Athletes have been found to have more negative attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help than non-athletes (Watson, 2005) despite experiencing comparable amounts of mental illness (Markser, 2011). The purpose of the present study is to examine factors that are associated with athletes’ help-seeking attitudes, including athletic identity and emotional competence. A sample of 144 college student-athletes from a small, private Midwestern college in the United States participated in the study. The athletes competed at the NCAA Division III level. Participants were asked to complete the following measures: Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993), Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form (Fischer & Farina, 1995), Toronto Alexithymia Scale (Bagby, Parker, & Taylor, 1994), Self-Stigma of Seeking Help Scale (Vogel, Wade, & Haake, 2006), the Problem Orientation Scale of the Social Problem Solving Inventory for Adolescents (Frauenknecht & Black, 1995), and the Rumination subscale of the Inhibition Rumination Scale (Roger, Guarino de Scremin, Borril, & Forbes, 2011).

Correlational analysis and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were used to examine the extent to which athletic identity and emotional competence, as measured by
alexithymia, problem orientation, and rumination, predicted attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. Results revealed that both athletic identity and the emotional competence variables entered as a block predicted unique variance in the athletes’ attitudes toward seeking help. Among emotional competence variables, alexithymia had a significant negative bivariate relationship with attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help and emerged as worthy of further study. Problem orientation was identified as a significant predictor in the regression models, however, it functioned as a suppressor variable and did not have a significant bivariate correlation with attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. Findings, implications, and directions for future research are discussed in this study.