

Spring 2018

Relationship between Male Athletic Identity and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction

Mark Alan Logan

Western Kentucky University, markalogan25@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses>



Part of the [Clinical Psychology Commons](#), and the [Counseling Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Logan, Mark Alan, "Relationship between Male Athletic Identity and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction" (2018). *Masters Theses & Specialist Projects*. Paper 2569.

<https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/2569>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MALE ATHLETIC IDENTITY
AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts

By
Mark Alan Logan

May 2018

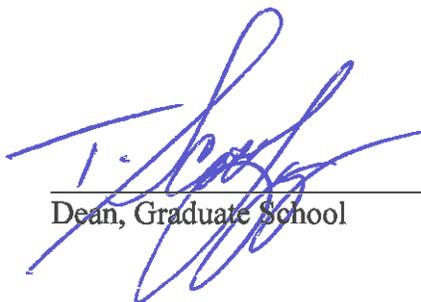
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MALE ATHLETIC IDENTITY AND
ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP SATIDFACTION

Date Recommended April 13, 2018


Frederick Grieve, Director of Thesis


Ryan Farmer


Fred Stickle



Dean, Graduate School

4/16/18

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my thesis director, research advisor, and professional mentor, Dr. Rick Grieve for his continued support and assistance in the completion of this research. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Britton Brewer for his assistance in providing previous research conducted using and the development process of the Athlete Identity Measurement Scale. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my social support throughout this process: my wife Lauren, my dog Archer, and my amazing cohort.

CONTENTS

Literature Review.....	1
Relationship Satisfaction.....	2
Male Stereotypes.....	5
Athletic Identity.....	6
Sport Participation.....	8
Sport Widow Hypothesis.....	9
Relationship Satisfaction Assessment.....	10
Limitations of Current Literature.....	10
The Current Study.....	11
Method.....	12
Participants.....	12
Design.....	13
Measures.....	14
Procedure.....	15
Results.....	17
Discussion.....	20
References.....	24
Appendix A: Demographics.....	29
Appendix B: Relationship Assessment Scale.....	31
Appendix C: Athlete Identity Measurement Scale.....	32
Appendix D: Implied Consent.....	33
Appendix E: Debriefing Statement.....	34

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Participants Percentages of Sport Participation and their Partners'

Percentages of Participation.....13

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. RAS Mean Analysis.....	18
----------------------------------	----

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MALE ATHLETIC IDENTITY AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP SATIDFACTION

Mark Logan

May 2018

34 Pages

Directed by: Frederick Grieve, Ryan Farmer, and Fred Stickle

Department of Psychology

Western Kentucky University

The purpose of this study is to determine if male athletic identity plays a role on romantic relationship satisfaction, so that it can be implemented into couples counseling and work to decrease the divorce rate. Participants completed two measures, the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988) and the Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS; Brewer & Cornelius, 2001), administered via a Qualtrics survey. The survey was accessed by Amazon Mechanical Turk participants and it took approximately 10 minutes to administer. Results indicate that there was not a significant difference in relationship satisfaction ratings between low, medium, and high groupings of athletic identity. This research contributes to a small body of research on the impact of athletics on romantic relationships. It can be included into the training of couples' counselors to provide general information on how men do not perceive any relationship between their athletic identities and their romantic relationships.

Literature Review

Romantic relationship satisfaction is a much-needed topic of study, as evidenced by the increasing field of marital therapy and the rising divorce rate. This increasing divorce rate has been linked to several factors, including female employment rate, income, and proportion of foreign population (Jiménez-Rubio, Garoupa, & Rosales, 2016). Some authors have looked at links between divorce rates and body mass index (BMI; Schneider & Grimps, 2013). The majority of the factors that researchers attribute the high divorce rate to can be simplified down to simply factors that can lower relationship satisfaction. Low relationship satisfaction can influence several other areas of one's life that athletics also influence, including the individual's mental health (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013). However, there has been little research looking for a link between romantic relationship satisfaction and athletics. The topic of athletics is one that is very popular across societies and cultures, to the point where many people are strongly encouraged to participate in athletics during adolescence (Apostolou & Athanasiou, 2016).

Athletics affects several areas of mental and physical health and can bring about various influences that many people take with them into other areas of their lives. Those influences can either have a positive impact or negative impact, but romantic relationship satisfaction is a field that has been rarely looked at in combination with athletics (Russell & Arms, 2002). The topics of athletic identity and romantic relationship satisfaction include discussions of sport participation, the sport widow hypothesis, and various other factors. These will be discussed.

Relationship Satisfaction

The quality of romantic relationships has been a large source of research; however, despite the wide range of research, there is still no consensus for how to properly and accurately define the quality of a relationship (Vaughn & Baier, 1999). Part of this indecisiveness is because of the range of relationship ideals across cultures and nationalities (Vaughn & Baier, 1999). Due to this inability to properly construct a definition for the quality of a romantic relationship, it has been widely considered to be an individualized construct, meaning that it can change from person to person (Vaughn & Baier, 1999).

One of the things that has been agreed upon within the field of relationship satisfaction is that marital complications and difficulties have been proven to be a source of negative psychological and physical health concerns, as well as a leading presenting concern among new therapy clients (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). According to the American Psychological Association (2017), greater than 90% of Americans will get married by the age of 50. It has also been discovered that between 40 and 50% of married couples in America will go through a divorce. The divorce rate is even higher for subsequent marriages (American Psychological Association, 2017). This divorce rate has been mostly consistent for the past few decades, with some minor fluctuations (Abrams, 2016). The high divorce rate in America is a strong indicator of underlying marital difficulties, which is of grave concern due to the negative health concerns associated with marital difficulties (Abrams, 2016; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987).

Romantic relationship satisfaction has been linked to many other factors, including social networking websites. Research has shown that social networking

websites play a significant role in the development of romantic relationships and research shows a large difference in virtual displays of affection compared to physical displays of affection (Seidman, Langlais, & Havens, 2017). Social networking sites have changed the culture of online communication in recent years from being anonymous to nonymous, thereby allowing users to be easily identified with their offline lives. Seidman and colleagues (2017) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between relationship-oriented behaviors on Facebook and relationship outcomes. They discovered that individuals in happy relationships portray their relationships positively on Facebook. The authors discuss the compensatory function of Facebook-related relationship behaviors for those individuals in less than satisfactory relationships (Seidman et al., 2017).

Romantic relationship satisfaction has been linked to posttraumatic stress in veterans. Research has shown that Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can partially mediate the relationship between masculinity ideology and relationship satisfaction and functioning in veterans (Cox & O'Loughlin, 2017). Cox and O'Loughlin (2017) sought out to investigate how masculine ideology might play a role in relationship satisfaction in veterans with PTSD by conducting a study using multiple measures, including the Male Role Norms Inventory Short Form (Levent, Hall, & Rankin, 2012), PTSD Checklist (Weathers, Litz, Keane, Palmieri, Marx, & Schnurr, 2013), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), and Traumatic Life Events Questionnaire (Kubany, Haynes, Leisen, Owens, Kaplan, Watson, & Burns, 2000). Individual differences within cognitive processing that lead to decreased cognitive-emotional processing after a traumatic event tend to increase the likelihood of PTSD symptoms. Cox and O'Loughlin (2017) found that how much an individual holds to the traditional masculine ideology qualifies as one

of the individual differences that are linked to decreased cognitive-emotional processing. This research discovered a link with relationship satisfaction and was able to suggest treatment interventions for the population of the study.

Romantic relationship satisfaction has also been linked to several factors in the general population. Some of these factors include self-esteem, parental attachment, psychosocial adjustment, and future time orientation (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016; Oner, 2000; Wang & Zhao, 2017). Kumar and Mattanah (2016) conducted a study of college students and discovered that both maternal and paternal attachment predicted higher levels of overall life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and lower levels of life distress. This indicates that healthy parental attachment provides an example of healthy romantic relationship development, which then influences overall psychosocial adjustment levels (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016).

Wang and Zhao (2017) conducted a study of college students and found a direct predicting relationship from self-esteem to college students' relationship satisfaction ratings, as well as a mediating relationship with marital attitude. Wang and Zhao (2017) examined 342 college students self-identified as "in love" by utilizing the Marital Attitude Scale (Braaten & Rosen, 2008) and the Quality of Relationship Index (Norton, 1983), as well as a self-esteem questionnaire. The SES scores were highly positively correlated with romantic relationship satisfaction, and that positive correlation was stronger when the MAS scores were controlled, indicating that marital attitude may have a partial mediating relationship between self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction in college students (Wang & Zhao, 2017).

Oner (2000) conducted a study on college students and found that present dating

experiences had no impact upon the individuals' future time orientation (general concern for future events). It was also concluded that past dating experiences typically impact the relationship between relationship satisfaction and future time orientation (Oner, 2000). Oner (2000) studied 226 undergraduate students and found that the participants who were highly satisfied in their non-romantic relationships with the opposite sex would seek out more temporary relationships than those participants who were less satisfied in their non-romantic relationships with the opposite sex.

Relationship satisfaction has been shown to play a role in many of the most predominate areas of today's society; however, it is still a topic that needs more research to establish correlational relationships with other common life constructs, including athletic identity. Due to the large number of mediating variables that can impact relationship satisfaction, it can be reasonably hypothesized that the social construct of sports could have an impact upon romantic relationship satisfaction. This allows us to dive deeper into romantic relationship satisfaction, as well as treatment planning for individuals pursuing individuals or couples counseling for relationship or marital distress.

Male Stereotypes

Within cultures all over the world, there are certain sets of stereotypes that are made on the basis of sex and/or gender. Within modern American culture, males often hold the stereotypes of being interested in sports, muscular, handy, holding in emotions, and being interested in the educational fields of science, technology, and engineering (Chapple, 2016). Stereotypes can influence how individuals develop their own self-knowledge and social identity, as well as which groups they choose to join and become members (Spittle, Petering, Kremer, & Spittle, 2012). Spittle and colleagues (2012)

investigated the stereotypes around physical education. They found that males focused on physical, assertive, and aggressive behavior, physical and self-presentation factors, perceived appearance and ability, aggressive and confident behavior, and independence and intellect.

Some of the stereotypes around romantic relationships for males include being disconnected from emotions, nonchalant with relationships, and in search of sexual conquests (Barrios & Lundquist, 2012). Most males within modern American culture are pressured and raised to meet these stereotypes, which can have a lasting impact upon their potential for satisfaction within romantic relationships (Barrios & Lundquist, 2012). It has been shown that males who stick to the conventional male relationship stereotypes utilize more unilateral power and avoidance strategies with their partners, whereas females used indirect power strategies and compliance with their partners when observing a more conventional female relationship stereotype (Snell, Hawkins, & Belk, 1988).

Zhang, Zhao, Ju, and Ma (2014) investigated the relationship that male stereotypes have between parental involvement and resilience, which is a necessary quality within successful relationships. Zhang and colleagues (2014) defined resilience as “an individual’s competence with regard to positive adaptation despite exposure to overwhelming adversity” (p.1955). They found that male stereotypes partially mediated the relationship between resilience and paternal involvement.

Athletic Identity

Athletic Identity is defined as “the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role and looks to others for acknowledgement of that role” (Brewer,

VanRaalte, & Linder, 1993, p.238). The construct of athletic identity is one that has been used to dive into the cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social areas of athletes' self-image. Due to the wide-sweeping nature of this construct, much research has been conducted in the topic area. Research has shown that athletes with elevated levels of athletic identity have higher levels of commitment to their sport (Horton & Mack, 2000). However, with this increase in commitment to their sport comes a higher likelihood of neglecting other aspects of their lives. Many of these athletes who are high in athletic identity and neglect other aspects of their lives end up with a poorly developed self-concept (Horton & Mack, 2000). These poorer developed self-concepts are also less likely to be multi-dimensional in nature.

Poucher & Tamminen (2017) set out to explore how both retired and active athletes maintain and perpetuate their athletic identity. They found that, for most athletes, their athletic identities were maintained through environmental factors and personal actions and behaviors. The personal actions and behaviors they discovered included compartmentalization, justified comments, setting sport-related goals, and internal attribution of success and external attribution of failure (Poucher & Tamminen, 2017). The environmental factors they discovered included attention from others and daily routines and rituals. A combination of personal behaviors and environmental factors assist the athletes in developing and maintaining their athletic identity, as well as coping with the difficulties of the demanding and difficult training timetables and high achievement standards associated with sports (Poucher & Tamminen, 2017). It has also been found that athletes who hold strong athletic identities tend to engage solely with their athletic goals, resulting in a lack of the ability required to engage with the goals they

would like to set in other areas of their lives (Poucher & Tamminen, 2017).

While the construct of athletic identity is primarily associated with current athletes, it is possible for non-athletes to hold strong athletic identities. Two of the primary reasons that non-athletes can hold strong athletic identities are due to the non-athletes' previous athletic performance or intensity of sport fandom. However, the athletic identity of non-athletes and former athletes is still generally lower than current athletes (Houle, Brewer, & Kluck, 2010). Non-athletes and former athletes also appear to have moderately declining scores in athletic identity as their age increases (Houle et al., 2010).

Sport Participation

Sport participation has been linked to several constructs, including overall life satisfaction (Varca, Shaffer, & Saunders, 1984). Previous research has shown that females did not have a significant link between sport participation and overall life satisfaction; however, males who had elevated levels of sport participation rated the highest in overall life satisfaction at multiple points during their lives (Varca et al., 1984). Previous research has also demonstrated that sport participation in male childhood and/or adolescence significantly impacted overall life satisfaction during adulthood (Varca et al., 1984).

Eime and colleagues (2013) reviewed psychological and social health benefits of sport participation in adults. The authors then utilized their systematic review to develop a conceptual model of health through sport participation. They reviewed 3,668 publications that dealt with the mental and/or social benefits of sport participation, and found 11 that met their strict selection criteria, including both inclusion and exclusion

criteria (Eime et al., 2013). The inclusion criteria included the need for the study to be published between January 1990 and May 2012, original research published in peer-reviewed journals, and the use of individual data, rather than national data. The exclusion criteria included studies that addressed physical activity constructs similar to sport but not sport (i.e., exercise, physical activity, physical education), studied specific sub-populations for specific risks, addressed sport rehabilitation, and addressed either elite sport participants or sport development programs. The data showed that sport participation provided benefits to individuals, including improved self-esteem, fewer depressive symptoms, and improved social interaction. From their data, they recommended that adults participate in sports as often as possible as a form of leisure activity, in order to receive as many health benefits as possible. They also stated that this topic should be researched further (Eime et al., 2013). Given the increased levels of self-esteem, fewer depressive symptoms, improved social interaction, and increased levels of overall life satisfaction that come along with sport participation, it can be reasonably hypothesized that the social construct of sports could have an impact upon romantic relationship satisfaction.

Sport Widow Hypothesis

Russell and Arms (2002) conducted a study on females that examined whether their partners' sport involvement affected their romantic relationships. The term "sport widow" refers to the idea that a romantic partner's passion for sports will damage the relationship because he/she ignores his/her family and domestic responsibilities. Russell and Arms set to test this theory with two different studies. The first study involved 75 university females and found that involvement in sports was positively correlated with

the perceived strength of the relationship, even though it had no relationship with a measure of relationship closeness or their level of love for their partners (Russell & Arms, 2002). The second study involved 91 older, non-university couples and found that the females' identification of strength of relationship, relationship closeness, and affection for their partners had no relationship with their partners' sport involvement; however, males reported that their relationships were strengthened and brought closer from their partners' involvement in sports (Russell & Arms, 2002).

Relationship Satisfaction Assessment

Due to the opaque nature of relationship satisfaction, there are a large number of assessment scales. Many relationship assessments get bogged down in the minutia of relationship quality that can change based on the individual (Hendrick, 1988). However, there are some global assessment scales that are more general in nature, including the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988; Vaughn & Baier, 1999). Global measures of relationship satisfaction allow for greater interpretation of results, which can more easily show any relationship between relationship satisfaction and various other constructs. This is needed due to the indecisiveness within the marriage and family literature.

Limitations of the Existing Literature

Currently, there is a significant amount of literature pertaining to the topic areas of athletic identity and relationship satisfaction that is already existent in the two separate fields of athletics and relationship satisfaction. However, there is very little research that proposes any relationship between these two areas. The primary study that looks at the relationship between athletic identity and romantic relationship satisfaction only asks

women to rate their own perceived romantic relationship satisfaction while rating their husbands' athletic identity (Russell & Arms, 2002). This study alone is not enough to establish any meaningful relationship between the two variables of romantic relationship satisfaction and athletic identity, especially since it was limited in its view of who to include as participants. The existing literature is still missing whether there is a meaningful relationship between athletic identity and romantic relationship satisfaction or not. Specifically, the existing literature is missing information on how athletic identity can influence romantic relationship satisfaction in the male population.

The Present Study

Currently, much of the literature on athletic identity and relationship satisfaction is not connected. The objective of the present study is to fill this gap in the existing literature, and determine if athletic identity can be used to predict romantic relationship satisfaction. This study looked for relationships between male participants' athletic identity scores and romantic relationship satisfaction. Athletic identity was measured via the Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) (See Appendix B). Romantic relationship satisfaction was measured via the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (See Appendix C).

It is hypothesized that medium levels of athletic identity will have the highest levels of romantic relationship satisfaction. It is also hypothesized that there will be a negative relationship with RAS scores the higher the AIMS score goes after the medium category.

Methods

Participants

This study looked at a convenience sample of males from the Amazon Mechanical Turk database. The sampling was single-staged and probability-based. A power analysis using 11 studies found a mean effect size (Cohen's d) of 0.50, which is a medium effect size. Using a within groups design, 80 participants per group yields a power of .88, which means that a true difference can be detected, if one is present, 88 percent of the time. There were three groups in this study, meaning that the total number of participants needed was 240. There were a total of 294 male participants recruited. Some participants were excluded due to failing a manipulation check ($N = 11$) and some were excluded due to incomplete responses ($N = 42$). The age of participants ranged from 19 to 71 ($M = 36.6$, $SD = 11.4$). There were 149 (61.6%) Caucasians, 55 (22.7%) Hispanics, 18 (7.4%) Asian Americans, 16 (6.6%) African Americans, and 2 (0.8%) Other. There were 119 (49.2%) participants who had a Bachelor's Degree, 52 (21.5%) had a High School Diploma, 39 (16.1%) had an Associate's Degree, 21 (8.7%) had a Master's Degree, 8 (3.3%) had a Doctorate, and 1 (0.4%) Other. There were 225 (93%) participants who were heterosexual, 7 (2.9%) participants were homosexual, 7 (2.9%) participants were bisexual, and 1 (0.4%) participant was other. Participants also reported the sports that they have participated in and the sports that their romantic partners participated in (See Table 1).

Table 1

Participants Percentages of Sport Participation and their Partners' Percentages of Participation

Sport Participated In	% of Participants	% of Partners
Basketball	46.7%	14.8%
Baseball	41.9%	12.6%
Soccer	28.8%	19.3%
Football	38.8%	1.6%
Swimming	21.4%	19.6%
Tennis	22.9%	17.1%
Other	19.8%	22.2%
None	11.6%	28.9%

Design

This study used a survey design because of its effectiveness in providing a quantitative description of trends in different populations. In this case, the survey design provided a quantitative description for potential trends in romantic relationship satisfaction in males with varying levels of athletic identity. This form of data collection was beneficial for this study because of the ability to receive a large amount of numerical data in a short segment of time. This survey design was collected in a cross-sectional manner. This data was collected using a Qualtrics questionnaire that was posted on Amazon Mechanical Turk. This was useful in that it was a quick way to receive data with

a convenient sample. This could be also be limitation of the study because the intricacies of sport participation could not be fully explored with each participant.

Measures

Demographics: Participants were asked to report age, current educational level, gender, ethnicity, which sports they participated in, length of time for involvement in sports, current relationship status, and current socioeconomic status. The participants rated their involvement in sports via reporting which sports they participated in and writing in how many years they have participated in the sport. The participants also reported their partner's sport participation level via the same question structure (See Appendix A).

Relationship Assessment Scale: The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988) is a seven-item survey that assesses participants' satisfaction with their romantic relationships. The RAS allows participants to rate their romantic relationships on a five-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (*low*) to 5 (*high*) (Hendrick, 1988). Higher scores on the RAS correlate with higher relationship satisfaction. For example, the item "How well does your partner meet your needs?" is scored on a scale from 1 (*low*) to 5 (*high*). Two of the items on the RAS are reverse scored. For example, the item "How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship?" is scored on a scale from 1 (*high*) to 5 (*low*). For results to be drawn from this measure, one can look at either the average score or the total score. Average scores can range from 1 to 5, while total scores can range from 7 to 35. This study used the total scores for the RAS. The Relationship Assessment Scale has been found to have an internal consistency of .91 (Vaughn & Baier, 1999). The Relationship Assessment Scale also has good external consistency, as

demonstrated by holding a correlation of .80 with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, a multi-dimensional relationship measure (Vaughn & Baier, 1999).

Athlete Identity Measurement Scale: The Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS; Brewer & Cornelius, 2001) is a seven-item survey that assesses participants' athletic identity (Cieslak, 2004). The AIMS allow participants to rate their athletic identity on a seven-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores on the AIMS correlate to an increased level of athletic identity (Cieslak, 2004). For example, the item "I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport" is scored on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The Athlete Identity Measurement Scale has been found to have internal consistencies ranging from .81 to .93 (Brewer & Cornelius, 2001). The AIMS also has strong test-retest reliability, as demonstrated by having a value of $r = .89$ over a two-week period (Brewer & Cornelius, 2001).

Procedures

Participants were recruited through the Amazon Mechanical Turk database. Testing of the participants occurred exclusively online. First, the participants were presented with the implied consent document (See Appendix D). Continuing with the study after being presented with the informed consent document implied consent. After that, participants completed the demographics questionnaire, which included questions about age, race, and relationship status. The demographics questionnaire included two disqualifying questions. If participants answered "No" to the question "Are you currently in a romantic relationship?" they were not allowed to continue in the survey. If they answered "Yes" to the question "Are you currently in a romantic relationship?" they were

allowed to continue with the rest of the survey. Similarly, if participants answered “Female” to the gender question, they were not allowed to continue in the survey. If participants answered “Male” to the gender question, they were allowed to continue with the rest of the survey. The AIMS and the RAS were counterbalanced in order to avoid order effects. After all assessment instruments were completed, the Amazon Mechanical Turk participants were debriefed and received their reward of \$1 (See Appendix E). Participation in this study took approximately 10 minutes from start to completion.

Results

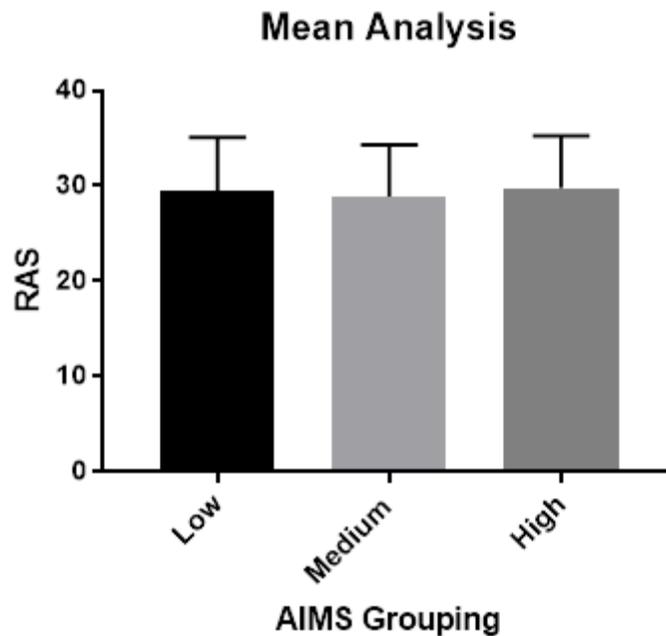
Preliminary Analyses

The AIMS scores were summed to determine the total athletic identity score ($M = 26.24$, $SD = 9.79$, $range = 7$ to 49). The RAS scores were summed to determine the total relationship satisfaction score ($M = 29.35$, $SD = 5.51$, $range = 11$ to 35). Cronbach's alpha was calculated in IBM SPSS to test reliability of both measures used in the study. The AIMS had Cronbach's alpha of .90, indicating good internal consistency. The RAS had a Cronbach's alpha of .91, which indicates excellent internal consistency. A Tertiary Split was conducted to determine AIMS grouping cutoffs. A One-Way ANOVA was calculated in IBM SPSS to show that the AIMS groupings were significantly different from each other, $F(2, 237) = 526.40$, $p < .001$. The low AIMS group had a mean of 14.74 ($SD = 5.2$). The medium AIMS group had a mean of 26.81 ($SD = 2.26$). The high AIMS group had a mean of 36.36 ($SD = 4.63$).

Hypothesis Testing

The first hypothesis is that men who have medium levels of athletic identity will have higher relationship satisfaction than will men who have low levels of athletic identity. The second hypothesis is that men who have high levels of athletic identity will have lower relationship satisfaction than men who have low or medium levels of athletic identity. A One-Way between subjects ANOVA was conducted in GraphPad Prism to compare the effect of athletic identity levels on relationship satisfaction scores in low, medium, and high athletic identity conditions. Relationship satisfaction ratings among men with medium levels of athletic identity ($n = 80$, $M = 28.88$, $SD = 5.422$) did not differ significantly from relationship satisfaction ratings among men with low ($n = 77$, M

= 29.40, $SD = 5.676$) or high ($n = 83$, $M = 29.77$, $SD = 5.473$) levels of athletic identity, $F(2, 237) = 0.54$, $p = .58$. The first and second hypotheses were not supported, as reported relationship satisfaction for participants did not change based on athletic identity scores. Figure 1 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and group ranges for the RAS and AIMS Groupings.



Low = 0-22; Medium = 23-30; High = 31-49

Figure 1: RAS Mean Analysis

To test for the normality of the data, several tests were conducted. The data failed the D'Agostino & Pearson ($p < .042$) and the Shapiro-Wilk ($p < .001$) normality tests, indicating that the data is not normal. Therefore, Bartlett's and Brown-Forsythe tests were conducted. Neither the Bartlett's ($p = .914$) nor the Brown-Forsythe ($p = .716$) were significant, indicating that the standard deviations for each group are not significantly different. Due to this, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to ensure similar results to the

one-way ANOVA. The results from the Kruskal Wallis, $H(2) = 1.527, p = 0.47$, confirm the results from the One-Way ANOVA. This most strongly shows that both hypotheses were not supported, since reported relationship satisfaction for participants did not change based on the groupings of athletic identity scores.

Discussion

Due to the large number of individuals who are affected by divorce, finding effective prevention and treatment options is a growing area of research. Not only should prevention and treatment options be developed for the purpose of couples counseling, but also for social organizations. Russell and Arms (2002) reported that women perceived a negative relationship between their male partner's athletic participation and their satisfaction. By finding a quick and effective prevention and additional treatment option, these individuals may be able to seek shared partner participation in various activities in order to improve the long-term prognosis of their relationship. The purpose of the current study was to determine if different levels of athletic identity would impact an individual's relationship satisfaction.

The first hypothesis is that men who have medium levels of athletic identity will have higher relationship satisfaction than will men who have low levels of athletic identity. The second hypothesis is that men who have high levels of athletic identity will have lower relationship satisfaction than men who have low or medium levels of athletic identity. The first hypothesis was not supported. This is because the results indicated that there was no significant difference on romantic relationship satisfaction ratings between the medium athletic identity group and the low athletic identity group. These findings are contrary to the findings of Russell and Arms (2002), who found that a romantic partner's athletic passion damaged the relationship because he/she ignores his/her family and domestic responsibilities when participating in athletics.

The second hypothesis was not supported. This is because the results indicated that there was no significant difference on romantic relationship satisfaction ratings

between the high athletic identity group and the low or medium athletic identity groups. These findings are in line with the findings of Russell and Arms (2002), who found that there was a positive correlation in men's belief that their relationships were strengthened and brought closer because of involvement in sports.

Results of this study indicated that there was no significant relationship between men's athletic identity and their romantic relationship satisfaction. This indicates that there is no perceived impact between men's relationship satisfaction self-report ratings and their athletic identity.

This research contributes to a small body of research on the impact of athletics on romantic relationships. It can be included into the training of couples' counselors to provide general information on how men do not perceive any relationship between their athletic identities and their romantic relationships. This study, in combination with Russell and Arms (2002), shows the discrepancy between male and female ratings on the impact of athletics on their relationships. If this study's results were found to be significant, it could have impacted both the treatment options found within marital counseling and a parent's decision for whether their child should participate in athletics or not.

There was not a significant change in relationship satisfaction scores based on athletic identity ratings. One potential explanation for this is that the AIMS measure has not been used as a categorical variable in the past. The AIMS has traditionally been used as a continuous variable (Good, Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raalte, Mahar, 1993; Houle, Brewer, & Kluck, 2010; Shachar, Brewer, Cornelius, Petitpas, 2004), and as such the psychometric data that has been established for the AIMS has been within the context of

being a continuous variable. Another limitation of the current study was that both the AIMS and the RAS have high face validity. When participants are completing measures with high face validity, there are often issues with accurate responding and participants wanting to give positive impressions. It is socially undesirable to have a poor romantic relationship or to not be satisfied in your relationship, which could result in participants wanting to give a positive impression rather than genuine responses. Another potential limitation is that the intricacies of sport participation and athletic identity cannot be fully explored with each participant. This is due to the survey design of the study and the use of qualitative data. Lastly, since this study was only conducted using only male participants, the results cannot be generalized to females.

Future research should include establishing psychometric data for the specific use of the AIMS as a categorical variable. By establishing more psychometric data for the AIMS to be used as a categorical variable, it opens up more potential uses for the AIMS in various settings and studies. Similarly, future research could take the RAS and the AIMS measures and modify them to establish new scales that have less face validity. Once scales with less face validity have been established, there may be an increased likelihood of detecting a true difference. Lastly, future research should also study both male and female participants. By including both male and female participants, the researcher would get a more comprehensive picture of the impact that athletics could have upon relationships.

In conclusion, the results of the current study show that there is not a relationship between men's athletic identity and satisfaction in their romantic relationship. There was very little impact upon romantic relationship satisfaction scores based on the three

different athletic identity groupings. Implications of the current research are seen in terms of the discrepancy between male and female perceptions of the impact that the field of athletics has upon their romantic relationships. This area of research should be further explored in order to see the full picture of the impact upon romantic relationship satisfaction.

References

- Abrams, A. (2016). Divorce rate in U.S. drops to nearly 40-year low. *Time Magazine*. Retrieved from: <http://time.com/4575495/divorce-rate-nearly-40-year-low/>
- American Psychological Association (2017). *Marriage & Divorce*. Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/topics/divorce/>
- Apostolou, M., & Athanasiou, M. (2016). I want to watch this! An evolutionary perspective on the popularity of sports. *Psihologijske Teme*, 25, 281-297.
- Barrios, R. J., & Lundquist, J. H. (2012). Boys just want to have fun? Masculinity, sexual behaviors, and romantic intentions of gay and straight males in college. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 9, 271-296. doi:10.1080/19361653.2012.716749
- Braaten, E. B., & Rosen, L. A. (2008). Development and validation of the Marital Attitude Scale. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 29. doi: 10.1300/J087v29n03_05
- Brewer, B. W., & Cornelius, A. E. (2001). Norms and factorial invariance of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale. *Academic Athletic Journal*, 15, 103-113.
- Brewer, B. W., Van Raalte, J. L., & Linder, D. E. (1993). Athletic identity: Hercules' muscles or Achilles heel? *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 24, 237-254.
- Cieslak, T. J. (2004). *Describing and measuring the athletic identity construct: Scale development and validation*. Retrieved from ProQuest Information & Learning. (AAI3144860)
- Chapple, K. R. (2016). Sports for boys, wedding cakes for girls: The inevitability of stereotyping in schools segregated by sex. *Texas Law Review*, 9, 537-566.

- Cox, D. W., & O'Loughlin, J. (2017). Posttraumatic stress mediates traditional masculinity ideology and romantic relationship satisfaction in veteran men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 18*, 382-389. doi:10.1037/men0000067
- Eime, R. M., Young, J. A., Harvey, J. T., Charity, M. J., & Payne, W. R. (2013). A systematic review of the psychological and social benefits of participation in sports for adults: Informing development of a conceptual model of health through sport. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, 10*. doi:10.1186/1479-5868-10-135
- Fincham, F. D., & Bradbury, T. N. (1987). The assessment of marital quality: A reevaluation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49*, 797-809. doi:10.2307/351973
- Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50*, 93-98. doi:10.2307/352430
- Horton, R. S., & Mack, D. E. (2000). Athletic identity in marathon runners: Functional focus or dysfunctional commitment? *Journal of Sport Behavior, 23*, 101-119.
- Houle, J. L. W., Brewer, B. W., Kluck, A. S. (2010). Developmental trends in athletic identity: A two-part retrospective study. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 33*, 146-159.
- Jiménez-Rubio, D., Garoupa, N., & Rosales, V. (2016). Explaining divorce rate determinants: New evidence from Spain. *Applied Economics Letters, 23*, 461-464. doi:10.1080/13504851.2015.1064070
- Kubany, E. S., Haynes, S. N., Leisen, M. B., Owens, J. A., Kaplan, A. S., Watson, S. B., & Burns, K. (2000). Development and preliminary validation of a brief broad-

- spectrum measure of trauma exposure: The Traumatic Life Events Questionnaire. *Psychological Assessment*, 12. doi: 10.1037/1040-3590.12.2.210
- Kumar, S. A., & Mattanah, J. F. (2016). Parental attachment, romantic competence, relationship satisfaction, and psychosocial adjustment in emerging adulthood. *Personal Relationships*, 23, 801-817. doi:10.1111/per.12161
- Levant, R. F., Hall, R. J., & Rankin, T. J. (2012). Male Role Norms Inventory-Short Form (MRNI-SF): Development, confirmatory factor analytic investigation of structure, and measurement invariance across gender. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60.
- Norton, R. (1983). Measuring marital quality: A look at the dependent variable. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 45. doi: 10.2307/351302
- Oner, B. (2000). Relationship satisfaction and dating experience: Factors affecting future time orientation in relationships with the opposite sex. *Journal of Psychology*, 134, 527-536. doi:10.1080/00223980009598234
- Poucher, Z. A., & Tamminen, K. A. (2017). Maintaining and managing athletic identity among elite athletes. *Revista De Psicología Del Deporte*, 26, 63-67.
- Russell, G. W., & Arms, R. L. (2002). The sport widow hypothesis: A research note. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 4, 249-252.
- Schneider, B., & Grimps, F. (2013). Role of national divorce rates in moderating the association between marriage duration and body mass index. *Marriage & Family Review*, 49, 606-622. doi:10.1080/01494929.2013.803007

- Seidman, G., Langlais, M., & Havens, A. (2017). Romantic relationship-oriented Facebook activities and the satisfaction of belonging needs. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 6*. doi:10.1037/ppm0000165
- Snell, W. E., Hawkins, R. C., & Belk, S. S. (1988). Stereotypes about male sexuality and the use of social influence strategies in intimate relationships. *Journal of Social And Clinical Psychology, 7*, 42-48. doi:10.1521/jscp.1988.7.1.42
- Spanier, G. B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38*. doi: 10.2307/350547
- Spittle, M., Petering, F., Kremer, P., & Spittle, S. (2012). Stereotypes and self-perceptions of physical education pre-service teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 37*, 19-42. doi: 10.14221/ajte.2012v37n1.5
- Varca, P. E., Shaffer, G. S., & Saunders, V. (1984). A longitudinal investigation of sport participation and life satisfaction. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 6*, 440-447. doi: 10.1123/jsp.6.4.440
- Vaughn, M., & Baier, M. (1999). Reliability and validity of the relationship assessment scale. *American Journal of Family Therapy, 27*, 137-147. doi: 10.1080/019261899262023
- Wang, Z., & Zhao, S. (2017). Mediating effect of marital attitude on relationship between self-esteem and romantic satisfaction in college students. *Chinese Mental Health Journal, 31*, 654-658.

Weathers, F. W., Litz, B. T., Keane, T. M., Palmieri, P. A., Marx, B. P., & Schnurr, P. P. (2013). *The PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5)*. Retrieved from

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/adult-sr/ptsd-checklist.asp>

Zhang, B., Zhao, F., Ju, C., & Ma, Y. (2015). Paternal involvement as protective resource of adolescents' resilience: Roles of male gender-role stereotype and gender. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 24, 1955-1965. doi:10.1007/s10826-014-9995-3

Appendix A
Demographics Form

1. Gender:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

2. Are you currently in a romantic relationship?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

3. Age: _____

4. Race/Ethnicity:
 - a. African American
 - b. Asian American
 - c. White, non-Hispanic
 - d. White, Hispanic
 - e. Middle Eastern
 - f. Other: _____

5. Highest academic status achieved:
 - a. Less than High School Diploma
 - b. High School Diploma
 - c. Associate's Degree
 - d. Bachelor's Degree
 - e. Master's Degree
 - f. Doctorate
 - g. Other: _____

6. College Academic Major: _____

7. Sexual Orientation:
 - a. Heterosexual
 - b. Homosexual
 - c. Bisexual
 - d. Other: _____
 - e. Prefer not to say

8. How would you describe your current socioeconomic status?
- a. Above average
 - b. Average
 - c. Below average
8. Which sports (if any) have you participated in?
- a. Basketball
 - b. Baseball
 - c. Soccer
 - d. Football
 - e. Swimming
 - f. Tennis
 - e. Other: _____
9. Years of participation in the abovementioned sport (at any competition level): _____
10. Which sports (if any) has your partner participated in?
- a. Basketball
 - b. Baseball
 - c. Soccer
 - d. Football
 - e. Swimming
 - f. Tennis
 - e. Other: _____
11. Years of participation in the abovementioned sport (at any competition level): _____

Appendix B
Relationship Assessment Scale

Please mark on the answer sheet the letter for each item which best answers that item for you.

Circle your answer					
1. How well does your partner meet your needs?	A Poorly		C Average	D	E Extremely Well
2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	A Unsatisfi	B	C Averag	D	E Extremely Satisfied
3. How good is your relationship compared to most?	A Poor	B	C Average	D	E Excellent
4. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship?	A Never	B	C Averag	D	E Very Often
5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?	A Hardly At All	B	C Average	D	E Completely
6. How much do you love your partner?	A Not Muc	B	C Averag	D	E Very Much
7. How many problems are there in your relationship?	A Very Few	B	C Average	D	E Very Many

Appendix C
Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS)

Please circle that answer that best reflects the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement in relation to your own sports participation.

Circle your answer	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I consider myself an athlete.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I have many goals related to sport.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Most of my friends are athletes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Sport is the most important part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I feel badly about myself when I do poor in sport.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I need to participate in sport to feel good about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix D



IMPLIED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Relationship between male athletic identity and romantic relationship satisfaction
Investigator: Mark Logan, B. A.; WKU Psychology Department
mark.logan183@topper.wku.edu

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you give your agreement to participate in this project.

You must be 18 years old or older to participate in this research study.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have. You should keep a copy of this form for your records.

- 1. Nature and Purpose of the Project:** The purpose of this study is to evaluate the levels of romantic relationship satisfaction accompanied by various levels of athletic identity in men.
- 2. Explanation of Procedures:** There will be several questions about basic information, including education level, sport participation level, and types of sports participated. After these demographic questions, two pages that consist of brief instructions and then several questions with rating scales attached. After reading the instructions and completing the first set of seven questions, you will be directed to the second page to read the instructions and complete the second set of seven questions. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.
- 3. Discomfort and Risks:** This study has minimal discomfort or risk, and is considered no more than experience in daily life.
- 4. Benefits:** Upon completion of this study, you will receive payment of either \$1.00 if recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk or research credits if recruited via WKU Study Board. Additionally, the information obtained from this study may be helpful in the modification of couples counseling interventions and athletic identity development programs.
- 5. Confidentiality:** This survey does not require you to share any identifiable information. Therefore, the data obtained from this study shall be considered anonymous, and securely stored for 3 years.
- 6. Refusal/Withdrawal:** Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.
You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

Your continued cooperation with the following research implies your consent.

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT
THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY
THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

Appendix E

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for participating in this study. All of the information received from this survey will be kept confidential.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between Romantic Relationship Satisfaction and Male Athletic Identity. This study tests a possible explanation for any reduction in romantic relationship satisfaction. Specifically, I want to determine if the reduction in romantic relationship satisfaction could be related to overboard male athletic identity. In this study, I asked participants to complete questionnaires about their relationship satisfaction and their athletic identity.

If you would like more information about this study or have additional questions, please contact Mark Logan (mark.logan183@topper.wku.edu) or his advisor Dr. Rick Grieve (rick.grieve@wku.edu).

Again, thank you for your time! Clicking the "Done" button below will send you to the Amazon Mechanical Turk home page. The code to receive your payment is Spring2018. Have a lovely day.