

A Comparative Study: Student-Athletes' and Non-Student-Athletes' Attitudes Regarding the  
Influence of the School Counselor/Athletic Coach  
Dual Role

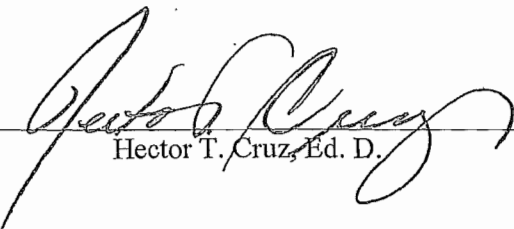
by

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ABSTRACT

Some of the dual roles that school counselors are asked to perform enhance their role as a counselor, while some of them such as the school counselor/athletic coach dual role may hinder their ability to facilitate successful counseling relationships with all students. This research considers the students' opinions on counselors' student bias relating directly to their dual role of athletic coach. Does the dual role of school counselor/athletic coach influence students' perceptions of the counselor's attitudes and biases, causing non-student-athletes specifically to reject their services?

The purpose of this study is to compare the attitudes of high school student-athletes with non-student-athletes regarding their willingness or reluctance to seek out help from a school counselor who is also an athletic coach. The data was collected through a survey which was distributed with guardian and school permission to students from a high school in north-western Wisconsin during the spring of 2009.

This study's findings conclude that there is no statistical difference between the influences of the dual role of school counselor/athletic coach on student-athletes compared to non-student-athletes. The

majority of students who participated in this study said that they were neutral about counselors also being coaches. The findings of this study do not indicate that the influence on student-athletes and non-student-athletes to go to a dual-roled counselor/coach was impacted by a perceived bias towards student-athletes.

These conclusions indicate that student-athletes and non-student-athletes alike would be equally comfortable and neutral about going to see a counselor who is also a coach. There is not enough evidence to indicate any reason that a counselor should not also be a coach.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
.....	
ABSTRACT .....	i
Chapter I: Introduction .....	1
<i>Rationale</i> .....	5
<i>Statement of the Purpose</i> .....	6
<i>Research Questions</i> .....	6
<i>Definition of Terms</i> .....	7
<i>Assumptions and Limitations</i> .....	7
Chapter II: Literature Review.....	8
Chapter III: Methodology .....	19
<i>Subject Selection and Description</i> .....	19
<i>Instrumentation</i> .....	19
<i>Data Collection</i> .....	19
<i>Data Analysis</i> .....	20
<i>Limitations</i> .....	21
Chapter IV: Results .....	22
<i>Demographic Information</i> .....	22
<i>Figure 1. Ages of Participants</i> .....	22
<i>Figure 2. Athletics Represented</i> .....	23
<i>Item Analysis</i> .....	24
<i>Research Questions</i> .....	30
Chapter V: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	32
<i>Discussion</i> .....	32
<i>Conclusions</i> .....	34
<i>Recommendations</i> .....	35

References .....37

Appendix A: Consent Form.....39

Appendix B: Directions for Survey Administration.....40

Appendix C: Survey .....41

## Chapter I: Introduction

### *The School Counselor's Role.*

According to Borders and Paisley (1995), “[s]chool counseling as a specialty area of the counseling profession emerged, and continues to evolve, as a result of social, educational, political, and economic trends” (p. 150). Just as the demands on counselors have changed, so have the national and state-wide models for school counselors, changing the definition and complexities of their role as it changes. The American School Counselor Association (2009) defined the school counselor as, “a certified/licensed educator trained in school counseling with unique qualifications and skills to address all students’ academic, personal/social and career development needs” (para. 1). School counselors address all students through various prevention and intervention programs, including individual, small group, and large group counseling, and also through consultation and collaboration with parents, teachers, administrators, and a range of community professionals and programs. School counselors aim to be a vehicle to student success.

In order to facilitate a helping relationship, school counselors need to ask themselves if they can be perceived by students as trustworthy, dependable, and consistent (J. Champe, personal communication, 2007). There is a better chance of students turning to a counselor for assistance if their expectation is that they will be able to trust the counselor, and as a result that the experience with the counselor will be a worthwhile one for them. According to Carl Rogers (1951), “the probability of therapeutic movement on a particular case depends primarily not upon the counselor’s personality, nor upon his techniques, nor even upon his attitudes, but upon the way all these are experienced by the client” (p. 65). It should therefore be a school counselor’s primary goal to at all times be a genuine person who will be perceived as warm and unbiased towards all students. This will help the counselor to build rapport, encourage all students to depend on him/her when they need help, and to be effective overall in the counseling process.

One dual role that counselors are currently managing is working as an athletic coach.

*The Athletic Coach Role.*

Reiter (1996) defined a coach as one who will, “train, observe and critique an individual or group. An individual that provides instruction in a specific area” (p. 13). According to the National High School Athletic Coaches Association (2009):

The function of a coach is to educate students through participation in interscholastic competition. An interscholastic program should be designed to enhance academic achievement and should never interfere with opportunities for academic success. Each student-athlete should be treated as though he or she were the coaches' own, and his or her welfare should be uppermost at all times. (para. 1)

As one can tell by these definitions, coaches are a very valuable part of our students' education, and they have a very unique experience with students as well. Wilson (2000) explained, “[t]he school employee's relationship with students is very important, and often very different in after-school activities” (p. 3).

Coaches have the opportunity to form very different relationships with students in athletics. Coaches have the privilege of seeing students working hard, committing themselves to their sport, and enjoying their sport. When students choose to give up personal time to play a sport with their peers, they treat the time as personal time and with that show more of their personality, and share more about themselves as well. With students in good spirits doing something they enjoy with their friends, and depending on the coach for advice on how to better their performance, a new relationship is formed where students may come to depend on the coach for other things as well, ranging from a ride home to an adult who will listen. Reiter (1996) explained that, “[b]ecause of the nature of the relationship, athletes often look up to coaches and will ask them for guidance which is facilitative to the counseling environment” (p. 23).

On the other hand, as cited above, a coach's job is also to critique students, and to give them direction, which are opposite functions of a counselor, who should never critique or direct students, but



rather listen to them primarily. Also, depending on the coaching style, and the depth of their relationship with their athletes, coaches can end up primarily being a person in students' lives who intimidates them, yells at them, or who makes them feel guilty and/or angry at themselves for their performances. This dual role could hinder relationships with student-athletes, as the broken coaching relationship could even extend to other relational settings such as the classroom or counselor's office.

“Possible benefits of being a teacher/coach cited were improved relations with other faculty, job security, improved relations with students and even establishing informal ties with students” (Wilson, 2000, p. 8). Establishing rapport and building trust with their athletes is definitely a way for coaches to take advantage of their coaching position, but does it make for a disadvantage when working with non-student athletes?

Erikson (1994) found that “[f]or the most part, terms of unpopularity and popularity follow the hierarchy of traits related to social success” (p. 28). And Adler et al. (1999) found that more specifically, “[a]thletes enforce the social code at most high schools, which helps explain why they're usually at the top” (p. 1). These facts explain how a coach could be at a disadvantage when trying to form a relationship with a non-student-athlete who is consequently not in the popular crowd. The coach may be perceived to be aligned with the popular crowd because of the rapport built and informal ties with the student-athletes.

Lastly, Reiter (1996) stated, “[r]esearch indicates that coaches should not counsel students for a variety of reasons,” one of which being that when coaches were surveyed, the majority felt less capable of actually counseling or helping students than simply identifying the problem (p. 24-25).

*The School Counselor/Athletic Coach Dual Role.*

“In spite of these [*sic*] guidelines and standards put forth by the ASCA [American School Counselor Association], many schools expect their guidance counselor to also perform roles as administrators, coaches, clerks, secretaries, substitute teachers, activity club supervisors, etcetera” (Wilson, 2000, p. 1). Some of the dual roles that school counselors are asked to perform enhance their

role as a counselor, while some of them, such as the school counselor/athletic coach dual role, may hinder their ability to facilitate successful counseling relationships with students. This study will look specifically at the school counselor/athletic coach dual role and its influence on students.

According to Wilson (2000), who addressed the school counselor/athletic coach dual role specifically:

‘[H]ealthy development for all adolescents represents an interaction among the individual and his or her psychological dynamics, and the larger social world in which the individual is living’ (Kiunick, 1985). Skills from coaching can also be utilized in the counseling role offering assistance to more students. (p. 11)

Of course, this would only be an advantage if students wanted to get help from their coach in the first place, which is something that this research will investigate.

Likewise, some counselors also feel that their counseling expertise may help them to perform better in various dual roles as well. Wilson (2000) concluded:

The training and skills a counselor has acquired from their schooling can be very beneficial for the student athlete/coach relationship. A counselor performing in a coaching role can bring to student athlete's insight and experience [what] other adults may not possess. (p. 10)

But as was discussed earlier, the advantage of establishing meaningful relationships with student-athletes specifically may cause non-student-athletes to perceive the counselor as biased towards student-athletes and cause them to be reluctant to seek that counselor/coach out for services.

According to Bryant and Constantine (2006), “[r]ole conflict and role ambiguity are two specific occupational stressors that school counselors experience with regard to the multiple roles they assume within schools” (para. 1). “Role conflict may arise when two or more simultaneous and incompatible expectations exist in such a way that compliance with a given role compromises fulfilling other roles”

(Bryant & Constantine, 2006, para. 1). Is there a role conflict between school counselors and athletic coaches?

“Many areas of concern arise when focusing on the combination or dual role of a guidance counselor and athletic coach. Some include counselor availability, time constraints, unclear contractual guidelines governing job function, counselor's student bias, and approachability” (Wilson, 2000, p. 2). This research looks at the students’ opinions on counselors’ bias relating directly to their dual role of athletic coach. Does the dual role of school counselor/athletic coach influence students’ perceptions of the counselor’s attitudes and biases, causing non-student-athletes specifically to reject their services?

#### *Rationale*

According to Miller (1989), “It is those core therapeutic conditions—empathy, warmth, genuineness, congruence, unconditional positive regard—that ultimately encourage client self-exploration and subsequent change” (p. 350). It is imperative to find out if a counselor can also be a coach without seeming incongruent or biased, hindering the students’ perception of the counselor’s unconditional positive regard for them.

“School personnel need to remain aware of the fragility of student social life and the potential impact of their own attitudes and actions in sustaining the negative effects of student hierarchies” (Erikson, 1994, p. 29). School counselor/athletic coaches could be unknowingly sustaining these effects by sending the message that they prefer student-athletes to non-student-athletes. “Several IYI youth advisory council members expressed the view that adult school personnel, perhaps unwittingly, reinforced existing peer structures by favoring students on top” (Erikson, 1994, p. 29).

There has been a lot of research on the dual role of school counselor/athletic coaches from professionals’ point of view. There is a gap in the research as the students’ perspectives on the dual role have not been explored. This research will look at the influence that the school counselor/athletic coach dual role has on students from the students’ point of view.

This research is extremely important as it will shed light on the influence the school counselor/athletic coach is having on students. Coaches and school counselors alike should be working to benefit all students, and this research looks at whether they are fighting their own cause by taking on both roles together. This research outlines whether or not the dual role is deterring counselors' efforts to help all students, and in turn affecting students' success.

It is important to know if non-student-athletes are unintentionally being driven away by the counselor/coaches' dual role as "the worst of high school fringe groups do seem more disturbed than in the past. The awkward kids aren't just smiling inappropriately during science-lab frog dissections" (Cohen, 1999, p. 1). School counselors need to be available to all students, and more importantly, they need to be perceived by all students as available to all of them so that students will consider their help, or the school counselors and coaches might as well not even be there to serve them at all.

#### *Statement of the Purpose*

This research examined the influence of the school counselor/athletic coach dual role on high school students. The purpose of this study was to compare the attitudes of high school student-athletes with non-student-athletes regarding their willingness or reluctance to seek out help from a school counselor who is also an athletic coach. The data was collected through a survey which was distributed with guardian and school permission to Menomonie High School students during the spring of 2009.

#### *Research Questions*

The survey for this research was designed to answer the following research objectives.

1. How does the dual role of school counselor/athletic coach influence student-athletes and non-student-athletes likelihood or reluctance to seek the professional out for counseling assistance?
2. How does the influence of the dual role on student-athletes compare to the influence on non-student-athletes?
3. Does the dual role of school counselor/athletic coach influence student-athletes to be *more* likely to seek them out for help because of a perceived counselor bias towards student-athletes?

4. Does the school counselor/athletic coach dual role influence non-student-athletes to be *less* likely to seek them out for help because of a perceived counselor bias towards student-athletes?

### *Definition of Terms*

This section includes an alphabetized list of terms which the reader may reference if he or she is unclear about any concept or term used throughout this thesis.

*“Athletics”* for this study include the following: Track and field, basketball, soccer, football, cheerleading, dance team, wrestling, swimming, gymnastics, golf, tennis, volleyball, softball, baseball, cross country, and hockey.

*Fringe Groups:* Groups of kids that are considered outsiders, awkward, and/or unpopular according to their peers.

### *Assumptions and Limitations*

The researcher has included the assumptions and limitations that were made in the research process in this section. It is assumed that the guardians of any students under the age of eighteen were able to read and comprehend the permission slip. It is also assumed that the three teachers who administered the survey to the high school students all followed the explicit directions for administration that were given to them and explained to them for the consistency of results. Lastly, it is assumed that the participating students answered openly and honestly when filling out the survey.

Limitations include the reluctance of high schools and high school students to participate voluntarily, subjects being able to articulate their reasoning for responses, and the use of hypothetical questions on the survey which may not create the most accurate reflection of student attitudes regarding the dual-role of school counselors/athletic coaches compared to more direct questions about particular individuals, situations, or experiences which would have made for a more high-risk study.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

In the previous chapter, the dual role of school counselor/athletic coach was introduced, as was the fragility of student perspectives and the influential relationship between the dual role and the high school hierarchy. In this chapter, the characteristics of the school counselor/athletic coach dual role and its various factors that play a role in the potential negative influencers on students will be further developed. This chapter will look at the characteristics and potential role conflicts of the school counselor/athletic coach dual role, as well as the influence of the dual role on students and how the concept of a perceived counselor/coach bias ties into athletic privilege and influences both student-athletes and non-student-athletes alike.

### *School Counselor/Athletic Coach Dual Role*

#### *Notable Characteristics of the Dual Role*

Wilson (2000) stressed that “[t]he dual role of teacher/coach, administrator/coach, or counselor/coach is performed across this entire country,” which makes the issue of what impact the school counselor/athletic coach dual role is having on students a nationwide issue (p. 3). We have so many students in this country working with counselors who are also coaches, but we have not yet heard from the students on whether or not they see the dual role as a positive thing for themselves and for all students.

The school counselor/athletic coach dual role is more prominent in some areas of our country than others, and has a higher number of one gender than another filling both roles as well. According to Wilson (2000), “[t]he dual role of a guidance counselor/coach has been reported in the past to be more predominant among men and in smaller schools” (p. 3). Wilson (2000) explained:

Counselors in rural schools often perform different duties than do counselors in urban schools. ‘School counselors working in rural areas faced issues that their urban counterparts never had to consider’ (Cahill and Martland, 1993). Smaller

student populations demand a less numerous staff at a school, so the dual role counselor/coach or teacher/coach may be more common. (p.11)

Wilson (2000) also reported that in Wisconsin:

More men (28%) than women (15%) are currently performing the dual role of guidance counselor/athletic coach. These figures show that both men and women currently counseling are more likely to be performing this dual role and coaching, than compared to 1985 where Tomski reported 24 percent of men and 5 percent of women performing the dual role. (p. 19)

As this dual role has been increasing, it is important to look at and dispel any potentially negative affects it may be having on students before it becomes an even more prominent dual role.

Wilson (2000) concluded that:

Just over 21 percent are currently performing the dual role, while 19 percent had performed the dual role in the past but were not at this time. The two most prominent sports coached today by male counselors are basketball and football. Female respondents reported that basketball and "other" which included pom pon[s] and cheerleading were their most often coached sports. (p. 19-20)

Clearly represented by these statistics, students who are involved with either boys or girls' basketball are most likely to have a counselor who is also a coach. Also, one can see that the coaching jobs counselors most often take are stereotypically for their specific gender. For example, at most schools girls are either not allowed to play football or choose not to play football, and most boys are either not allowed to be involved in cheerleading or choose not to be involved in cheerleading. Male counselors mostly coach "male" sports, as women counselors mostly coach "female" sports, with the exception that they both predominantly coach basketball. Wilson's study did not include whether or not men or women were excluded from coaching particular sports.

“When asked what role the counselors were involved in coaching, 26 percent responded head coaching, 37 percent responded assistant coaching, and 37 percent reported both head and assistant coaching” (Wilson, 2000, p. 20). Clearly, most counselors have been assistant coaches, but head coaching has not been out of the question for counselors as well.

Wilson (2000) reasoned that “different dual roles are strongly related to the guidance counselor/athletic coach dual role because of the dynamics of job stress, role strain, time management and approachability” (p. 8). How approachable is the counselor making his/herself to their students by also being a coach?

“Studies conducted in the past offer evidence that the dual roles can be both harmful and beneficial for the professional and others whom he or she has contact with” (p. 9). This research will focus on what effects the dual role has on students. Wilson (2000) recorded that, “[t]he two most popular positive responses were "establish rapport" (89%) and "establish trust" (89 %). The two most popular negative responses were "time availability" (56%) and "free time tied up" (56%)” (p. 21). The positive responses, “establishing rapport” and “establishing trust” were likely referring to student-athletes specifically, while the dual role may be having the opposite effect with non-student-athletes for counselor/coaches because of a perceived counselor student bias towards student-athletes because of that established rapport and trust.

As far as counselor/coaches recommending the dual role based on their satisfaction, Wilson (2000) found that, “[n]early 65 percent of males *would* recommend the dual role as opposed to just 30 percent of females...Almost 48 percent of the counselors would recommend performing the dual role, while approximately 37 percent would not recommend it” (p. 22-25). This stated that more counselors than not would recommend the dual role based on their experiences and overall job satisfaction. Lastly, Wilson (2000) asked counselor/coaches about policies against the dual role. “When asked if the counselor was aware if the school district had a policy preventing them from coaching, 97 percent



responded no, while the other two respondents answered "not applicable" and "don't know" (p. 18).

Wilson (2000) concluded that no school reported having a policy against the dual role at that time (p. 25).

### *Dual Role Conflict/Ambiguity*

Bryant and Constantine (2006) stated that, “[b]ecause of their myriad roles and functions within school systems across the United States, many school counselors often are overwhelmed by their increasing job responsibilities and expectations” (para. 1). Adding a dual role to school counselors’ responsibilities may contribute towards the overwhelming feeling and ambiguous expectations one has to sort out when juggling two roles that can be very different, like counseling and coaching. Reiter (1996) pointed out that, “[o]ften times these roles are conflicting in nature which may cause confusion on the part of the student” (p. 26).

Are school counselors being asked to perform additional jobs that diminish the quality of their counseling role? Would coaching qualify as one of those jobs? Bryant and Constantine (2006) discussed how “within some school settings, school counselors are expected to serve as substitute teachers and engage in other non-counselor-related tasks, which often are incompatible with their own professional expectations or training” (para. 7). Is the additional coaching role incompatible with the counseling role because of a possible increase in the likeliness of student-athletes to approach the counselor verses a possible reluctance in non-student-athletes?

Wilson (2000) said, “[a]ttitudes and expectations of parents, teachers, administrators, and coaches are a major source of developmental stress for students” (p. 10). If a school sends students in to see their counselor about an issue, and the counselor is also a coach, the students may not be comfortable talking to them about an issue because of their outside informal relationship. That counseling relationship is at an obvious disadvantage because the student has another relationship with that counselor/coach. Reiter’s (1996) study concluded, “student[s] did not feel comfortable when talking about a personal issue with their coach” (p. 58).

“The inherent challenge in these dual roles is maintaining a commitment to quality performance in both roles” (Wilson, 2000, p. 3). The example above illustrates this point. Another example would be that school counselors cannot commit to a quality performance in their role if students are perceiving them to have a student bias favoring the student-athletes’ since they are also a coach. In either example, the counselors have established another role, which impacts the students’ perceptions and expectations whether the student is an athlete or not. Wilson (2000) concluded, “it is recommended that counselors work with other counselors in their field on determining if this dual role is a positive step for them” (p. 30). ASCA’s Ethical Standards (2004) stated that the professional school counselor should, “[a]void[s] dual relationships that might impair his/her objectivity” (p. 3). The students’ perception of the counselor/coaches’ objectivity should be taken into ethical consideration for the benefit of all students as well.

### *Perceived Counselor Student Bias*

#### *Potential Influence of the Dual Role on Students*

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Ethical Standards (2004) the professional school counselor should be concerned with the development of *every* student. Counselors work hard to be a congruent person who reflects no judgment of the client in order for the client to feel comfortable and accepted being who they are, and for the counseling relationship to flourish. Miller (1989) explained how, “[b]ecoming truly and deeply empathic, becoming transparent enough to perceive the client’s world nonjudgmentally to accelerate the formative tendency of the client (Bozarth, 1984) is, after all, a basic goal behind a client-centered approach to supervision” (p. 350).

But what if the student perceives the counselor/coach to be biased or judgmental before a counselor-student relationship is even given the chance to form? A counselor/coach may be perceived as having an attitude or student bias simply because he/she is a coach. Rogers (1951) explained the significance of a counselor’s set of attitudes; “[t]he counselor who is effective in client-centered therapy holds a coherent and developing set of attitudes which is implemented in his personal organization, a

system of attitudes which is implemented by techniques and methods consistent with it” (p. 19). If a student takes the dual role of coaching to define the counselor’s system of attitudes, that student may assume that that set of perceived attitudes will be carried into the counseling relationship. Rogers (1951) pointed out that, “[t]he primary point of importance here is the attitude held by the counselor toward the worth and the significance of the individual” (p. 20). What holds the most importance of all is how the counselor’s actions, or the dual role for this research, is being perceived by his or her clients or students. Comparably, how is the counselor communicating his or her attitudes?

Rogers (1951) explained how, “[t]he communication of one’s real self, one’s real attitudes, to another may well be the basis of deep social experience, of friendship, of interpersonal development, as well as of therapy” (p. 114). Through what avenue is this communication taking place, even if a counselor/coach may be making a special effort to lesson the role conflict, and reflect a congruent attitude of respect and understanding for all students? Long (1996) pointed out that “[a]ttitudes, which are primarily nonverbal, generally come across regardless of one’s verbal statements or behavior” (p. 110). Long (1996) suggested that counselors ask themselves whether the message they are sending regarding their “beliefs about rights, respect, and responsibility” is being adequately communicated and accurately received (p. 161). “There can be no doubt that every therapist, even when he has resolved many of his own difficulties in a therapeutic relationship, still has troubling conflicts, tendencies to project, or unrealistic attitudes on certain matters,” and a counselor should be continually focused on how clients are perceiving him/her (Rogers, 1951, p. 42).

Students’ perceptions influence their expectations, which in turn influence whether or not they would seek out help from a counselor. “The manner in which the client perceives the counselor and the interview is initially influenced very deeply by his expectations” (Rogers, 1951, p. 66). If the student expects the relationship to fail based on perceived incongruence, they will not choose to enter into the relationship at all. Schaub and Tokar (1999) reported:

Researchers have found clients' expectations about counseling to be related to their stage of counseling readiness (Satterfield, Buelow, Lyddon, & Johnson, 1995), their perceptions of the working alliance with their counselor (Al-Darmaki & Kivlighan, 1993; Tokar, Hardin, Adams, & Brandel, 1996), and their level of involvement in an initial counseling interview (H. E. A. Tinsley, Tokar, & Helwig, 1994). (p. 1)

Clearly, students' readiness to go and get assistance from a counselor/coach who they feel has a bias towards student-athletes because of their coaching role would affect student-athletes and non-student-athletes both, but probably in different ways. Schaub and Tokar (1999) also reported, "data suggest that important relations exist between people's core personal attributes and their expectations about counseling" (p. 1). If the counselor's dual role of coaching tells the student that his or her personal attributes are the same or different from their own, that would contribute towards their likeliness or reluctance to seek that counselor/coach out for assistance.

Rogers (1951) explained that a counselor should provide a safe opportunity for the client to discern themselves more clearly, becoming a companion to the client. If a role such as coaching may be creating a perceived bias of the counselor towards student-athletes, a lack of perceived positive regard and rapport for non-student-athletes may be at hand. Long (1996) explained that, "[p]ositive regard means accepting other people's right to their own unique individualities and perspectives" (p. 71). Furthermore, Long (1996) maintained that, "[a] helping relationship needs some level or rapport to be effective" (p. 78).

Schaub and Tokar (1999) concluded:

Given the important influence of clients' expectations about counseling on their actual counseling experience, research examining how different person and situational factors may be related to individual differences in expectations about counseling is warranted. To date, only a handful of studies have explored the

potential influence of students' and clients' core personal dispositions on their expectations about counseling. (p. 1)

This field needs more information about students' perceptions and expectations about the counselor/coach dual role and how that influences their decision to use the professional for help.

*Athletic Privilege and Popularity*

In American high schools, athletics have worked to divide student-athletes and non-student-athletes into different levels of the high school hierarchy. Erikson (1994) explained that, “[f]or the most part, terms of unpopularity and popularity follow the hierarchy of traits related to social success. ‘Jocks’ and ‘Preps’ are the most commonly used labels to designate students at the top” (p. 28). Erikson (1994) went on to say, “[a]thletes with good personalities (‘jocks’) continue to have high status” (p. 8).

Adler et al. (1999) reinforced these observations concluding, “[a]thletes enforce the social code at most high schools, which helps explain why they're usually at the top” (p. 1). But is this nothing more than a stereotype? Reiter's (1996) study concluded that an overwhelming majority of the students surveyed “felt teachers treated them differently due to their participation in sports” (p. 49). And Cohen (1999) stated that:

[I]t's a cliché that jocks and cheerleaders rule, but it is largely true. While others plod through high school, they glide: their exploits celebrated in pep rallies and recorded in the school paper and in trophy cases. ‘The jocks and the cheerleaders, yes, have the most clout,’ says Blake McConnell, a student at Sprayberry High School near Atlanta. (p. 1)

If student-athletes are at the top of the hierarchy, where does that leave the non-student-athlete?

Coeyman (1999) explained, “[a]nyone who attended an American high school any time this century knows that teens tend to divide sharply into cliques - and that these divisions can devastate students who don't easily find a niche” (p. 1). According to the literature, most student-athletes find their niche right

away due to their involvement in athletics, and their spot is near the top. For non-student-athletes, and kids who don't as easily find their niche, the division can turn into envy, rivalry, or even hatred.

A school counselor's job is to promote a safe and unified place where all students feel like they belong. A school counselor's office should be the ultimate place of refuge; where that feeling of safety and belonging resonates. Coleman (1961) stated:

Research—based on the visibility of athletic stars, on most desired achievement, on the composition of the leading crowd, on status criteria in leading-crowd membership, on popularity—demonstrates conclusively that athletics is far and away more important as a value among high school students than intellectual achievement. And the school itself seems to encourage rather than to discourage this relative evaluation. (p. 33)

Schools seem to be almost perpetuating the hierarchal problem in American high schools. Erikson (1994) concurred, reporting, “[a]dult school personnel, perhaps unwittingly, reinforced existing peer structures by favoring students on top” (p. 29). Even if school personnel, such as counselors/coaches are not actually doing the student-athletes favors, if other students’ perceive a counselor bias towards the student athletes, the effect on the sustention of the hierarchy would remain the same.

Erikson (1994) went on to ask school counselors of their programs, “[m]ight efforts also be made toward reducing the social barriers that are a part of a school’s peer culture?” (p. 41). It seems as though this would be a movement that school counselors and school personnel would want to initiate for the happiness and success of all of their students. What if the counselor is also a coach, and is being perceived to be biased towards the student-athletes, and therefore contributing towards athletic privilege, and the social barriers kids are facing? A counselor/coach can not both work to break down social barriers and, unintentionally or not, sustain them at the same time.

Non-student-athletes in the fringe groups need serious help from school counselors too, if not more than the highly achieving and supported student-athletes. But if a counselor/coach is perceived to

be a “member” or “supporter” of the student-athletes in particular as a result of their coaching role, the non-student-athlete may be less comfortable going to the counselor because they might feel as though they’d be less accepted by the counselor. Erikson (1994) stated, “[w]e found disturbing the consensus among respondents that once an individual’s image and reputation is ‘set,’ it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to change others opinions” (p. 8). So if students’ perceive a counselor/coach to be a “member” of sorts, it will be exceptionally challenging for the counselor to prove otherwise to a potential student client.

Fiske and Russell (2008) explained that, “[s]tructural features of interpersonal relationships, particularly competition and status, can cause people, respectively, to (dis)like and (dis)respect each other, although they think they are reacting to the target’s personality” (p. 1193). In Fiske and Russell’s (2008) study, “[c]ompeting targets were judged less warm than cooperating targets; high-status targets were judged more competent than low-status targets” (p. 1193). These findings explain how a counselor/coach maintaining group membership with his or her athletes and essentially becoming a part of the high school’s social competition with their own status within it, would potentially be judged as less warm by members of any other social group. This is a direct threat to the school counseling mission, and to the potential likelihood that non-student-athletes in particular would want to come to him/her for help.

Postmes and Tanis (2005) explained, “[t]rusting behaviour involves relinquishing control over outcomes valuable to the self. Previous research suggests that interpersonal perceptions of trustworthiness are closely related to this behaviour” (p. 413). Their study concluded that, “trusting behaviour was based on expectations of reciprocity inferred from group membership, not on perceived trustworthiness” (p. 413). What this tells counselor/coaches is that even if the counselor is being perceived as trustworthy by a non-student-athlete, the fact they are still also a coach and have membership with the student-athletes by default would still be enough for those students to feel like they can not trust the counselor. That would be a huge hurdle for counselors to have to jump in the mission to reach out to *all* students because of their coaching role.

Likewise, Agatstein et al. (1997) reported that, “[a] model specified to estimate the consistency of a target person's effect on perceptions by others across social groups showed weaker agreement across groups. That is, targets were perceived consensually within groups, but these consensual perceptions differed between groups” (p. 390). This proves that it may be harder for non-student-athletes to perceive the counselor/coach accurately than for student-athletes.

Goto's (1996) study supports the previously mentioned findings as well concluding that when:

[t]he effects of situational uncertainty, social distance of the target person, and the actor's disposition, on the level of trusting behavior were investigated using a series of scenarios...trusting behaviors are more likely to occur in situations of low uncertainty, and individuals of small social distance are more likely to be trusted than those of large social distance. (p. 119)

This research strongly indicates that a counselors' involvement as a coach will make it harder for them to be perceived accurately, and trusted fully by non-student-athletes in particular.



### Chapter III: Methodology

In the previous chapter, the literature was reviewed and included the growth and prominence of the dual role, the potential dual role conflicts, and the perceived counselor student bias paired with a fragile and reactive social hierarchy featuring athletic privilege resulting in the potential influence on students. In this chapter you will find details about this research including subject selection, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and the methods used for this study.

#### *Subject Selection and Description*

The subjects for this study were high school athletes and non-student-athletes in every grade from a High School in North-Western Wisconsin. The researcher completed a proposal for the principal of the school and was granted permission after its completion and a meeting to discuss the potential benefits of the study for the students. The three high school teachers who were randomly selected by the researcher and authorized by the principal each chose approximately three of their classes or sixty students each to survey. The classes were composed of all grade levels of students, and a random mixture of student-athletes, and non-student-athletes alike.

#### *Instrumentation*

The four page voluntary survey used was created by the researcher and included fill in the blank, Likert rating scale, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. The correlating scales of measurement included nominal, ordinal, and ratio. The survey was designed to adequately address the research questions, and to be easily read and understood by the participating students. Because the instrument was created specifically for this research, there are no measures of validity or reliability. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C.

#### *Data Collection*

The three high school teachers who were randomly selected by the researcher and authorized by the principal were each given manila envelopes in their mailboxes with consent forms which they passed out to students in their classes and gave them three days to have signed and returned if under the age of

eighteen. The teachers then placed the signed consent forms back into the manila envelopes for the researcher to pick up. A copy of the consent form is located in Appendix A. The three random teachers were then each given another manila envelope in their mailboxes all filled with the surveys and identical explicit directions for administration. A copy of the directions for administering the survey can be found in Appendix B. The teachers all met with the researcher before administering the surveys to go over the directions and to have any questions they might have had answered. The teachers then administered the survey to all students who were the age of eighteen or older and volunteered themselves or who received permission from a parent if underage in all of their classes. The completed surveys were collected and placed back into the manila envelopes they were delivered in for the researcher to pick up.

Each teacher was given sixty surveys so that they could each survey approximately three random classes. There were 180 surveys total given to the three teachers. The entire data collection process took one week, and a total of eighty-one consent forms and surveys were collected to be analyzed. This survey had a successful 45% return rate, with 81 out of 180 surveys being completed.

### *Data Analysis*

The computerized statistics package used called the SPSS-X for the PC analyzed the data appropriately as determined by both the research questions for this study and the nominal, ordinal, and ratio scales of measurement used for the survey. Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for every section of the survey to analyze the influence of the dual role on student-athletes, and non-student athletes. An independent samples t-test was run for section C of the survey to test the differences between student-athlete and non-student-athlete responses. Lastly, crosstabulations and Chi-Square tests were run for section G of the survey to test for differences between student-athlete and non-student-athlete responses as well.

*Limitations*

Limitations of this instrument include the restrictions of generalizing data collected through the use of hypothetical questions, and the fact that it was created specifically for this research and so it has no measures of reliability or validity.

A limitation regarding the sample selection includes not knowing if there would be an adequate number of both student-athletes and non-student-athletes comparably since the teachers and consequently the classrooms of students were chosen randomly. Also, having only one school district participate in the study makes it hard to infer data from this sample to the much larger population of districts, students, and professionals in education.

Lastly, a limitation of data collection includes the reluctance of high schools and high school students to participate voluntarily, and the ability of subjects to articulate their reasoning for responses.

## Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this study was to compare how high school student-athletes and non-student-athletes perceive themselves to be influenced by the dual role of school counselor/athletic coaches. The survey designed specifically for this research included demographic information, athletic categories, questions about students' counselor/coach preferences, and a final portion about experienced counselor/coach emotional affect.

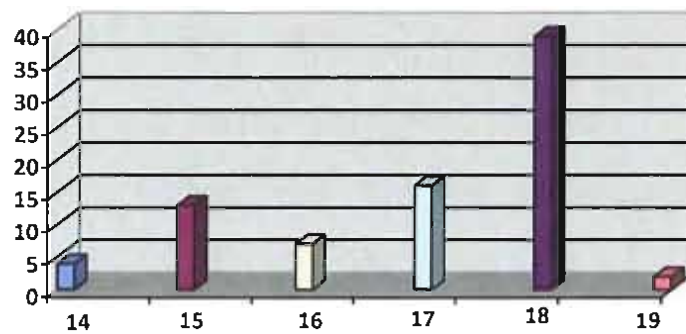
This chapter will include the results of this survey. Demographic information and item analysis will be discussed, and the chapter will conclude with the consideration of each of the research questions under investigation.

### *Demographic Information*

There were three teachers who were each given 60 consent forms and surveys each and told to survey three random classes of students each. This makes for a total of 180 potential students being surveyed. Of the 180 potential participants, 81 students returned their consent forms and participated in the survey, which represents a 45% return rate from the total possible participants.

The ages of the students who participated range from fourteen -years -old to nineteen –years- old; freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors were all included. The majority of students were seventeen and eighteen-years-old; of the students who participated, most said that they were eighteen-years-old, and seniors in high school as the following chart demonstrates.

Figure I. Ages of Participants

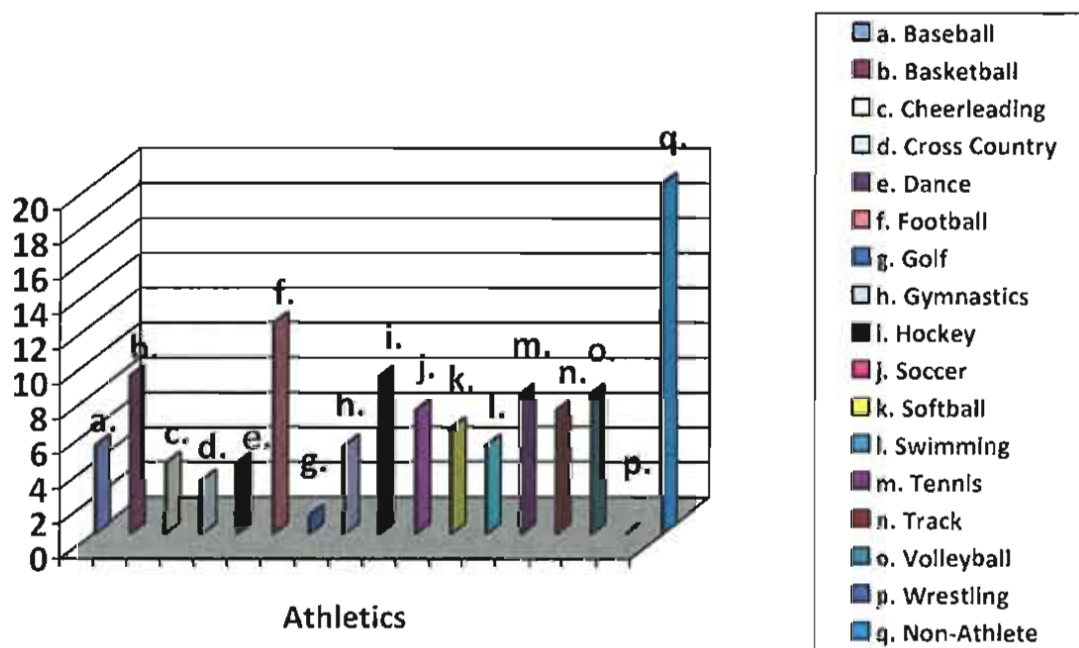


Of the students who were surveyed, 57 were female while 23 were male. This means that 70.4% of those who participated were female, while 28.4% were male.

The predominant race of the sample was white, with 68 of the 81 participants filling in that they were white or Caucasian. This means that 84% of the sample was Caucasian, while 16% of the sample was made up of Asian, Asian-Indian, Asian-Hmong, Latino, and Middle Eastern races.

This study is comparing student-athlete responses with non-student-athlete responses. This random sample contained 49 student-athletes and 32 non-student-athletes. The sample included student-athletes making up 60.5% of the participants, while non-student-athletes made up 39.5%. The following sports indicate which athletics the student-athletes surveyed currently participate: 6.2% chose baseball, 11.1% chose basketball, 4.9% chose cheerleading, 3.7% chose cross country, 4.9% chose dance, 14.8% chose football, 1.2% chose golf, 6.2% chose gymnastics, 11.1% chose hockey, 8.6% chose soccer, 7.4% chose softball, 6.2% chose swimming, 9.9% chose tennis, 8.6% chose track, 9.9% chose volleyball, and no one selected wrestling. Participants were allowed to select as many sports as they were involved in. Football was the sport that was chosen the most out of any other sport included.

Figure 2. Athletics Represented



### *Item Analysis*

In this section, each item from the survey along with its results will be addressed. Each item analysis will include the statistics which were run, and the final section of the chapter will go over what the results of statistical significant findings mean with regards to the research questions under investigation.

*C.1. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach at your school, rather than a counselor who is NOT ALSO A COACH at your school for career advisement?*

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, and t-tests were run for this item and found that 51% of all of the student-athletes, and non-student-athletes who answered the question chose the response “neutral.” This was the response picked most for this question by all student-athletes and non-student-athletes who participated. The t-test was used to test for differences between student-athletes and non-student-athletes, and found no statistically significant differences between the means ( $t(76) = .450; p = .654$ ).

*C.2. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach at your school, rather than a counselor who is NOT ALSO A COACH at your school for help with a personal or social issue?*

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, and t-tests were run for this item and found that 38% of all of the student-athletes, and non-student-athletes who answered the question chose the response “neutral.” This was the response picked most for this question by all student-athletes and non-student-athletes who participated. The t-test was used to test for differences between student-athletes and non-student-athletes, and found no significant differences between the means ( $t(77) = 1.078; p = .284$ ).

*C.3. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach at your school, rather than a counselor who is NOT ALSO A COACH at your school for academic advisement?*

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, and t-tests were run for this item and found that 52% of all of the student-athletes, and non-student-athletes who answered the question chose the response “neutral.” This was the response picked most for this question by all student-athletes and non-student-athletes who participated. The t-test was used to test for differences between student-athletes and non-student-athletes, and found no statistically significant differences between the means ( $t(78) = .273$ ;  $p = .786$ ).

*D.1. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach OF YOURS, rather than a counselor who is a coach, but not YOUR coach for career advisement?*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which only student-athletes were to respond and found that 41.7% of all student-athletes that answered this question chose the response “More Likely.” This was the response most picked for this question by all student-athletes who participated.

*D.2. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach OF YOURS, rather than a counselor who is a coach, but not YOUR coach for help with a personal or social issue?*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which only student-athletes were to respond and found that 32.7% of all student-athletes that answered this question chose the response “More Likely.” This was the response most picked for this question by all student-athletes who participated. A third of the student-athletes surveyed indicated that they would be more likely to go to their own coach/counselor over another coach/counselor for help with a personal issue, while two-thirds of the student-athletes indicated otherwise.

*D.3. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach OF YOURS, rather than a counselor who is a coach, but not YOUR coach for academic advisement?*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which only student-athletes were to respond and found that 43.8% of all student-athletes that answered this question chose the response “Neutral.” This was the response most picked for this question by all student-athletes who participated.

*E. 1. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also YOUR coach, rather than another counselor who DOES NOT ALSO COACH at all for career advisement?*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which only student-athletes were to respond and found that 40.8% of all student-athletes that answered this question chose the response “More Likely.” This was the response most picked for this question by all student-athletes who participated.

*E.2. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also YOUR coach, rather than another counselor who DOES NOT ALSO COACH at all for help with a personal or social issue?*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which only student-athletes were to respond and found that 28.6% of all student-athletes that answered this question chose the response “More Likely.” This was the response most picked for this question by all student-athletes who participated.

*E.3. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also YOUR coach, rather than another counselor who DOES NOT ALSO COACH at all for academic advisement?*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which only student-athletes were to respond and found that 40.4% of all student-athletes that answered this question chose the response “Neutral.” This was the response most picked for this question by all student-athletes who participated.

*F.1. Please rate the counselors below from 1-6, 1 being your first choice, and 6 being your last choice to go and see for any kind of assistance. Counselor: Female Coach*



Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which both student-athletes and non-student-athletes were to respond to and found that 32% of the students who answered this question chose to rate this choice as a “3.” This choice was rated a “3” more than any other number by all of the students who participated.

*F.2. Please rate the counselors below from 1-6, 1 being your first choice, and 6 being your last choice to go and see for any kind of assistance. Counselor: YOUR Female Coach*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which both student-athletes and non-student-athletes were to respond to and found that 42.1% of the students who answered this question chose to rate this choice as a “1.” This choice was rated a “1” more than any other number by all of the students who participated.

*F.3. Please rate the counselors below from 1-6, 1 being your first choice, and 6 being your last choice to go and see for any kind of assistance. Counselor: Female Non-Coach*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which both student-athletes and non-student-athletes were to respond to and found that 22.4% of the students who answered this question chose to rate this choice as a “1.” This choice was rated a “1” more than any other number by all of the students who participated.

*F.4. Please rate the counselors below from 1-6, 1 being your first choice, and 6 being your last choice to go and see for any kind of assistance. Counselor: Male Coach*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which both student-athletes and non-student-athletes were to respond to and found that 25% of the students who answered this question chose to rate this choice as a “5.” This choice was rated a “5” more than any other number by all of the students who participated.

*F.5. Please rate the counselors below from 1-6, 1 being your first choice, and 6 being your last choice to go and see for any kind of assistance. Counselor: YOUR Male Coach*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which both student-athletes and non-student-athletes were to respond to and found that 28% of the students who answered this question chose to rate this choice as a “1.” This choice was rated a “1” more than any other number by all of the students who participated.

*F.6. Please rate the counselors below from 1-6, 1 being your first choice, and 6 being your last choice to go and see for any kind of assistance. Counselor: Male Non-Coach*

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run for this item which both student-athletes and non-student-athletes were to respond to and found that 32% of the students who answered this question chose to rate this choice as a “6.” This choice was rated a “6” more than any other number by all of the students who participated.

*G.1. Does your coach yell at you?*

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, crosstabulations, and Chi-Square tests were run on this item which was answered by student-athletes and non-student-athletes and found that of the 51 students who answered the question, 54.9% circled the option “Yes.” The crosstabulation showed no statistical difference between the student-athletes and the non-student-athletes (Fisher’s Exact 2-Sided  $p = 1$ ).

*G.2. Does your coach make you feel like he/she has time for you?*

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, crosstabulations, and Chi-Square tests were run on this item which was answered by student-athletes and non-student-athletes and found that of the 52 students who answered the question, 84.6% circled the option “Yes.” The crosstabulation showed no statistical difference between the student-athletes and the non-student-athletes (Fisher’s Exact 2-Sided  $p = .291$ ).

*G.3. Does your coach seem to care about you and value you as a person?*

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, crosstabulations, and Chi-Square tests were run on this item which was answered by student-athletes and non-student-athletes and found that of the 54 students who answered the question, 88.9% circled the option “Yes.” The crosstabulation showed no statistical difference between the student-athletes and the non-student-athletes (Fisher’s Exact 2-Sided  $p = 1$ ).

*G.4. Does your counselor yell at you?*

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, crosstabulations, and Chi-Square tests were run on this item which was answered by student-athletes and non-student-athletes and found that of the 68 students who answered the question, 94.1% circled the option “No.” The crosstabulation showed no statistical difference between the student-athletes and the non-student-athletes (Fisher’s Exact 2-Sided  $p = .152$ ).

*G.5. Does your counselor make you feel like he/she has time for you?*

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, crosstabulations, and Chi-Square tests were run on this item which was answered by student-athletes and non-student-athletes and found that of the 66 students who answered the question, 71.2% circled the option “Yes.” The crosstabulation showed no statistical difference between the student-athletes and the non-student-athletes (Fisher’s Exact 2-Sided  $p = .403$ ).

*G.6. Does your counselor seem to care about you and value you as a person?*

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, crosstabulations, and Chi-Square tests were run on this item which was answered by student-athletes and non-student-athletes and found that of the 65 students who answered the question, 73.8% circled the option “Yes.” The crosstabulation showed no statistical difference between the student-athletes and the non-student-athletes (Fisher’s Exact 2-Sided  $p = .255$ ).

*G.7. Is your counselor in the dual role of coach and counselor?*

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, crosstabulations, and Chi-Square tests were run on this item which was answered by student-athletes and non-student-athletes and found that of the 45 students who answered the question, 62.2% circled the option “No.” The crosstabulation showed no statistical difference between the student-athletes and the non-student-athletes (Fisher’s Exact 2-Sided  $p = .744$ ).

*Research Questions*

*Research Question #1 – How does the dual role of school counselor/athletic coach influence student-athletes and non-student-athletes likelihood or reluctance to seek the professional out for counseling assistance?*

All items in sections C, D, E, and F addressed this question. Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run on these items and concluded the following.

Section C results indicate that both student-athletes and non-student-athletes are neutral about going to see a counselor who is also a coach for any kind of assistance.

Section D results indicate that student-athletes are more likely to go to a counselor/coach who is their own coach rather than a coach who is not for career and personal/social assistance, but that they are neutral about going to their own coach for academic assistance.

Section E results indicate that student-athletes are more likely to go to a counselor/coach who is their own coach rather than another counselor who is also a coach, but not their own for career and personal/social assistance, but that they are again neutral about going to their own coach over another counselor/coach for academic assistance.

Section F called for both student-athletes and non-student-athletes to answer the questions in the section. Student-athletes could answer the questions about coaches thinking of their own coaches, and

non-student-athletes were to answer the questions about coaches hypothetically. The results indicated that both student-athletes and non-student-athletes would prefer counselors that are their own male or female coaches, and female non-coaches the most. The options of counselors who are female coaches, male coaches, and male non-coaches were chosen the least.

*Research Question #2 – How does the influence of the dual role on student-athletes compare to the influence on non-student-athletes?*

The independent samples t-test for section C found no statistical difference between the averages of two groups of students. The crosstabulations and Chi-Square tests that were run on section G have shown no difference between student-athletes and non-student-athlete responses.

*Research Question #3 – Does the dual role of school counselor/athletic coach influence student-athletes to be more likely to seek them out for help because of a perceived bias towards student-athletes?*

The frequencies for section C, D, and E have indicated that student-athletes would be more likely to seek out a counselor/athletic coach of their own over a counselor/athletic coach who was not also a coach or a coach of their own. Only one student-athlete surveyed mentioned a perceived bias and felt that the counselor/coach would be biased towards student-athletes.

*Research Question #4 – Does the school counselor/athletic coach dual role influence non-student-athletes to be less likely to seek them out for help because of a perceived bias towards student-athletes?*

The frequencies for section C have indicated that non-student-athletes have neutral feelings about going to a counselor/coach for help over a counselor who does not also coach for any kind of assistance. However out of the 32 non-student-athletes who participated, five touched on a perceived bias. This means that 6% of non-student-athletes surveyed felt that the counselor/coach would be biased towards student-athletes.

## Chapter V: Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations

The previous chapter contained the statistical results of the study including demographic information, item analysis and research question results. This chapter will include a discussion comparing the results regarding literature review points, a summary of findings, and recommendations for further study.

### *Discussion*

This section details how the results compare to the literature review including: the prominence of the dual role, student opinions about whether the dual role would be helpful or harmful, dual role quality or conflict, students' perceived bias and expectations, trusting behaviors, and the perpetuation of social hierarchal issues.

Chapter two discussed the prominence of the school counselor/athletic coach dual role. Wilson (2000) concluded that, "just over 21 percent are currently performing the dual role" (p. 19). Of the 81 students who filled out the survey, 16 of them answered that they thought their counselor was also a coach at their school. According to these surveys, 19.7% of the students who participated have a counselor who is also a coach, demonstrating how Wilson's noted percentage is reaffirmed.

Chapter two also discussed role quality and conflict; could a counselor maintain quality in both the counseling and coaching roles, or would role conflict be the inevitable result. Four of the 81 students who filled out surveys commented on role quality. One student said they'd be more likely to go to a counselor in the dual role because, "they work harder by doing two jobs so they are better at managing time, etc..." Another student reasoned that, "a counselor that is also a coach would have more knowledge than strictly a counselor." These surveys are a direct response to the question of role quality and the effects of the dual role on students' opinions.

Four of the 81 students who participated commented directly on role conflict in their responses. One student wrote that, "athletes are less likely to go to a coach unless it is their own because they will try

and get them to play their sport.” Another student commented that they would be less likely to go to a counselor in the dual role because, “I would feel they didn’t have as much time to help me.” Clearly these are not thoughts or expectations that school counselors would want their students to think as it impacts their likeliness to come in for help. The surveys show that students both feel that coaching in addition to counseling would strengthen the quality of the role as well as create conflict in achieving school counselor ethics and goals in different ways.

Chapter two discussed the influence and impact of student expectations. The surveys featured some open-ended questions which often led to explanations about expectations. One student explained that they would be less likely to go to a counselor who is also a coach because, “it may be stereotypical but coaches tend to be more harsh in my opinion.” This student would expect a counselor in the dual role to be harsher with them than a counselor who does not also coach, which makes them less likely to want to go to the counselor/coach for help as opposed to a counselor who is not also a coach.

Trusting behaviors directly influence student expectations, and six of the 81 students directly commented on trust being an influencing factor. All of the students who commented on trust said that they felt that since the coach would know them better they would trust the coach more. However one student said they’d be less likely to go to their coach specifically for personal/social issues because, “I couldn’t trust them fully.”

This pattern of preferring the counselor/coach over counselors who do not also coach for any reason with the exception of personal/social issues proved to be a common theme. Eight of the 49, or 16% of the student-athletes who participated in the study commented that they would be less likely to go to a coach for personal/social problems specifically. This theme would influence students’ likelihood to go to a school counselor if they were also a coach.

However, 36 out of the 49 student-athletes who participated commented that they would be more likely to go to the counselor/coach because they feel the coach would know them better than a counselor

who is not also a coach. This shows how interpersonal relationships and face time with students is exceptionally valuable and greatly influences students' likelihood to go to the counselor for help.

Another main point from chapter two is the question of perceived bias. Six of the 81 students who participated in the study commented directly about counselor/coach bias. Comments reflecting students perceived biases include: "I trust those that are less biased...or more biased with me more," from a non-student-athlete, "I would feel they would think less of those not in sports," from a student-athlete, and "I believe counselors who are also athletic coaches are biased about students who aren't involved in athletics. Also, they're not as knowledgeable, I believe," from a non-student-athlete.

According to this survey, both student-athletes' and non-student-athletes' comments reflected a perceived bias towards student-athletes over non-student-athletes, yet the overall number of students who commented this way was not statistically significant compared to the number of students who either were neutral on the issue or who commented that the additional coaching role would make them more likely to go to the counselor. And although several students commented on counselor/coach bias, there is no statistical evidence from the surveys that would indicate a concern about a perpetuated social hierarchy problem caused specifically by the dual role of school counselor/athletic coach.

### *Conclusions*

Overall, comments included the following themes: feeling that the coach would know the student better which would cause them to trust or have more comfort with the counselor/coach, not wanting to talk to a counselor/coach specifically about a personal/social matter, a perceived counselor/coach bias towards student-athletes, and the majority of comments regarded being neutral often paired with explanations regarding the personality or individual skills and characteristics of the counselor/coach.

These survey explanations contribute towards the findings for research questions three and four which ask whether student-athletes and non-student-athletes are more or less likely to go to a counselor/coach for help because of a perceived bias towards student-athletes. The key component in these mirrored questions is whether they are influenced because of the bias factor. No student-athletes



indicated that they would prefer going to a counselor/coach because they were biased towards student-athletes. And while five of the 32 non-student-athletes commented that they were influenced by a perceived counselor/coach bias towards student-athletes, there was no statistical significance found. Many of the students who participated said that they would rather go to a counselor who is also a coach, but the majority of the students who participated were neutral about a counselor also being a coach.

This study's findings conclude that there is no statistical difference between the influences of the dual role of school counselor/athletic coach on student-athletes compared to non-student-athletes. The majority of students who participated in this study said that they were neutral about counselors also being coaches. The findings of this study do not indicate that the influence on student-athletes and non-student-athletes to go to a dual-rolled counselor/coach was impacted by a perceived bias towards student-athletes.

These conclusions indicate that student-athletes and non-student-athletes alike would be equally comfortable and neutral about going to see a counselor who is also a coach. There is not enough evidence to indicate any reason that a counselor should not also be a coach.

### *Recommendations*

#### *Recommendations for further study*

Additional information gained from this survey's themes in explanations include students feelings that if the counselor/coach knows them better they feel more trustworthy towards that individual, and that student-athletes showed hesitancy to go to a counselor/coach for personal/social matters specifically. These could be topics for further consideration.

This researcher also wonders if one would have the same student responses from students in a bigger school verses students from a smaller school about the positive or negative influences of the dual role on them and their peers. One logical explanation could be that a professional assuming both roles in a smaller school would have more of a chance to have more contact with both non-student-athletes and student-athletes alike, creating less of a chance for the students to perceive any counselor bias towards

student-athletes. Likewise, at a bigger school, the professional would have a harder time getting to know every student, and consequently would end up spending more time with their athletes, creating more likeliness that students would perceive a counselor bias towards student-athletes. This would be a worthwhile and interesting topic for future research.

Another recommendation for further study could include the following. One option could be researching what students know about the school counseling profession and role. In collecting these surveys it became obvious that students were not informed about what their school counselors were there to help them with. This can be a problem in two ways; students do not know where they can get help if they need it, and/or students expect their high school counselors to be mental health counselors and then do not see them doing the job they falsely expect them to be doing.

If this study were to be done again, one-on-one interviews and/or a larger sample would be recommended.

#### *Recommendations for the school counseling field*

Personnel in the school counseling field should work to dispel bias, clarify the school counseling role for students, and consider that if some students are uncomfortable with talking to a professional who is also a coach about personal and social matters specifically, then we need to continue to reevaluate our role and our mission in helping all students and look at both where that discomfort is coming from and how to provide students with the help that they need most effectively.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form

### Thesis Research Participant Consent Form

Dear Guardian(s),

The purpose of this letter is to ask your permission to allow your student to complete an anonymous survey regarding their attitudes and opinions about counselor/athletic coach dual roles in their school. The administration of these surveys is part of my thesis research on the topic of school counselor/athletic coach dual roles and the impacts on high school students, which I am required to complete as part of my Master's program in School Counseling at UW - Stout.

The survey is voluntary and your student can choose not to be involved, as it is not a required class assignment. I will be distributing the survey during school hours, which your student would complete in the classroom, and which would then be collected to draw conclusions for this study. This research does not propose any risks for the students involved.

Your cooperation is very much appreciated, and if you have any questions at all before you sign this form, please do not hesitate to contact me by either phone or e-mail, or my advisor Dr. Hector Cruz at (715) 232-2556.

Thank you!

Alyssa Leonard  
M.S. School Counseling  
University of Wisconsin - Stout  
(715) 505-1894  
[leonardal@uwstout.edu](mailto:leonardal@uwstout.edu)

**Student, please return the bottom portion of this form.**

-----

Guardian, if your student is still a minor, please sign next to the option you wish to choose. **Student, if you are 18-years-old or older you may sign your own slip.**

Please print your name here. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **YES**, my student can participate in this study by filling out a confidential survey.

\_\_\_\_\_ **NO**, my student may not participate in this study by filling out a confidential survey.

**THANK YOU!**

## Appendix B: Directions for Survey Administration

### Directions for Survey Administration

1. Please hand out the surveys to those students who turned in a consent form allowing them to participate. The survey should be taken individually and quietly. Other classmates should not be allowed to influence students who are taking the survey.
2. Please ask students to make sure they DO NOT put their name anywhere on the survey.
3. Please state: "The purpose of this survey is to find out how athletes and non-athletes may be influenced in seeking out help from a counselor who is also a coach."
4. Please state: "Please answer each question as completely and honestly as possible."
5. Please collect the surveys once they are completed, and put them directly into the envelope provided.
6. If students have questions about survey items, I will answer them upon my arrival.

THANK YOU!

## Appendix C: Survey

**A Comparative Study:****Student-Athlete and Non-Student-Athletes' Attitudes Regarding the Influence of the School Counselor/Athletic Coach Dual Role**

The purpose of this study is to compare the attitudes of high school student-athletes with non-student-athletes regarding the influence of the school counselor/athletic coach dual role.

**Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible.**

---

**A. Please fill in your demographics:**

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Grade \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Sex \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Race \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**B. "Athletics" for this study will include the following: if you have identified yourself as a student-athlete, please indicate the sport(s) in which you participate. If you identify yourself as a non-student-athlete, please check that line.**

- |                       |                    |                                     |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Baseball ____      | 7. Golf ____       | 13. Tennis ____                     |
| 2. Basketball ____    | 8. Gymnastics ____ | 14. Track and Field ____            |
| 3. Cheerleading ____  | 9. Hockey ____     | 15. Volleyball ____                 |
| 4. Cross Country ____ | 10. Soccer ____    | 16. Wrestling ____                  |
| 5. Dance Team ____    | 11. Softball ____  | <b>17. Non-student-athlete ____</b> |
| 6. Football ____      | 12. Swimming ____  |                                     |

**\*\*IF YOU ARE A NON-STUDENT ATHLETE, PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS EXCEPT: D. & E.**

**\*\*IF YOU ARE A STUDENT-ATHLETE, PLEASE CONTINUE TO FILL OUT EVERY SECTION.**

---

**C. Please circle your responses for each question below, and briefly explain why you chose the answer that you did.**

1. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach at your school, rather than a counselor who is NOT ALSO A COACH at your school for career advisement?

\*Examples of a meeting for career advisement could include, but would not be limited to: help with revising your resume, setting up a job-shadow or volunteering opportunity, help with scholarships, assistance with job or college applications, etc.

**Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely**

Please explain the reasoning for your answer.

2. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach at your school, rather than a counselor who is NOT ALSO A COACH at your school for help with a personal or social issue?

\*Examples of a meeting for help with a personal or social issue could include, but would not be limited to: concerns about your own or a friend's wellbeing, mediation between another student or students and yourself, concerns about your home life, etc.

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer.

3. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach at your school, rather than a counselor who is NOT ALSO A COACH at your school for academic advisement?

\*Examples of a meeting for academic advisement could include, but would not be limited to: help with class selection, scheduling, or class changes.

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer.

**D.** Please circle your responses for each question below, and briefly explain why you chose the answer that you did.

1. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach OF YOURS, rather than a counselor who is a coach, but not YOUR coach for career advisement?

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer.



2. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach OF YOURS, rather than a counselor who is a coach, but not YOUR coach for help with a personal or social issue?

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer.

3. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach OF YOURS, rather than a counselor who is a coach, but not YOUR coach for academic advisement?

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer.

**E.** Please circle your responses for each question below, and briefly explain why you chose the answer that you did.

1. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also YOUR coach, rather than another counselor who DOES NOT ALSO COACH at all for career advisement?

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer.

2. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also YOUR coach, rather than another counselor who DOES NOT ALSO COACH at all for help with a personal or social issue?

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer and continue to the back page.

3. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also YOUR coach, rather than another counselor who DOES NOT ALSO COACH at all for academic advisement?

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer.

**F.** Please rate the counselors below from 1-6, 1 being your first choice, and 6 being your last choice to go and see for any kind of assistance.

**Counselors:**

- 
1. Female Coach \_\_\_\_
  2. YOUR Female Coach \_\_\_\_
  3. Female Non-Coach \_\_\_\_
  4. Male Coach \_\_\_\_
  5. YOUR Male Coach \_\_\_\_
  6. Male Non-Coach \_\_\_\_
- 

**G.** Please circle one answer for the following questions. "NA" represents the selection "Not Applicable."

- |  |            |     |           |
|--|------------|-----|-----------|
| 1. Does your coach yell at you?  | NA         | Yes | No        |
| 2. Does your coach make you feel like he/she has time for you?           | NA         | Yes | No        |
| 3. Does your coach seem to care about you and value you as a person?     | NA         | Yes | No        |
| 4. Does your counselor yell at you?                                      | NA         | Yes | No        |
| 5. Does your counselor make you feel like he/she has time for you?       | NA         | Yes | No        |
| 6. Does your counselor seem to care about you and value you as a person? | NA         | Yes | No        |
| 7. Is your counselor in the dual role of coach and counselor?            | Don't Know | NA  | Yes    No |
- 

**H.** Any additional thoughts or comments are welcome!

\*Examples of a meeting for academic advisement could include, but would not be limited to: help with class selection, scheduling, or class changes.

**Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely**

**Please explain the reasoning for your answer.**

**D. Please circle your responses for each question below, and briefly explain why you chose the answer that you did.**

1. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach OF YOURS, rather than a counselor who is a coach, but not YOUR coach for career advisement?

**Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely**

**Please explain the reasoning for your answer.**

2. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach OF YOURS, rather than a counselor who is a coach, but not YOUR coach for help with a personal or social issue?

**Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely**

**Please explain the reasoning for your answer.**

3. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also an athletic coach OF YOURS, rather than a counselor who is a coach, but not YOUR coach for academic advisement?

**Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely**

**Please explain the reasoning for your answer.**

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**E.** Please circle your responses for each question below, and briefly explain why you chose the answer that you did.

1. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also YOUR coach, rather than another counselor who DOES NOT ALSO COACH at all for career advisement?

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer.

2. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also YOUR coach, rather than another counselor who DOES NOT ALSO COACH at all for help with a personal or social issue?

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer and continue to the back page.

3. How likely would you be to go see a school counselor who is also YOUR coach, rather than another counselor who DOES NOT ALSO COACH at all for academic advisement?

Not Likely      Less Likely      Neutral      More Likely      Most Likely

Please explain the reasoning for your answer.

**E.** Please rate the counselors below from 1-6, 1 being your first choice, and 6 being your last choice to go and see for any kind of assistance.

**Counselors:**

1. Female Coach \_\_\_\_

---

2. YOUR Female Coach \_\_\_\_

3. Female Non-Coach \_\_\_\_

4. Male Coach \_\_\_\_

5. YOUR Male Coach \_\_\_\_

6. Male Non-Coach \_\_\_\_

**G.** Please circle one answer for the following questions. "NA" represents the selection "Not Applicable."

1. Does your coach yell at you?	NA	Yes	No	
2. Does your coach make you feel like he/she has time for you?	NA	Yes	No	
3. Does your coach seem to care about you and value you as a person?	NA	Yes	No	
4. Does your counselor yell at you?	NA	Yes	No	
5. Does your counselor make you feel like he/she has time for you?	NA	Yes	No	
6. Does your counselor seem to care about you and value you as a person?	NA	Yes	No	
7. Is your counselor in the dual role of coach and counselor?	Don't Know	NA	Yes	No

**H.** Any additional thoughts or comments are welcome!