collected from the interviews suggesting that they could have higher adaptive skills in the confidence dimension than they reported. Simon and Matthias expressed that they believed in their ability to make career decisions and resolve any issues that may occur, but provided no evidence of problem-solving abilities, which indicates that their rating in the medium range was accurate.

**Career Adaptability Summary**

Reviewing the data collected regarding the career adaptability of the student-athletes, each participant had some skill in the four dimensions. However, there are gaps in skill development that prevent student-athletes from being competent in each of the dimensions. From the student-athlete's perspective, as reported on the CAAS, they possessed all the tools they need to make developmentally appropriate career decisions and can overcome barriers they face to their post-secondary goals. However, when asked to provide instances where they have demonstrated those skills, they lacked experience. To be fully competent in career adaptability, participants should exhibit planning, decision-making, exploration, and problem-solving behaviors (Savickas, 2013). Participants all showed a general level of concern regarding their future. However, many still rely heavily on their parents or another trusted adult when deciding

their fate. Participants showed a trend of following the careers of family members instead of participating in exploration activities to discover where they fit best. Moreover, participants lacked growth in personal control, making it challenging to construct their occupational futures without assistance (Savickas, 2013).

**Student-Athletes' Perception of Adaptive Skill Development**

According to the study results, student-athletes believe they possess the necessary skills to make developmentally appropriate career decisions. Most participants reported that they felt confident in making career decisions. However, three participants expressed concern regarding their ability to decide their future. One of those participants stated that he was confident that he could make decisions presently but may need some assistance in the future. The other participant said he felt confident making the decisions but was unsure of his ability to execute the necessary career tasks. The third participant expressed doubt about his preparedness for future career tasks.

Student-athletes who participated in this study needed more engagement in career development activities. Stambulova et al. (2015) stated that combining sports and career planning has been proven to assist in balancing sports and other areas of the student-athlete's life. The combination of athletics and career planning also helps prepare student-athletes for a life outside of sports. Only three of the participants participated in activities that would be considered career preparatory. Two participants participated in technical training and trade-related coursework while in high school. Another participant engaged in job-shadowing activities to learn about occupational skills. Many participants considered their football participation to help prepare them for a career.

The data shows that only some participants in the study understand career development strategies, techniques, and their importance to developing adaptive skills, which assist in lifelong

success. In addition, only three participants had engaged in verified career preparatory activities and could express how their participation in those activities had a bearing on their future success. Nota et al. (2014) stated that the ability to connect present actions to future success indicates the awareness necessary to grow and develop throughout a lifespan.

## Student-Athletes' Decision-Making Strategies

Participants in the study reported using several different methods to make career-related decisions. Over half of the participants said they consulted a parent or another trusted adult to get advice before making critical career-related choices. Two participants consulted a parent or trusted adult but also researched so that they could form their own opinions. Two participants relied on their research and made their decisions unilaterally. Finally, one of the participants examined the situation to assess the positives and negatives associated with the decision before making a choice.

Overall, most participants looked for a parent or a trusted adult to tell them what to do when making an important decision. Only five participants reported strategies for decision-making and utilization of personal input into the construction career decisions. Of those five, only one participant felt confident enough to make a career decision without consulting an adult. Savickas (2013) determined that the lack of independent action indicates a deficiency of career preparation in student-athletes, leading to an inability to make self-determining decisions.

### *Student-Athletes' Career Choice*

Selecting a career path is an important task in every young adult's life. For student-athletes the decision on a career path to follow is often clouded with dreams of becoming a professional athlete. When making career decisions, it is important to make informed choices to minimize the unexpected barriers that may arise. A significant number of participants in this

study had no pertinent information about their chosen career paths. Only two participants had actual job-related information regarding the career paths they selected. Eight participants shared that they had changed their career choice after finding out certain aspects that they realized did not suit them.

Student-athletes need to devote time to researching different career paths and participating in exploration activities to identify areas of work that are conducive to their talents and skills (Stambulova et al., 2015). They devote most of their time outside of the classroom to athletic training and competition, which leaves little time for the development of career and life skills (Love, 2019). The data indicated several of the student-athletes who participated in this study lacked the foundation to make informed decisions regarding their career paths and are unsure of the area or how they will earn a living.

**Student-Athletes' Problem-Solving Abilities**

Student-athletes face many challenges to their post-secondary success. How they meet and resolve those challenges can mean the difference between a college future or going directly into the workforce. This study's participants faced challenges from attaining college entrance, deciding on a college major, and essential life preparation. Most participants relied on a teacher or a counselor to provide a solution to their academic issues. One participant stated that he had to restructure how he approached his academics. He used his problem-solving skills to address deficits in his preparation for school by using his time more wisely and being disciplined. Paul stated, "So what I did was, when I got the homework and the classwork, I would try to do it in class, and then if I had anything left over, I would do it in study hall." He continued, "If we didn't have study hall, after practice, I would make sure I would see my desk and eliminate all

electronics." He concluded, "I would just have my Chromebook and my work, and I would just get it done before I did anything else."

As with the trends in decision-making skills, student-athletes strongly tend to seek an adult to assist in addressing barriers. Most of the participants sought the assistance of a teacher or a counselor when addressing obstacles to post-secondary success. A small percentage of participants displayed significant problem-solving strategies, including correcting their behaviors or actions that contributed to the problem.

### Student-Athletes' Perceptions: The Effect of Sports Participation

Each of the participants believed that participation in sports had been a benefit to their development as athletes and as maturing adults. A third of participants expressed that participation in sports helped them develop skills that will enable them to be successful in their careers. Participants identified benefits to sports participation, such as the development of maturity, leadership, and life skills; participants also stated that sports participation provided a safe place to release stress. Only one participant identified the demands of participation in sports as being a barrier to academic success. However, several participants identified meeting college entrance requirements as a barrier to post-secondary education. Surprisingly, the other participants made no connection between their academic deficiencies and the rigorous demands of athletic training and competition.

## Limitations and Delimitations

Qualitative research, by design, is a time-consuming process. With the purpose of providing a voice for the participants, interviews were utilized to collect the data, thereby requiring slow and methodical methods to analyze the information. In addition, the sample size was small, meaning the results will not be generalizable to the student-athlete population at large.

Also, the participant pool was made up of all males who played football. All but one was of African American descent. In addition, all the participants were from the Midlands of South Carolina. Those factors prohibit the results from being relevant to student-athletes who participate in other revenue sports, are female, and are from other cultures and states.

The process of initiating the study proved to be a limitation. Because the procedures were initiated electronically, the interest form, informed consent, completion of the CAAS, and scheduling the interview had to be completed in separate steps. Finding participants to complete each of those steps for the data collection process was a challenge. Thirty-two potential participants completed the interest form, but only twelve participants completed the steps necessary to be included in the study.

The scope of this investigation was defined by several restrictions. First, the experiences of high school student-athletes were the specific focus of this study. Only student-athletes who competed in a sport that generates income (such as football or basketball) were included in that category of participants. The results of the study did not apply to all student-athletes since different students required different amounts of time for physical activity. Although people who are not student athletes could have provided feedback about their experiences using adaptive career skills, this study had to be focused on the unique experiences of high school student athletes.

Second, only student-athletes who were 18 years of age or older and who had graduated were included in the study. The ages were verified by the participant responses on the interest form. Third, all the student-athletes were from South Carolina's Midlands. Moreover, the interview was conducted via the online platform Google Meet. Last, the participants were seniors who received their diplomas in June 2022 from the class of 2022.

The student-athletes were given a reward for agreeing to take part. The incentive was not so great that it would persuade individuals to consent to participating despite any potential dangers, according to guidelines for conducting research. Due to this restriction, each participant received a meager incentive of a Chick-fil-A gift card worth $10 when the interview was over. Participants could pick up the card in person from the researcher at a predetermined time or have it mailed to them.

## Implications for Professional Practice

According to the data collected, participants in this study believed they had the skills to make developmentally appropriate career decisions but relied on guidance from a parent or trusted adult. Ozdenur and Guneri (2017) suggested student-athletes would benefit from carefully planned guidance and career education programs entering high school. The results of the assessment would be used to individualize career exploration activities that should occur in regular intervals throughout the student-athlete's high school career. The purpose for assessing the student-athletes is to assist them in developing skills that they can utilize when their athletic career ends and to promote decision-making based on their interests and skills independent of the influence of their family.

Most participants exhibited surface-level skills in planning for their futures and faced barriers such as gaining college acceptance and indecision regarding a college major or career path. Considering the information gained from the data regarding difficulties student-athletes have meeting college entrance requirements, it seems imperative for school personnel to recognize that student-athletes have unique needs in their preparation for post-secondary success (Ozdemir & Guneri, 2017). Identifying student-athletes upon entering their first year of high

school would be beneficial so that they could receive specialized interventions that target the development of academic identity (Stambulova et, al., 2015).

From an early age, student-athletes form an identity based on who they are on the playing field. Success in organized youth sports, coupled with the cheers of a crowd, begin to send a message to young children that they are special based on their athletic performance. By the time a student-athlete reaches high school, they may have been participating in sports for ten years; their identities as athletes is well established. Prior to high school, academics, while important, were not factored into the decision for college admissions. Harris et al. (2014) found that interventions can be utilized to educate and inform student-athletes about the importance of academic success as it relates to college admission and how it plays a role in continued participation in the sport they love.

The goal is for student-athletes, upon completion of their athletic career, to have a normal life in society. To facilitate that, they should not only enjoy the benefits of athletic competition but should also prepare for the potential deficits in growth and development in other critical areas of their psyche. Having a dual career focus that prepares them in athletics and education or sports and employment is vital to achieving that outcome. Stambulova et al. (2015) stated that method has been proven successful in helping student-athletes achieve balance between sports and other areas in life.

According to Ozdemir and Guneri (2017), high school students who exhibit a positive outlook can improve their career adaptability before transitioning to college or the workforce. Nine of the twelve participants in this study lacked an optimistic attitude, suggesting that those students-athletes would face challenges in strengthening their adaptive skill level. As a result,

school counselors should focus on identifying students having problems with planning, to provide additional support and interventions.

Additionally, because all the participants at the time of the data collection had hopes of participating in sports on the college level and/or professionally, the recommendation is that school counselors provide programming to educate student-athletes on the reality of playing college and professional sports. Cooper's (2016) research found that, with social media and television coverage of high-profile athletes getting college scholarships and being drafted to the professional leagues, student-athletes receive a skewed view of the opportunities available to participate in sports after high school.

## Recommendations for Future Research

In this study, the lack of diversity among participants, the retrospective view provided, and the exclusion of socioeconomic status as a consideration left room for further examinations on the topic. Additional information on the improvement of career adaptive skills of student-athletes in other populations would assist school counselors in the formation of comprehensive vocational development interventions to address the needs of a wide variety of student-athletes. In addition, an examination of student-athletes of different races, genders, and socioeconomic status would be beneficial. That information would allow counselors to provide individualized interventions specific to the needs of the student-athlete. Moreover, a longitudinal study of student-athletes beginning in their ninth-grade year and ending during the twelfth-grade year would enable school counselors to measure the effectiveness of their career development programs in promoting adaptive skill development relative to the four dimensions of career adaptability.

Another area of research that would add to the body of literature on the career adaptability of student-athletes is the examination of the relationship to grade point average and adaptive skill development. Studies examined the effect of sports participation on academic performance; however, the correlation of the academic performance of student-athletes to their adaptive skill development remains untapped.

## Conclusion

Participants in this study believed that they possessed the skills to make developmentally appropriate career decisions. However, their responses to the interview questions indicated that most of them rely on the guidance of a parent or trusted adult when making important decisions and solving problems related to their career goals. A small selection of participants demonstrated effective decision-making and problem-solving strategies that were implemented independently. Though student-athletes expressed they had frequent career thoughts, they were not actively planning for their futures. Only two of the participants were engaged in career exploration activities to increase their vocational skills and knowledge of occupational paths.

One of the most common barriers reported by participants was gaining college acceptance. Some participants believed low grades and test scores were the reasons they were not admitted. Another barrier reported by participants was indecision regarding a college major or career path. The barriers identified by participants indicated that implementation of rigorous and routine career development interventions would be of great benefit to themselves, their families, and their communities.

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# APPENDICES

# Appendix A

## Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development

### Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of your ability to make decisions about your career after high school?

2. How often do you think about a career?

3. When thinking about the future, what are your career thoughts?

4. What are your concerns about your career?

5. What activities do you participate in that help you develop the knowledge and skills you need to make career choices?

6. What are the steps you take when making important decisions about what you are going to do after high school?

7. Describe a time when you had to rethink an educational or career goal while in high school. What changes to your post-secondary plans did you have to make, if any? How did you arrive at a solution? From whom did you receive assistance in correcting the problem?

8. When you have had concerns about what you are going to do after high school, what options have you considered to address those concerns?

9. What do you know about the career path that you have chosen to pursue after high school? How did you get this information?

10. Explain the reasons you believe your chosen career path is the best choice for you.

11. Describe a problem you faced in preparing for what you are going to do after high school. How did you solve it?

12. How has your participation in sports affected your adaptive skill development in high school?

## Appendix B

## Career Adapt-Abilities Scale

Name _____ Age _____ Circle one: Male or Female

DIRECTIONS Different people use different strengths to build their careers. No one is good at everything, each of us emphasizes some strengths more than others. Please rate how strongly you have developed each of the following abilities using the scale below.

| **STRENGTHS** | Strongest Strong 5 | Very Strong 4 | Strong 3 | Somewhat Strong 2 | Not Strong 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Thinking about what my future will be like | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Realizing that today's choices shape my future | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Preparing for the future | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Becoming aware of the educational and vocational choices that I must make | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Planning how to achieve my goals | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Concerned about my career | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Keeping upbeat | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Making decisions by myself | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. Taking responsibility for my actions | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. Sticking up for my beliefs | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 11. Counting on myself | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 12. Doing what's right for me | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Please rate how strongly you have developed each of the following abilities using the scale below.

| **STRENGTHS** | Strongest Strong 5 | Very Strong 4 | Strong 3 | Somewhat Strong 2 | Not Strong 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. Exploring my surroundings | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 14. Looking for opportunities to grow | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 15. Investigating options before making a Choice | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 16. Observing different ways of doing things | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 17. Probing deeply into questions I have | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 18. Becoming curious about new opportunities | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 19. Performing tasks efficiently | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 20. Taking care to do things well | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 21. Learning new skills | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 22. Working up to my ability | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 23. Overcoming obstacles | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 24. Solving Problems | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Scoring Key

Concern = Items 1-6
Control = Items 7-12
Curiosity = Items 13-18
Confidence = Items 19-24
Career Adaptability = Items 1-24

Mark L. Savickas & Erik J. Porfeli, 2011

## Appendix C

**Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development**

**Video Recording Consent Form**

**I Acknowledgement of Video Recording**

I, _____, agree to be video recorded as part of my participation
Participant Name

in the study, " Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student - Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development", conducted by Aretha Barnes.

**II. Confidentiality and Storage Example Sentence**:

I understand that the video recording will not be labeled with my name. I understand that the video will be kept in a Google Drive that is password protected and destroyed upon completion of the study.

**III. Access and Dissemination** Example Sentence:

I understand that access to the video will be limited to the principal investigator, Aretha Barnes, for data collection purposes only. I understand that no clips from the video will be used for publications or conference presentations.

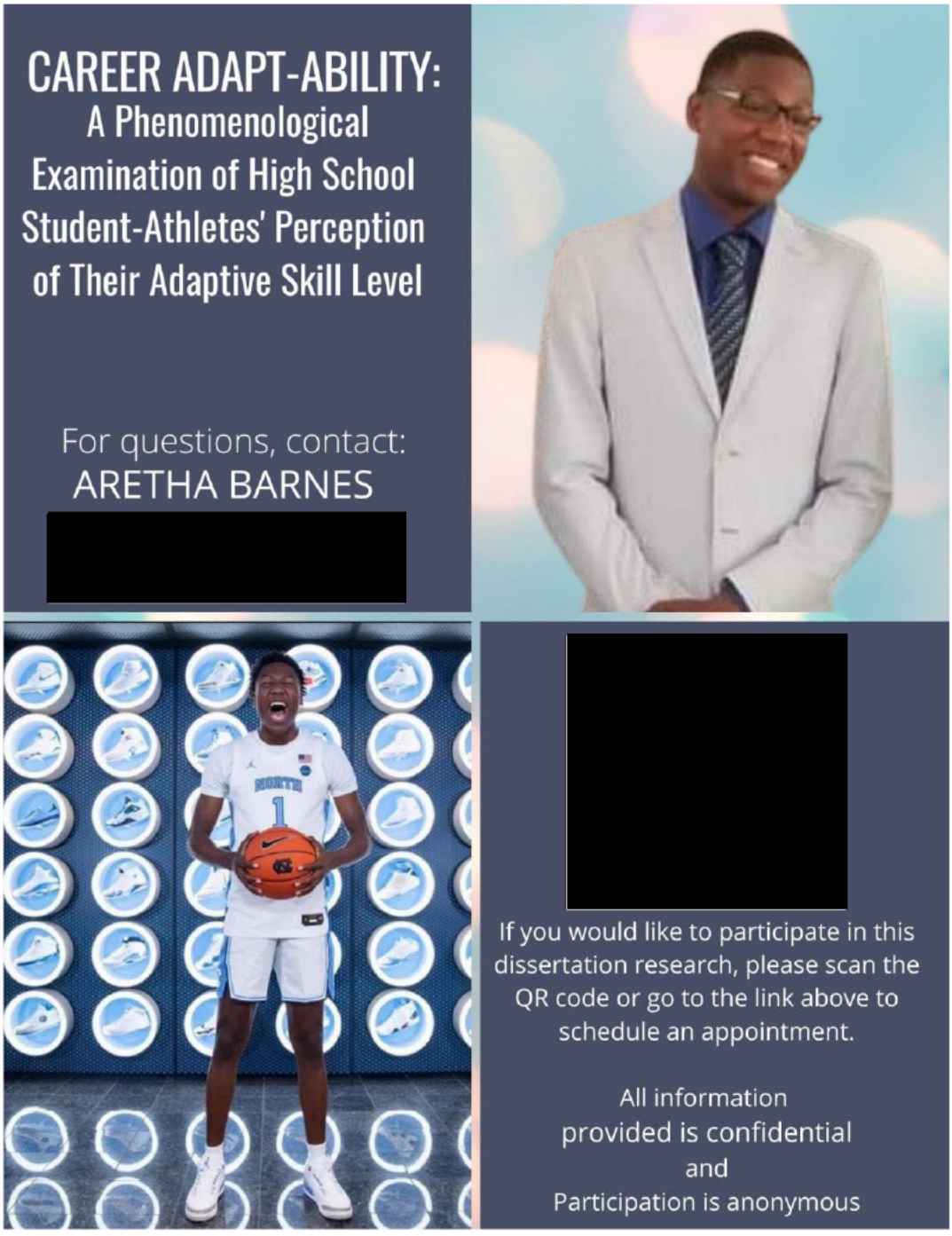
_____ _____
Print Name Date

_____ _____
Signature Date

## Appendix D

## Recruitment Flyer

**Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development**



## Appendix E

## Career Adaptabilities: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development

### Recruitment Notice

Prospective Participant,

I am a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at National Louis University. I am researching the adaptive career skills of high school student-athletes.

I am seeking student-athletes who meet the following criteria as research participants:

1. student-athletes,
2. who are at least 18 years of age,
3. participated in a revenue varsity sport (football or basketball) for at least three years, and
4. will participate voluntarily.

Interested student-athletes will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire that will take about twenty minutes, participate in a one-hour interview, and a one-hour group session in which the results of the study will be revealed.

During the questionnaire and the interview steps, you will be asked to discuss your perception of your adaptive skill development, how you make decisions about your post-secondary goals and your thoughts about your future career outside of sports. The study is qualitative and seeks to understand your personal experiences related to the development of adaptive career skills which enable you to be successful in life.

If you meet the above criteria and are interested in participating with sharing your experience and would like more information about the study, please contact:

Aretha Barnes
[redacted]

# Appendix F

## Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development

### Informed Consent

My name is Aretha Barnes, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, **"Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development,"**. This study aims to understand the career adaptive skill development of high school student-athletes who participate in revenue sports. This study is intended to help researchers develop a deeper understanding of the student-athlete's perception of their adaptive skill development, and deficits in your adaptive levels critical to the formation of sound career development and life skills while contributing to the body of literature related to career adaptability. This form outlines thepurpose of the study and describes your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Aretha Barnes, a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa.

Please understand that the purpose of the study is to examine the perception of high school student-athletes who participate in revenue sports related to the development of skills that promote promising career and life planning. Participation in this study will take approximately 2 hours and twenty minutes which includes:

- completion of a short paper-pencil survey to identify adaptive career levels that will take approximately twenty minutes,
- an individual interview scheduled at your convenience via Google Meet,
    - The interview will last up to an hour and include approximately twelve questions to understand student-athlete's perception of their adaptive skill development.
    - Interviews will be recorded.
- a reveal of the results of the study to include all participants that will last approximately an hour.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences and employed to inform school counselors of the challenges that student-athletes face in post-secondary planning and preparedness and interventions to address deficits in adaptive skill development. Participants' identities will in no way be revealed (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants). The researcher will secure recordings in a password-protected cloud folder and transcripts in a locked cabinet in her office to ensure confidentiality. Only the researcher will have access to data. Only the researcher will know who participated in the study.

There are no anticipated risks to participants greater than that encountered in daily life. However, the participants may benefit from gaining insight into post-secondary preparedness, which could lead to the facilitation of developmentally appropriate career decisions. Further,the

information gained from this study could be helpful to the school counselors at RVHS, other schools, and school districts looking to strengthen the career planning of high school student-athletes.

Upon request, you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, Aretha Barnes, at aretha.barnes09@gmail.com to request results from this study.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher, Aretha Barnes, by email at [redacted] or by phone at [redacted].

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that the researcher has not addressed, you may contact the dissertation chair, Dr. Marguerite Chabau at mchabau@nl.edu or the co-chairs of NLU's Institutional Research Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth; email: Shaunti.Knauth@nl.edu; phone: (312) 261-3526; or Dr. Christopher Rector; email: CRector@nl.edu; telephone: (312) 621-3112. Co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

***Consent*:** I understand that by signing below, I agree to participate in the Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development study. I also know that I will receive an incentive in the form of a Chick-Fil-A gift card ten dollars in value for my participation. My participation will consist of the activities below during the spring semester of 2022:

- Completion of a paper-pencil survey taking approximately twenty minutes
- An interview lasting approximately an hour
- Attendance at the meeting to reveal the results lasting approximately one hour

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____

Researcher's Signature Date

## Appendix G

### Joining Google Meet for your Interview

1. The participant will access the email in which they accepted the invitation to the interview.
2. Then the participant will simply click on the hyperlink included in the email to enter the video conference.

a. The participant may have to click the camera icon to turn on the camera depending on the settings selected.

b. Also, the participant may have to click on the microphone so that he/she can be heard.

# Appendix H

## Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development

## Debriefing Statement

Thank you for your participation in this study entitled Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development conducted by Aretha Barnes. The goal of this study is to understand the career adaptive skill development of high school student-athletes who participate in revenue sports. The research questions are:

RQ 1: How do high school student-athletes perceive their career adaptive skill levels?

RQ 2: How have high school student-athletes made choices about their future careers?

RQ 3: How do high school student-athletes solve problems that could hinder post-secondary success?

In this study, you were asked to complete the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale which indicated your self-reported adaptive skill level. In addition, you were asked a series of questions to explain the processes you undertake while making career decisions, your understanding of your adaptive skill level and your career problem-solving skills.

Your participation helped to provide data that could possibly aid counselors when working in career planning by identifying areas of need to ensure that future student-athletes are prepared for post-secondary challenges and the world of work.

At the conclusion of the research project, you will be contacted via email and invited to a meeting to reveal the results. The email will include an invitation to a Google Meet. If you are unable to attend, you will receive via email, a copy of the results to review. Any comments you

wish to make can be emailed to the researcher. If you are concerned with protecting your identity during the Google Meet, you may request that the results be emailed to you. If, after reviewing the information you have any questions, please email the researcher at abarnes12@my.nl.edu.

You will receive a Chick-Fil-A gift card for your participation which is strictly voluntary. You may, without penalty, withdraw from the remainder of the activities by emailing the researcher at [redacted].

If you have any concerns regarding this research, please contact us using the following information. Aretha Barnes, Researcher at [redacted] Dr. Marguerite Chabau, dissertation chair at mchabau@nl.edu or the co-chairs of NLU's Institutional Research Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth; email: Shaunti.Knauth@nl.edu; phone: (312) 261-3526; or Dr. Christopher Rector; email: CRector@nl.edu; telephone: (312) 621-3112. Co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

If your participation in this research causes any concerns regarding your career planning, you may contact your school counselor at [redacted] who will refer you to the appropriate campus resources.

For additional information related to this project you can consult the studies listed below.

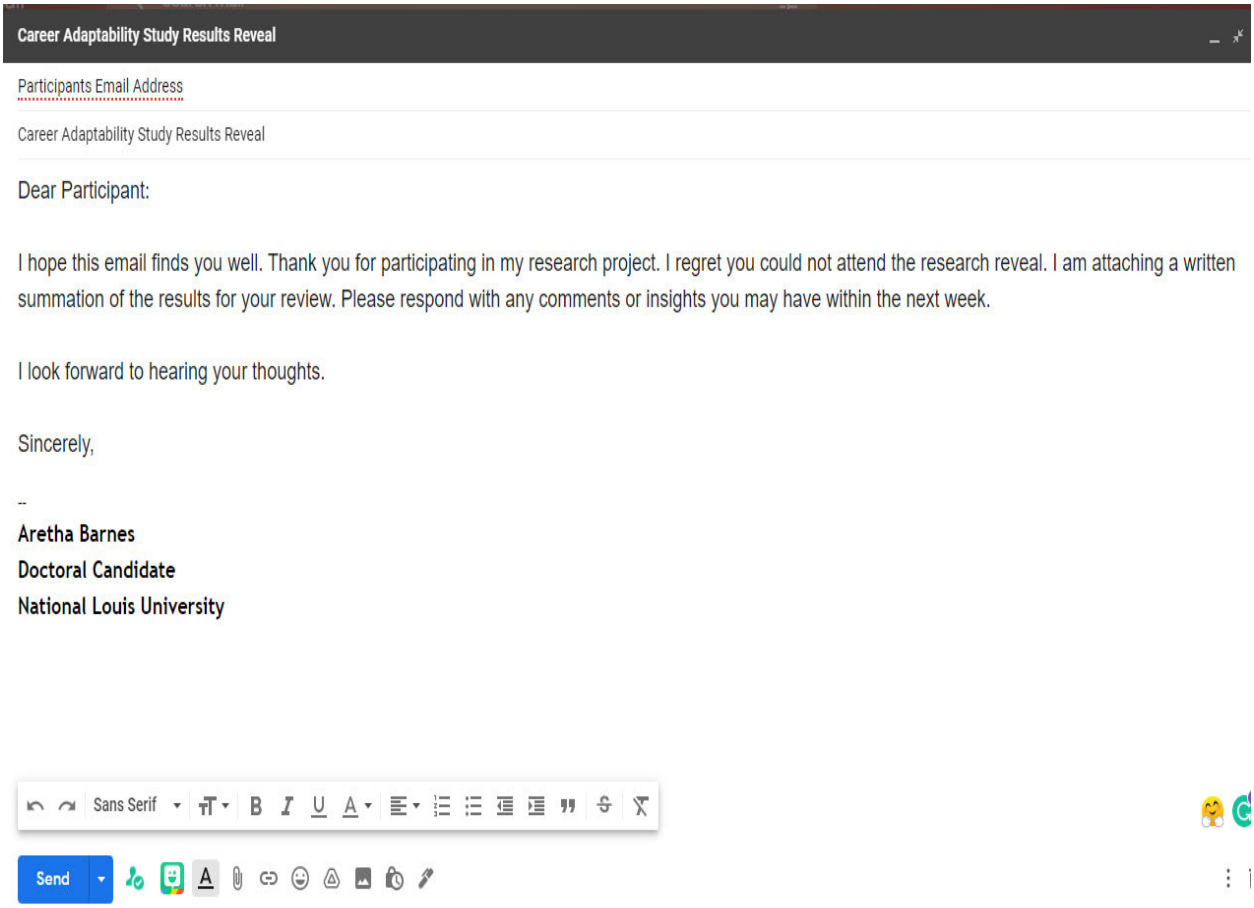
Goshorn, K. (2018). *More than a game: A study of the effect of sports participation on education and labor market outcomes* [Doctoral dissertation, Hartford College]. Google Scholar. https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/bitstream/handle/10066/20739/2018GoshomK.pdf?sequence=1

Li, J., Mau, W.-C. J., & Bray, S. (2017). Examining the role and practices of high school counselors in helping students make career transitions. *RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOLS*, *24*(2), 57–67. web.a.ebscohost.com.nl.idm.oclc.org

# Appendix I

## Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development

## Sample Email



# Appendix J

## Career Adaptability: A Phenomenological Examination of High School Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Adaptive Skill Development

### Citi Completion Certificate

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date [redacted]
Expiration Date
Record ID

This is to certify that:

**Aretha Barnes**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

[redacted]

Under requirements set by:

**National Louis University**

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [redacted]