One person can have many identities and roles they can fill (Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). For instance, one person can be a mother, businesswoman, and philanthropist. These identities can exist simultaneously with one another without encroaching upon the other identities (Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). However, some identities can, in a sense, compete for dominance within the mind of an individual. For instance, collegiate athletes can often question whether they are primarily a student or an athlete (Watt & Moore, 2001). Typically, athletes will adhere more strongly to their athletic identities the more they experience success, acceptance, and praise for their athletic endeavors (Johnson & Migliaccio, 2009). When a collegiate athlete endures a season-ending injury, the student-athlete identity can often come under conflict.

Sports injuries can potentially have many adverse effects upon the athletes that suffer the injury, from loss of confidence to increased anxiety (Day, et. al, 2012). Additionally, the effects of an injury can become more complicated when multiple identities are involved; with college athletes that are both students and athletes, the athletes can experience identity confusion following an injury (Tamminen, et. al, 2012). For example, when a collegiate athlete must postpone his or her athletic endeavors for a period of time due to an injury, it is possible that he or she will question what his or her prominent identity is, whether that of an athlete or a student. One possible explanation for this identity confusion is that many players do not return to their same level of performance following certain injuries (McCullough, et. al, 2012). Another explanation could be that athletes often experience depression following a serious injury (Kontos, et. al, 2012). Whether lower performance and/or depression are contributing factors, collegiate student-athletes still have the potential of undergoing identity confusion. Currently, there is a lack of evidence as to whether collegiate student-athletes adhere more strongly to their student identity or athletic identity. Research suggests that highly selective universities and colleges with rigorous academics are often correlated with student-athletes that adhere more strongly to their student identities (Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). However, an absence of evidence exists in the broad spectrum of colleges and universities worldwide, suggesting more research needs to be done in this area of interest.

After searching Google Scholar and PSYCinfo, around ten empirical articles and/or book chapters were found on this subject. This dearth of research presents an opportunity to both clinicians and researchers to delve into this particular group of collegiate athletes. In this literature review, we will examine the current evidence as to whether collegiate student-athletes adhere more strongly to their student identity or athletic identity following an injury.

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