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Ball is Life: Black Male Student-Athletes Narrate Their Division I Experiences

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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

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Black Male Student-Athletes Narrate Their Division I Experiences

by

Eno Attah Meekins

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This dissertation written by Eno Attah, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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DEDICATION

"We reject new thought until, eventually, its edges soften, its suggestions seem tame and manageable, and its proponents are 'elder statespersons,' to be feared no longer. By then, of course, the new thought has lost its radically transformative character. We reject the medicine that could save us until, essentially, it is too late."

---Richard Delgado

For every child I have birthed, embraced, influenced or encouraged. You have been the greatest inspiration and impacted my life beyond what you could ever imagine. For that I am eternally grateful. Dream grandly and live boldly as I will continue to do the same.

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Black Male Student-Athletes Narrate Their Division I Experiences

by

Eno Attah Meekins

This study focused on the experiences of Black male student-athletes in Division I sports and used critical race methodology to present counter narratives. These narratives highlighted successes and heightened awareness about the needs and concerns of an extremely important, but often silenced, population. The purpose of this research was to examine the experiences of Black male student-athletes in the Division I revenue-generating sports of basketball and football. This study examined how Black males perceived the effectiveness of the NCAA supports in place for their academic success, degree attainment, and postcollegiate leadership and career opportunities. This dissertation also sought to understand the extent to which the legacy of racism in the United States has impacted the collegiate experience of these athletes. This research utilized critical race theory to frame the counter narratives of Black male student-athletes participating in this study. Through counter stories, the researcher offered suggestions that more effectively serve NCAA Black male student-athletes during their transition into and beyond Division I university sports participation as a strategy to achieve social justice for a historically marginalized group.

Prologue

My personal and professional connection to this research, as a mother, wife, educator, and graduate student, point to certain considerations and risks. GOD has blessed me with two loving, intelligent, and athletically inclined young boys. I thank GOD every day for being blessed to love and raise them—but nevertheless, I sit back and wonder sometimes, how did I end up the only woman in a house full of guys, and married to a basketball coach? Growing up as the child of a pastor, I promised myself that I would never marry a pastor as long as I lived. If I had known then, what I know now, I might have made the same promise about basketball coaches and former athletes.

Setting: One early 2015 morning in the researcher's household preparing for the morning commute

Researcher: Good morning, Baby!

Researcher's son: Uhm (unintelligible grunts)

Researcher: Put your clothes on baby. It's time to go.

Researcher's son: Why do I have to wear pants?

Researcher: It's cold outside. I don't want you to get sick

Researcher's son: I'm an athlete. I don't wear pants. I just wear shorts.

Researcher: You're my son and you're wearing pants!

Setting: One evening in the researcher's household engaging in evening household activities. Researcher's husband has ESPN on in the living room going in and out of naps after holding a 2.5-hour high school basketball practice. Researcher is preparing dinner and supervising homework and sibling interaction.

Researcher: Son, are you ready to eat? Did you finish your homework like I asked you?

Researcher's son: Just one more shot mom.

Researcher: Did you finish the homework (a little more intense)?

Researcher's son: Not yet!

Researcher (voice slightly raised): Put the basketball down and finish the homework please!

Researcher's son (yelling): All you want me to do is do homework all the time! I'm an athlete!

Researcher (yelling): You're my son and in this house, you are not an athlete! You are so much more than just an athlete! You are intelligent! You are creative! You can do so much more than just bounce and shoot a ball! And if you don't start the homework, I'm taking every basket down in this house and throwing them away!

Researcher's son (crying): You're a mean mom!

Although my sons are young, I have always pushed the importance of education. It was impressed upon me at a young age, and my desire to learn has never been extinguished. Being a participant of a rigorous academic program in middle through high school, my opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities were limited. It was not until my junior year of high school that I began running on my high school's cross-country team. My experience was average, but I gained great appreciation and empathy for the daily commitment and devotion that was required of student-athletes. When teaching high school English, I also supported the athletic department's study hall program. In addition, my husband has served as a high school and travel ball basketball coach, which has given me some insight into the experience of male athletes who

compete in team sports. Although my actual involvement in organized sports was limited, my intimacy with the sports world has been deeply personal. My kids have been raised in basketball gyms and on the football field. While I went to school twice a week in the evenings to obtain my second master's degree, my first son followed his father, a former athlete and now high school basketball coach, to every practice and game. When I began and, now, as I conclude, my pursuit of a doctoral degree, the high school basketball childcare continued. So, in part, I blame myself and my pursuit of education for my 7-year-old's current confusion and prioritizing of athletics over academics. Every week the struggle between sports and academics in my household is very real and extremely intense. Between sports leagues, athletic practices, games, individual workouts, and homework, reading time, extra studies, and the arts, I find myself in a whirlwind trying to help maintain balance. The disagreements with dad about my emphasis on homework seven days a week and his dedication to sports, not only impacts the marriage but the manner in which we raise our children. The struggle to agree on how academics and sports will coexist within our household has proven to be quite a challenge; yet still, we will continue to model and cultivate balance-promoting habits for these growing young boys.

But after reading the endless literature on Black males and Black male athletes with the negative accounts and statistics prevailing, a slight fear and need to protect my two Black boys, and other Black boys from the imminent doom of an athletics-dominated existence has been activated. I have found myself increasingly promoting academics, and dissuading my sons from overly engaging in the sports activities that have brought them joy. "You're more than that basketball!" "I want to see you reading your books as much as you are shooting baskets!" "No more basketball until you finish some math and reading!" I have found myself repeatedly yelling

at the 7-year-old. The 7-year-old finally asked, “Momma, why do you only want me to do math and reading? Why don’t you like me playing basketball? I can do other things.” In the midst of my heightened anxiety, I had caused him to believe that I did not like basketball or believe that he could be a well-rounded person.

Yet, as I thought, these fears did not begin during my literature review, but long before my career as an English teacher, and back to college, interacting with my student-athlete friends. As I circulated the classroom of Black and Latino students, when asked what they wanted to accomplish in the future, the majority of Black boys stated that they wanted to be basketball or football players. I wondered then why more had not responded that they wanted to be team owners, cardiologists, physicists, or any other career path, and hence began my deep interest in Black males and Black male student-athletes. I never imagined that I would go on to marry a former basketball player and current basketball coach with whom I would have two sons.

With a background in education, I have served as librarian and magnet coordinator at a high school, and have directed an all-girls leadership program. Some of the students I have served have been athletes, but that has not been my primary responsibility, so some might wonder why I am interested in this study of Black male student-athletes. The answer is simple. My children. The children I have birthed and the children I serve and have served.

As a mother of two Black boys who love sports, I have an intensely personal connection to this research topic. Although I am raising two spirited Black boys to one day become Black men who will positively contribute to and lead their communities and the world, they may one day also choose to become student-athletes. As much as this thought scares me, I am hopeful that this research will impact the future of collegiate athletics in which they may participate. For

years as an educator, I have witnessed the toiling and pressures of student-athletes, particularly the struggle inner city athletes face when completing the NCAA Clearinghouse and their hopes to be NCAA eligible during their senior year. As the NCAA requirements have increased (Petr & McArdle, 2012), student-athletes of color have become increasingly marginalized (Ferris, Finster, & McDonald, 2004). The pressure has become more intense for these athletes (Jolly, 2008). They know that their fate and future goals of going to college and earning a scholarship to play a sport that they love might be contingent upon that one decision. I have seen a few student-athletes qualify for Division I athletic programs and go on to successfully graduate from college but still not attain positions with decision-making power or leadership status in future careers to which degrees from top-tier universities have entitled so many others. I have also seen other athletes fail to qualify and go on to community colleges where they persevered to acquire the eligibility necessary to transfer to Division I universities in order to play their sport and engage in student life for a shorter period of time than their initially qualifying peers. Even still, I have seen many student-athletes not qualify for Division I athletic programs and begin at community college programs only to drop out some months later. These experiences are the basis for my interest in this topic.

Researcher's Bias

Clarifying bias by analyzing how findings might have been impacted by a researcher's background allows for an open and honest narrative (Creswell, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Due to my maternal, personal, and professional investment in the research, it is quite clear that I must remain conscious of my subjectivity. Therefore, I have accepted that I bring to this study certain biases and assumptions (Peshkin, 1988) that Black males face distinct challenges not only in educational settings, but also in society. Nevertheless, I will maintain an awareness of my assumptions and bias.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Much discussion has surrounded the state of intercollegiate athletics, specifically revenue-generating sports within Division I athletic programs. Engulfed by a heavy sports culture, many people have questioned if universities have prioritized athletics over academics (Clubb, 2012; Daniels, 1987; Lapchick, 2006; Thelin, 1994). Advanced athletic prowess and sensational crowd-pleasing performances by Black student-athletes have driven higher television ratings, resulting in more media contracts, corporate sponsorships, advertisement agreements, and excessive amounts of revenue for athletic programs. If the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and Division I athletic programs are to actualize their missions for all student-athletes, then it is imperative that Black student-athletes who have benefitted these institutions tremendously, be provided effective supports to realize and attain their academic, social, career, and life goals.

This study examined the effectiveness of the NCAA supports in place for the academic success, degree attainment, and postcollegiate and leadership opportunities for Black male student-athletes. In addition, the dissertation explored the collegiate experience of Black males in Division I basketball and football. Furthermore, the literature review rationalized the use of critical race theory (CRT) as a framework and methodology to later present the counter narratives of Black student-athletes in the revenue-generating sports of basketball and football. It reviewed the extent to which the long-standing history of racism in the United States has impacted the educational experience and outcomes of Black males. The dissertation described sports culture and the history of NCAA leadership, policy, and reform to situate them within a

political and social context. This included a discussion of the NCAA and Division I basketball and football programs' power structures. It juxtaposed the highly visible Black male student-athletes contributing greatly to universities and the NCAA to the low visibility of Black male leadership in universities, athletic departments, and the NCAA after their athletic retirement. Furthermore, the presentation of Black male student-athletes' challenges and successes considered the supports and opportunities in place to counter the commonly held beliefs about their failures.

Background

Black male student-athletes have dominated two of the three Division I revenue-generating sports: basketball and football. In a study conducted between 2007 and 2010 by Harper, Williams, and Blackman (2013), Black men were 2.8% of full-time, degree-seeking undergraduate students, but 57.1% of players on football teams and 64.3% of players on basketball teams. This phenomenon has been assumed as common occurrence, and evidenced by the largest percentage of Black males who have attended predominantly White institutions (PWIs) being those who were granted through participation in sports (Wiggins, 2003). Yet, the overall representation and retention rate of Black males at universities other than historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) has been abysmal (Harper et al., 2010; Hawkins, 2010). Additionally, Black male students have ranked at the bottom of academic performance and progress markers consistently within the U.S. educational system (Comeaux, 2008; Cooper, 2009; Daniels, 1987; Glass, 2015; Hawkins, 2010; Hodge, Collins, & Bennett, 2013; Kunjufu, 2013; Singer, 2015; Smith, 2014), including, but not limited to, Division I universities. Harper et

al. (2010) concluded that 96.1% of the NCAA Division I colleges and universities selected for their study graduated Black male student-athletes at rates lower than student-athletes overall.

Furthermore, Fletcher, Benshoff, and Richburg (2003) uncovered that Black players regularly were assigned to positions in basketball and football programs that stressed the need for more physical agility and had lower reasoning and leadership expectations. In past years, Black males were not placed in the quarterback and point guard posts; instead, those positions were filled by White athletes who, after college, obtained higher salaries and more endorsement opportunities (Pitts & Yost, 2013). Nevertheless, Black male student-athletes persevered and persisted in other positions despite the statistics. Most recently, more Black males, even though small in number when compared to White quarterbacks, have been placed in the leadership role of quarterback past and present, including Steve McNair, Michael Vick, Russell Wilson, Cam Newton, Robert Griffin III, and prior to his 2017 protests, Colin Kaepernick.

While many Black student-athletes have dominated on the field for football and on the court for basketball during their college tenure, many have not lead their division in grade point averages or graduation rates, nor have they held the same command of athletic departments, the NCAA, or sports franchise leadership after athletic retirement. Even though many Black collegiate athletes have aimed to play professional sports after university, each year the National Football League (NFL) and the National Basketball Association (NBA) have drafted fewer than 2% of student-athletes. When professional sports dreams are dashed, many Black male college athletes are faced with making alternative plans, while others are encompassed in feelings of confusion (Hawkins, 2010) and depression (Hawkins, Mila-Williams, & Carter, 2007). As a

result, questions have risen about the preparation of Black male student-athletes for life beyond college athletics (Clubb, 2012; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993).

Student-athletes in revenue-generating sports have been exposed to extreme pressures (Harris, 1993; Person, Benson-Quaziena, & Rogers, 2001) during their collegiate careers, and at times, their interests and needs are overshadowed by the desires of varying constituents (Daniels, 1987; Horton, 2011). Some of these pressures included prescribed schedules, high-level athletic training, team travel, missed classes, monitoring by the university and NCAA, and limited amounts of time to conduct research and engage in non-sports activities or relationships. Black student-athletes at Division I universities also had added pressures of not seeing themselves reflected in the larger student body, faculty, or athletic administration. Also, an overrepresentation existed in the number of Black males in Division I basketball and football programs compared to their low representation in other NCAA Division I sports, such as bowling, golf, hockey, lacrosse, swimming, tennis, volleyball or water polo (Edwards, 1970; Hawkins, 2010; S. M. Lawrence, 2013; Smith, 2004). This revealed how Black males access to PWIs in 2016 mirrored the identical manner that provided their initial access in the early twentieth century. Another disturbing emergence obscured by the media sensation and fanfare was that the large revenues generated by the two sports predominantly played by Black male students at Division I institutions—60% of whom, at the time of this study, came from the lowest socioeconomic status—has supported the sports programs dominated by majority White students from suburban neighborhoods (Hawkins, 2010; Hawkins et al., 2007; Miller & Wiggins, 2004), such as golf, hockey, lacrosse, tennis, and water polo, in addition to funding a majority of women's athletic programs (Hodge et al., 2013).

Statement of the Problem

While Black males have been able to generate billions of dollars in revenue for the NCAA and Division I universities, many have retired from collegiate athletic careers without the majors, marketable skills, or financial capital to improve the precollegiate circumstances that motivated a majority of them to initially pursue collegiate sports. While attending Division I universities, certain Black athletes have been directed toward majors that will keep them eligible athletically, but are not advised that the selected major will require schooling beyond undergraduate studies before yielding lucrative earnings (Henrion, 2009). The experiences and lives of Black male student-athletes who have offered their athleticism and who have generated revenue for the university have been seldom reflected in its leadership roles, yet greatly impacted by leadership's perceptions and actions (Bimper, 2015; Daniels, 1987; Shulman & Bowen, 2001).

Horton's (2011) research revealed that Black student-athletes were glamorized as athletes, but vilified as students. Jolly (2008) noted that the majority of Black male student-athletes possessed weak identity and self-efficacy (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) as students. Also, they have had less time to pursue research projects and internships due to athletic participation. In the past, Black student-athletes have been scheduled into classes that would keep them eligible for athletic play, but which have not been necessarily beneficial for job marketability or leadership positions after graduation (Daniels, 1987; Horton, 2011). Black student-athletes have continued to profit universities through athletic participation, but a majority of those athletes have exited collegiate athletic careers only to suffer from a wage gap as Black

males (Carrington & Troske, 1998), usually the lowest pay when compared to White males and females in the labor market (Pitts & Yost, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into Black players' academic, athletic, and sociocultural experiences in NCAA Division I basketball and football, as well as to examine how the NCAA and universities support them to succeed academically and professionally. In addition, this exploration encouraged Black student-athletes in revenue-generating sports to think critically about the current state of Division I athletics and what position they hold in shaping their own futures and the future of intercollegiate sports for generations of Black student-athletes following their precedent. It was the goal of this study to provide a platform through a qualitative research approach that narrates the experiences, concerns, hopes, aspirations, and goals of Black student-athletes to a captive audience of their peers, NCAA and athletic department officials, and to critical educators concerned with the future direction of intercollegiate sports. This investigation meant to provide a critical examination of the current approach to Black student-athletes and the future direction of intercollegiate sports to prompt dialogue, more questions, and action toward social justice among NCAA administration, university officials, critical educators, and student-athletes.

Sports have been an enormous part of the world culture, especially in the United States (Hartmann, Sullivan, & Nelson, 2012). Division I collegiate sports have been able to generate more revenue than professional sports leagues. Yet, regardless of the increase in freshman applications, alumni donations, or generated revenue Black student-athletes have attracted to the university, little is known about how Division I universities have addressed past issues of

advisement, class scheduling, position stacking, stereotyping, exploitation, and marginalization of Black male athletes (Pitts & Yost, 2013). Although the NCAA and universities have provided varied supports for student-athletes, very little research exists on how these supports have benefitted Black athletes explicitly. There has been no disputing that Division I basketball and football programs dominated by Black male student-athletes have generated large amounts of revenue for the NCAA operations, yet it has remained unclear exactly how much Black athletes have benefitted academically, socially, and financially during and after their participation in Division I sports programs.

Research Questions

Two questions focused on Black student-athletes and their perceptions of NCAA and university supports from an academic skills level, and postcollegiate standpoint guided the research in this study:

1. How do Black male student-athletes perceive the effectiveness of supports implemented by the university and the NCAA to help them successfully complete their college degrees?
2. How do Black male athletes articulate the supports provided by the university and NCAA to help them attain postcollegiate opportunities and positions of leadership after athletic retirement?

Theoretical Framework

Mirrored in the essence of Black student-athletes have been the complexities confronting humanity worldwide (L. Harrison, C. K. Harrison, & Moore, 2002; Hawkins, 2010; Singer, 2015). Issues to consider have included culture (Boyd, 2003; Kunjufu, 2013), identity

(Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1994), education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011), power structures (Smith, 2014), economics (Levin, Belfield, Muennig, & Rouse, 2007), and social inequities (Hawkins, 2010). To observe the multiplicity of matters that have contributed to the existing state of Black male student-athletes, CRT was determined as the best framework. The use of CRT scrutinized the extent to which racism has impacted the everyday existence of Black male athletes (Bimper, 2015; Comeaux, 2015; Harris, 1993; Singer, 2015), and how certain structures have marginalized, yet could be resisted to enact agency and persist (Harper, 2009a, 2012). When analyzing the current state of Black male student-athletes, it is necessary to consider how race, education, money, and power have interconnected to reveal a perplexing relationship between Black males, educational institutions, NCAA Division I athletic programs, and a capitalist society (Hawkins, 2010; Singer, 2015). Thus, to capture how race has impacted these interconnected factors in society, including the experience of Black males in college athletics, this research used the lens of CRT.

Critical Race Theory

Although after the election of President Obama it has been purported that the United States has become a post-racial society, Black male student-athletes' situations cannot be separated from the issue of race. CRT initially surfaced out of critical legal studies (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Singer, 2002). Delgado (2009) recollected that CRT emerged in 1989 from a 2-day convent of academic legal thinkers on the University of Wisconsin campus. Delgado credited Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, Charles Lawrence, and Mari Matsuda for igniting the sparks of critical legal studies that have continued to burn in the current CRT movement. Since its inception, CRT has rejected the argument of color blindness and instead embraced the idea of

color consciousness (Crenshaw, 1995). CRT has explored how subtleties of racism operate in institutions and its impact on the experiences of people of color (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). CRT has probed "social, educational, and political issues by prioritizing the voice of participants and respecting the multiple roles held by scholars of color when conducting research" (Chapman, 2007, p. 157). CRT tenets include: (a) counter storytelling, (b) permanence of racism, (c) Whiteness as property, (d) interest convergence, and (e) critique of liberalism. CRT has continued to shift with the political, ideological, social, and institutional discourse of the times, and has resulted in subsequent theories addressing the specific needs and issues of each community.

Overview of Methods

Creswell (2014) described qualitative research as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). This investigation took a qualitative approach through the use of critical race methodology (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988) to create counter narratives. This study explored the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of Black student-athletes using in-depth interviews (see Appendix A) and a focus group. This qualitative research closely aligned with the selected CRT framework to relay the experiences of Black basketball and football players. Incorporating this approach was a natural style for the way human beings approach life, including storytelling and critical listening. The study's sampling consisted of 12 current and former Black student-athletes who have participated in Division I basketball and football programs (see Appendix B).

Critical race methodology has provided a platform for the voices of people of color. Their experiences have been valued, and through shared agency they have made meaning of these lived experiences. Critical race methodology is an empowering tool that has pushed those marginalized out of the corners of shame and onto center stage into the spotlight (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) by creating counter narratives. Counter narratives are a disruptive form of critical research that have privileged interpretations from marginalized groups (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) with social justice as the goal (Freire, 2000). This disruption has exposed the complexities and contradictions within official accounts of history (Mutua & Swadener, 2004).

Although Black male athletes are in a great deal of spotlight, they are seldom heard. The researcher built upon current relationships with Black male student-athletes and developed new ones to narrate an understanding of how and why these athletes experience their academic and social occurrences. The counter narratives will allow institutions, specifically schools, to listen critically and reflect deeply to learn more about themselves. This method lent itself toward the study of Black male student-athletes by providing opportunities for participants to seriously contemplate their Division I experiences, valuing those reflections and sharing these thoughts to raise questions and create more socially just conditions for future Black student-athletes.

Significance of the Study

There are several reasons why the topic of this research has importance and relevance. Black male student-athletes who participate in Division I athletics have generated large amounts of funds for colleges and have supported the operation of several non-revenue-generating sports, yet for numerous reasons, their voices oftentimes have been restrained. This study has

significance in the current climate of collegiate sports and will provide several significant contributions to the field:

- A safe platform for the voices of Black student-athletes who are more often seen than heard;
- An examination of university and NCAA supports for Black student-athletes; and
- An opportunity for university staff and faculty to reflect upon the academic, emotional, and occupational needs expressed directly by student-athletes.

The topic of Black male student-athletes is one that has been heavily researched, with great attention paid to their lack of academic achievement and decline in status after athletic retirement. Yet, at the time of the literature review, very little research was located that emanated directly from the thoughts and words of Black male athletes on the condition of college athletics, NCAA policies, and supports that they believed were necessary for their success in academics and post athletic retirement. Upon further review, the literature was scant in terms of what supports had been established by the NCAA and Division I universities to specifically assist Black male athletes in areas that had been deemed deficient. Research on general supports and best strategies for student-athletes were available.

Since the image of the universities is highly vulnerable, often athletes have been guarded and shielded from those who have been viewed as outsiders to the organization. Athletes also have been discouraged from disclosing information related to their sports teams. In addition, many athletes have been scripted with talking points when addressing questions from media and other entities outside of their teammates and team staff members. With academic scandals and sexual assault cover-ups emerging from university athletic programs, athletic departments have

been leery of opening themselves up for scrutiny. Since the majority of Black male student-athletes attending Division I universities participate in highly visible revenue generating sports, how and with whom these athletes have tended to share their thoughts and concerns on Division I athletics and supports has great significance.

Limitations and Delimitations

In 2016, there were nearly half a million NCAA student-athletes competing in intercollegiate sports (Irick, 2016). The NCAA athletic programs have been divided into three divisions. Within those three divisions and nearly half a million student-athletes were more than 170,000 Division I athletes (NCAA, 2016) and 33,305 Division I basketball and football players (Irick, 2016). To appropriately limit the scope of this study, the researcher investigated only Division I programs. Due to an interest in Black male student-athletes, the study also was limited to basketball and football, which have contained a majority of Black male students enrolled in Division I universities. This study limited itself to student-athletes who currently participated at Division I universities located near the west coast and Division I student-athlete retirees who also resided on the west coast, so that the researcher could conduct personal interviews with participants in their chosen spaces.

The researcher used purposive sampling and referrals to identify 12 Black male student-athletes for this study. Due to limited time and resources, the participant sample of 12 contributed as a limitation of this study. One researcher personally conducted all interviews. The large amount of time spent with current and former Black student-athletes to hear their stories and learn their experiences impacted the presentation of the data and influenced the researcher's perception of these athletes.

The use of CRT did not limit, but rather added depth, authenticity and richness to this research. In general, critical race methodology has been criticized for lacking rigor in procedure and analysis. Narrative analysis allowed for in-depth analysis of the study data. Bruner (1991) described narratives as a version of reality since they would not follow logical and scientific procedures or pass empirical verifications. Although questions about rigor, generalizability, and truthfulness (Trinchero, 2011) have risen in narrative research, Freire posited that narratives would not answer all questions, but instead meet the needs of individuals according to the moment in history (Arnett, 2002).

Definitions of Terms

This section lists and defines key terms that were used throughout this dissertation.

- **Black.** Black refers to the descendants of African-derived people, including aboriginals, slaves, and immigrants across the diaspora. Black has also been used to describe those of mixed race including African descent existing in every nation of the globe.
- **Collegiate sports.** Collegiate sports have been defined as organized, competitive team sports where the participants represent their postsecondary institution in contests against teams from other institutions.
- **Counter narrative.** Counter narrative has been a tool for "exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32).
- **Division I.** NCAA Division I schools usually have had the largest student bodies, have managed the largest athletics budgets, and have offered the most generous

number of scholarships of NCAA schools. Teams from these programs have competed at the highest level of athletic competition, have had larger media outlets, and have provided athletes with greater access to professional scouts than smaller schools.

- **Predominantly White Institutions.** The term *predominantly White institutions* (PWIs) has been used to indicate institutions of higher learning where Whites have accounted for at least 50% of the enrollment (Singer, 2002).
- **Racism.** Racism has been seen as an unavoidable and almost permanent fixture of society. Racism has maintained the current power and privilege structure, benefiting some and not others, even in a post-Civil Rights Era (Zamudio et al., 2011). The definition of race as a means of subordinating people of color has led to the understanding of racism as an ideological function of White supremacy. White supremacy has been understood as a system of racial domination and exploitation where power and resources have been unequally distributed to privilege Whites and oppress people of color (Huber, 2008, p. 164).
- **Revenue-generating sports.** The top three money-grossing sports—baseball, basketball and football—have generated more publicity and more revenue for universities than any other sports programs. Through media contracts, sponsorships, endorsements, playoffs, tournaments, bowl games, and championships, sports programs have the opportunity to generate enormous amounts of revenue.
- **National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).** The 500 employees of the NCAA serve more than 460,000 student-athletes, 19,000 teams and 1121 colleges and

universities. The NCAA interprets legislation, provides member support, handles all championships, and manages programs that benefit student-athletes. Its published mission is to support student-athletes so that they can succeed on the field, in the classroom and in life (NCAA, 2016).

Summary

This research narrated the experiences of several Black student-athletes at PWIs. In addition, the study analyzed the supports that Black student-athletes believe have been present or lacking at the university to prepare them for personal, career, and financial success after graduation. This study provided Black athletes an opportunity to voice their experiences and concerns as the minority attending predominantly White universities from which Black students graduate at the lowest rate. Finally, this study examined to what extent participation in revenue generating athletics benefitted the lives of Black student-athletes. By listening to the voices presented in this study, leaders in athletic programs and sports management should be more reflective in their interactions with and decisions affecting the academic, leadership, and postcollegiate opportunities for Black male student-athletes.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to add more voices of Black male student-athletes to the discussion surrounding Division I athletics and university and NCAA supports. Also, this study contributes to an understanding of how Black male student-athletes perceive the effectiveness of those supports as implemented by the university and the NCAA to successfully complete their college degrees, access postcollegiate opportunities, and attain positions of leadership after athletic retirement. Using CRT as a theoretical framework, the researcher investigated literature on Black history in the United States, world-wide sports culture, NCAA revenue-generating sports, and the supports provided to Black male athletes in Division I sports.

There has been much debate on the state of intercollegiate athletics, especially on revenue-generating sports in major athletic programs (Fizel & Fort, 2004; Lapchick, 2006; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Singer, 2002). Central to this discussion have been Black male student-athletes (Harper et al., 2010; Smith, 2014). At the time of this dissertation study, certain researchers recognized that how Black male student-athletes have identified themselves within institutions of higher education and in the world of sports has reflected their positions within the larger society (Bimper, 2015; Comeaux, 2008; Daniels, 1987; Edwards, 1988; Singer, 2013; Smith, 2014). Much of the literature reviewed has revealed that Black males have ranked lowest, with the exception of Native Americans and Eskimos, when compared to other subgroups on educational attainment and indicators of academic performance. The research also has revealed that this population has been exposed to unique pressures, which have had significant effects on their identity formation (Archer, 2002; Brooks & Althouse, 2007; Fletcher et al., 2003; Glass,

2015; Harris, 1993; Hawkins, 2010; Paule, 2011; Person et al., 2001). Several researchers have noted the impact of these tensions on the socialization of Black male student-athletes (Anderson & South, 2007; Franklin, 1994; Hawkins et al., 2007; Majors & Gordon, 1994). Consequently, these researchers have determined that many Division I Black male athletes experienced limited access to lucrative opportunities after retirement from sports (Hawkins et al., 2007; Singer, 2013; Smith, 2014). The NCAA and university athletic departments have established several support systems for student-athletes (NCAA, 2016); yet, it is unclear what supports have directly addressed the academic path, career counseling, financial advisement and leadership preparation for Black male student-athletes.

Many researchers have described Black male student-athletes across a broad spectrum of characteristics both personally and socially:

- Highly valued (Cooper, 2009; Hawkins, 2010);
- Athletically superior (Boyd, 2003; Comeaux, 2008; Cooper, 2009; Smith, 2014);
- Elite players (Hodge et al., 2013);
- Identically confused (Erikson, 1994; Hawkins, 2010);
- Academically inferior (Cooper, 2009; Harris, 1993; Smith, 2014);
- Exploited (Daniels, 1987; Edwards, 1970; Hodge et al., 2013; Singer, 2002);
- Marginalized (Smith, 2014); and
- Complex members of institutions and society (Bass, 2002).

In this study, the researcher explored the experiences of Black male student-athletes who have or currently participated in revenue-generating sports at major universities and the university and NCAA academic and supplementary supports provided for them. This literature

review analyzed Black male student-athletes' experiences in NCAA Division I basketball and football programs. This section began with an explanation of the guiding CRT framework, and then followed with a brief review of Black history in the United States, because to understand the current status of Black males, one must recognize how their position links to past practices and policies (Byard, 2015; Daniels, 1987; Glass, 2015; Hawkins, 2010; Hodge et al., 2013; Kunjufu, 2013; Singer, 2013; Smith, 2014; Woodson, 1919) regardless of the discomfort this reflection may trigger (Crenshaw, 1995; S. M. Lawrence, 2013; Singer, 2002). A contextualized review of Black males in the United States, its educational system, and revenue generating athletic programs revealed the connection to the choice of research method. The research then delved into a discussion of the impact of sports culture (Kunjufu, 2013; Lapchick, 2006; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Singer, 2015). Specifically, the examination focused on a brief history of the NCAA and the revenue-generating sports of basketball and football. Finally, examined were discussions of supports that have been provided for student-athletes in these sports and explicitly how certain supports have impacted Black male student-athletes.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers have noted that reflected in the essence of Black student-athletes were the complexities confronting humanity (L. Harrison et al., 2002; Hawkins, 2010; Singer, 2015). Issues to consider as they have related to Black male student-athletes have included culture, identity, education, and social inequities (Bimper, 2015; Comeaux, 2008, 2015; Harris, 1993; Singer, 2002). Thus, upon observing the multiplicity of matters that have contributed to the current perception of Black male student-athletes, these various contributing elements should be acknowledged (Bimper, 2015; Comeaux, 2015; Harris, 1993; Singer, 2013), while also providing

the opportunity to honor a traditionally silenced perspective to more comprehensively frame the position of Black male student-athletes. Analyzing the literature on Black male student-athletes and the interconnectedness of race, education, and money has revealed a perplexing relationship between Black males, educational institutions, NCAA Division I athletic programs, and a capitalist society (Hawkins, 2010). This analysis also uncovered racial components in the structure of team roles, coaching, athletic departments, and NCAA leadership. Thus, to capture to what degree race has impacted Division I college athletics, explicitly the experience of Black males in college athletics, the researcher framed this study through the lens of CRT.

Critical Race Theory

CRT was developed as an international multidisciplinary field utilized by numerous scholars who sought to divulge institutionalized racism. As a result, race was placed at the center of law and policy in the United States (Delgado, Stefancic, & Liendo, 2012). Due to CRT's roots in the civil rights struggle, cultural nationalism, and Marxism, it has used race as the central construct to analyze, frame, and interpret inequality within society (Zamudio et al., 2011). CRT has been an intellectual movement particular to both "postmodern (and conservative) times and part of a long tradition of human resistance and liberation" (West, as cited in Crenshaw, 1995, p. xii). CRT has been deeply concerned with rectifying historical misdoings (Delgado et al., 2012). Since its origin, CRT has refused to accept an idea of color blindness, but instead has embraced the idea of color consciousness (Crenshaw, 1995).

CRT was built from critical legal studies and radical feminism, as well as the writings of philosophers and theorist including Gramsci, Foucault, Derrida, Douglass, Du Bois, and Chavez (Delgado et al., 2012). CRT initially surfaced out of critical legal studies to provide a counter

narrative to liberal discourse (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Delgado, originally a critical legal studies scholar, recollected that CRT emerged in 1989 from a 2-day convent of radical academic legal thinkers on the University of Wisconsin campus (Delgado & Stefancic, 2009). Delgado has credited Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, Charles Lawrence, and Mari Matsuda for igniting the sparks of critical legal studies that exploded and transformed into the CRT movement acknowledged at the time of this study.

With each time period, CRT has shifted with the political, ideological, social and institutional discourse. "The movement highlights a creative—and tension-ridden—fusion of theoretical self-reflection, formal innovation, radical politics, existential evaluation, reconstructive experimentation and vocational anguish" (West, 1995, p. xi). This scholarly discourse has promoted narrative tradition and argued against the slow pace of racial reform in the United States. CRT proponents have posited that racism is customary in American society, but have strongly disagreed with the stagnant racial reform and extensive benefits afforded to Whites in the United States (Bimper, 2015; Boyd, 2003; Daniels, 1987, 1988; Harper, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Harper (2012) has noted that modern racism, different from past views of racism, is composed of both intentional and unconscious actions used to marginalize persons of color, while reproducing inequities that sustained social norms of White privilege (Harper, 2012). Singer (2015) has explained that CRT should not only be used as a tool to address race and racism, but should also be used to "understand and address other forms of subordination based on gender, class, language, and other differences" (p. 194). Most CRT scholars have viewed the movement for its endless possibilities, not for its basic components (Crenshaw,

1995). However, primary tenets of CRT include: (a) counter storytelling, (b) permanence of racism, (c) Whiteness as property, (d) interest convergence, and (e) critique of liberalism.

Counter storytelling. Singer (2015) explained that CRT's analysis and confrontation of social inequities was based on race, gender, class, language, and other differences from a minority perspective. Voices of color have been uniquely shaped through powerful varying histories and experiences with oppression. Minority background has validated people of color as authorities on racial matters via experience (Delgado et al., 2012).

CRT has used a particular lens to capture and present a picture of several elements evident in racial educational inequality (Zamudio et al., 2011). These elements have existed within society, institutions and schools. Ladson Billings (1995) utilized specifically this tenet of CRT to critically observe the education of non-White children (Glass, 2015). Bimper (2015), Comeaux (2008), and Harper (2009a) have used counter narratives to push back against observed racial stereotypes. After living and teaching within a deeply segregated time, in 1933, Woodson was prompted to publish his thoughts on the teaching of Black students in the U.S. education system. "The American Negro has taken over an abundance of information which others have made accessible to the oppressed, but he has not yet learned to think and plan for himself as others do for themselves" (Woodson, 1933, p. 132). Black people have been reminded constantly of slavery and past oppression that certain researchers have asserted served to justify the further oppression of the race (Barrett et al., 2013; James & Asante, 1992). Woodson (1933) suggested that Black people should narrate their own history, instead of having others narrate it for them. This, along with an examination of education, religion, literature, and philosophy as they have historically been taught, Woodson believed would instill a lost sense of pride. He implored that

Black people learn to reject orders, think, and pursue education meant to inspire "people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better" (Woodson, 1933, p. 29). Woodson's principles have not yet become the norm for many educators engaging with Black males or Black male athletes.

Permanence of racism. According to Delgado et al. (2012), the ongoing existence of racism has been ignored, and as a result has never been completely or adequately addressed. Although blatant racism has been on the decline, and blatant forms of racism have been pacified by color-blind "conceptions of equality," it has been extremely difficult to handle other forms of racism due to non-acknowledgement (Delgado et al., 2012). Blacks and Latinos have often been the most frequent recipients of institutionalized racism. Delgado et al. noted that while the prison population was primarily Black and Brown, the majority of CEOs, senators, surgeons, and university officials were White. The hierarchy in college sports administration and the NCAA has also exemplified this dynamic. Thus, the permanence of racism has touched certain aspects of Black athletes in their college athletic lives (Singer, 2013; Wiggins, 2007). Smith (2014) has contended that an analysis of the lack of access to sports management positions for Blacks revealed a connection to history and presented an opening to understand how a long-standing existence of racism has perpetuated more opportunities for some and a lack of access for others—specifically Black males—in sports leadership. Cooper (2009) has insisted that an understanding of how "race and racism perpetuate social inequalities and academic disparities" (p. 14) would illuminate the understanding of Black male student-athletes' experiences in college athletics.

Whiteness as property. Cooper (2009) and Harris (1993) have maintained that White supremacy has been perpetuated by maintaining Whiteness as property rights and excluding people of color. S. M. Lawrence (2013) has asserted that White Americans often have denied the existence of Whiteness as property yet unconsciously connected to the identity and benefitted from the resources, power, and opportunity of this status at the expense of Black people and other minority groups. Moreover, L. Harrison et al. (2002) advanced the notion of Whiteness as the norm resulting in the privilege that came from that Whiteness. S. M. Lawrence (2013) has discussed the intersection of race and property ownership that has maintained racial and economic disparities. The researcher contends that "whiteness in sport exposes and interrogates contemporary power relations, racial performances, and struggles over meaning" (S. M. Lawrence, 2013, p. 335). Critical race theorists have maintained that Whiteness as property has had a payoff from which people of color could not benefit.

Interest convergence. Interest convergence has addressed how racism has advanced the interests of elite and working-class Whites. Bell has proposed that civil rights litigation did more to assist Whites than it did to assist Blacks (Delgado et al., 2012). Singer (2015) has determined that Black athletes who have competed in PWI athletic programs served the best interest of the institution and did not negatively alter the benefits and power that Whites would continue to enjoy. Singer (2015) further suggested that Black student-athletes' participation in university athletics was one of the "primary reasons that these programs have become highly competitive and entertaining commercial enterprises" (p. 346). He has referenced Black student-athletes as a precious commodity crucial to the "continuing commercial development and success of the college sport enterprise" (Singer, 2015, p. 347) and has contended that "those who control

college sports have been willing to sacrifice the well-being and educational interests" (p. 349) of Black male athletes for their personal economic profits. Harper (2009b) and Harper et al. (2013) have conducted a great deal of research on Black male student-athletes at the 2-year college and 4-year university levels. The researchers have analyzed psychosocial and post-college research on Black male college athletes and found that through the use of interest convergence, African American male student-athletes have benefitted the colleges, but should also benefit themselves as students.

Critique of liberalism. The critique of liberalism has resisted the presentation of society as having attained fairness, egalitarianism, and an equal playing field (Cooper, 2009; Crenshaw, 1995; Zamudio et al., 2011). Critical race theorists advocate that "liberalism sees inequality as a natural product of fair competition . . . rejects any consideration of the structural, rather than natural or individual causes of inequality" (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 16). This perspective has failed to consider that some individuals possess a greater advantage due to unequal power structures that consequently have disadvantaged others from fully and equally participating in the competition (Chonwerawong, 2006). Zamudio et al. (2011) have argued that liberal societies spoke the slogan of freedom and liberty for all, and gave members of the non-dominant groups legal and political rights, but failed to address "the fundamental material inequality passed down through generations of modern capitalist development" (p. 16). The notion of universal schooling providing universal educational opportunities has been misleading because the great equalizer of schooling has contradicted the reality of educational inequality.

Critical Race Theory and Education

In 1995, Ladson-Billings and Tate brought CRT to the field of education with their groundbreaking educational scholarship and direct discussion of race at the American Educational Research Association meeting. They have theorized that race should be utilized to analyze school inequality in response to the volumes of gender and class scholarship. The scholars were disturbed by the lack of attention to "race and the racialization process as a basis for educational inequality" (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 8). Zamudio et al. (2011) noted, "CRT is the medicine for education, and as educators, we still have a choice to remedy our schools, thereby saving a generation of students from intellectual numbness that comes from entertaining false assumptions about race in society" (p. 6). CRT's interdisciplinary approach has offered teachers and students alternative solutions to the challenges students of color faced in traditional schooling (Zamudio et al., 2011) since their full integration into a persistent racist society (Kunjufu, 2013).

Long-Standing Racism in Society

Frederick Douglass's *The Color Line* (1881) begins, "Few evils are less accessible to the force of reason, or more tenacious of life and power, than a long-standing prejudice" (p. 1). Douglass diagnosed the condition of long-standing prejudice as a moral disorder fortified in a delusional distorted existence. In 1895, Du Bois (1903/2013) succeeded in documenting the ways in which large profits accumulated during the transatlantic slave trade period made Black life disposable. In 1896, Frederick Hoffman advanced the idea that Blacks would soon be extinct through death and disease. The colonists themselves declared slaves the strength and subsistence of the western world (Hoffman, 1896). Even after slavery was abolished, the problem of the

color line in the 20th century caused Black people in America to endure the lasting impact of slavery and disdain from the legacy of past enslavers (Du Bois, 1903/2013; James & Asante, 1992).

Emancipation From Slavery

The declaration of emancipation from slavery resulted in deep disappointment for Black people whose education, if at all, did not encourage the opportunity to develop and increase self-consciousness or self-realization. The Emancipation Proclamation was a token act, and Black ex-slaves still found themselves enslaved educationally and financially. Black people were removed from their lineage, legacy, language, and inheritance in Africa and a majority was left without possession, formal education, or self-sufficiency in America. Laws were enacted to keep Blacks subservient and in a place of inferiority. This progression of events has urged some scholars to connect the utilization of African slaves beginning in colonial America to the exploitation of Black athletes in collegiate and professional sports in past and current day.

Predominantly White Institutions

It is important to devote brief attention to the term predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Singer (2015) defined PWIs as colleges and universities in which Whites students have accounted for at least 50% of the enrollment. When observing faculty composition, these institutions have generally hired and retained a low percentage of faculty of color. In a great deal of recent literature, PWIs have been utilized routinely.

Critical researchers have delved directly into the issues or questions of concern related to PWIs (Arnold, 2003; Sinanan, 2012). The prevailing assumption has been that those reading the material are aware—if not critically aware—of the existence of PWIs. Institutions that some

would consider historic, prestigious sources of pride, critical theorists critique as marginalizing, and sometimes hostile environments in need of more diversity reflected in the student body and staff (Frazier, 2012; Singer, 2013). Critical theorists have also illuminated that each person possesses a different set of lived experiences and values that shapes perspective. This insight has amplified the advocacy of critical researchers for the representation of multiple voices in qualitative research.

Access to PWIs for Blacks. In the past, several motives existed for PWIs to admit limited numbers of Black students, including sports participation, preparation for early missions to Liberia, and attempts to encapsulate the principles of democratic education professed by Dewey (1971) and Mann (1848). Throughout the early 20th century, Black male athletes were on the frontlines of racial discrimination through participation in college athletics (Edwards, 1970; Singer, 2015; Spivey 2004). Nevertheless, students, student-athletes, their families, and their communities stood up to the injustice of racial discrimination in collegiate sports, demonstrating the importance of sport and Black athletes in the history of race relations (Spivey, 2004). Once flagrant prejudices were curtailed, friends of Black people advocated intensely for their education after seeing how segregated schools had adversely affected Black people. First, they advocated for practical education, then for vocational training, and eventually for integrated education. The final call for integration was due to Black people paying to support public schools that they could not attend.

Exodus of Black males to PWIs. In their early years, HBCUs had highly competitive sports teams, but eventually the number of elite athletes at the HBCU level began to decline. The exodus of elite players from HBCUs was attributed to many opting for participation in highly

funded Division I athletics at PWIs and hoping for postcollegiate professional athletic careers (Hawkins, 2010; Hodge et al., 2013). In 2008–2009, there were 103 accredited HBCUs with 93 athletic programs serving a total of 14,928 student-athletes (Hodge et al., 2013). At the time of this study, the majority of students at HBCUs were female. Football programs that would potentially help to financially support women's programs were not significant enough financially to do so; thus, women athletes have experienced inequities. Financial struggles and the overwhelming financial debt of the HBCUs have made it difficult to obtain funding and accreditation. Funds have been garnered from annual football classics, basketball tournaments, and competing in major Division I programs. This has enacted another structural interdependence between PWIs and HBCUs, similar to the structural interdependence between PWIs and Black athleticism. Meanwhile, HBCUs still have been unable to hire large well-paid coaching staffs, purchase ample equipment, or build state-of-the-art facilities that would attract many elite players. Despite the negative finances, HBCUs have sent numerous Black women to compete in the Olympics. This has not been the similar case for Black men because the majority have attended PWIs for sports competition (Hodge et al., 2013; Wiggins, 2007).

Inequities in Educational Attainment

The 2015 census indicated a wide gap between the educational levels of Blacks and Whites (see Table 1). Historical data showed increasing educational attainment for all groups, with the gap between Blacks and Whites remaining similar over time (see Figure 1). Moreover, foreign-born Black people had higher levels of education than native-born Black people (see Figure 2).

Table 1

Educational Attainment of the Population Aged 25 and Older by Race and Hispanic Origin
(Numbers in Thousands)

Race and Hispanic origin	Total	High school graduate or more		Some college or more		Associate's degree or more		Bachelor's degree or more		Advanced degree	
		Percent	Margin of error[1]	Percent	Margin of error[1]	Percent	Margin of error[1]	Percent	Margin of error[1]	Percent	Margin of error[1]
White alone	168,420	88.8	0.3	59.2	0.6	42.8	0.6	32.8	0.6	12.1	0.3
Non-Hispanic White alone	140,638	93.3	0.3	63.8	0.6	46.9	0.7	36.2	0.7	13.5	0.4
Black alone	25,420	87.0	0.9	52.9	1.4	32.4	1.4	22.5	1.2	8.2	0.7
Asian alone	12,331	89.1	1.2	70.0	1.9	60.4	2.0	53.9	2.0	21.4	1.5
Hispanic (of any race)	31,020	66.7	1.1	36.8	1.0	22.7	0.9	15.5	0.7	4.7	0.4

Note. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90% confidence interval.

Note. Adapted with permission from *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2015*, by C. L. Ryan & K. Bauman, 2016, p. 2. Based on U.S Census Bureau, 2015 Current Population Survey.

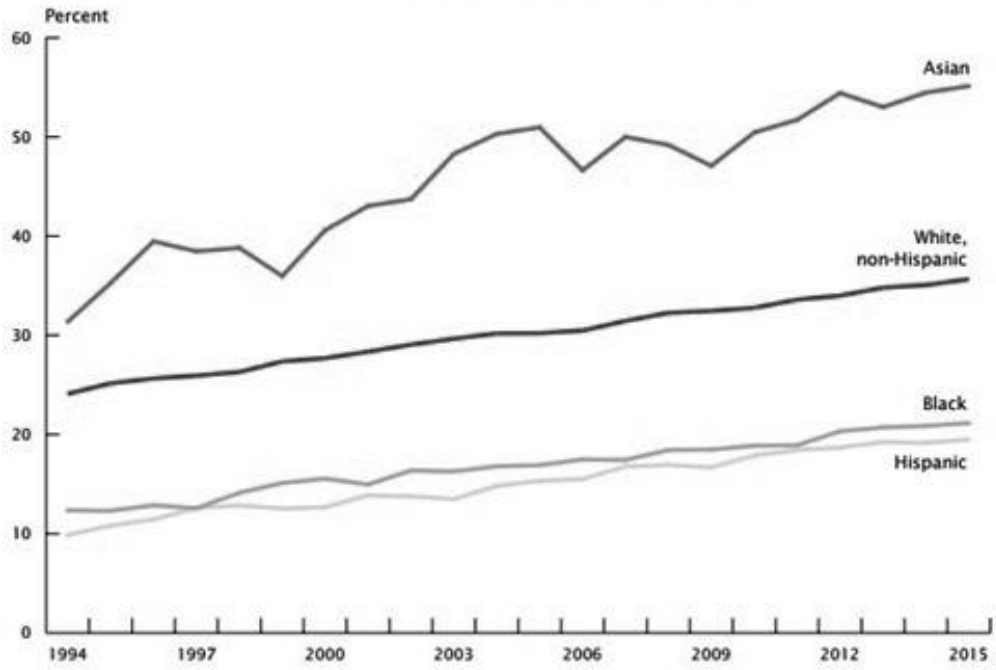

Figure 1. Percentage of native populations aged 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher by race and Hispanic origin, 1994 to 2015. Adapted with permission from *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2015*, by C. L. Ryan & K. Bauman, 2016, p. 6.

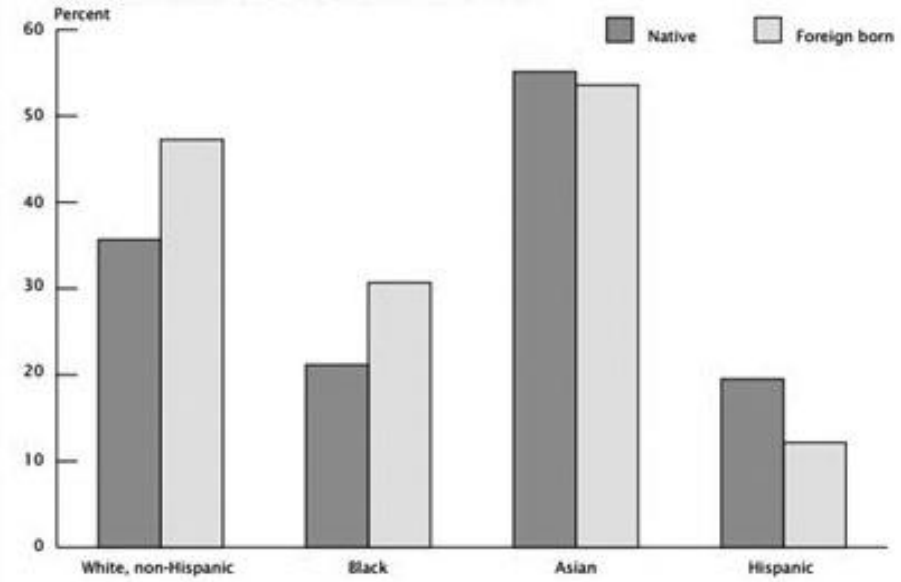

Figure 2. Percentage of population 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher by race, Hispanic origin, and nativity, 2015. Adapted with permission from *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2015*, by C. L. Ryan & K. Bauman, 2016, p. 7.

In addition to differences in educational attainment levels, there has been disparity in the quality of education at those levels and discussion of the reasons for that disparity. Zamudio et al. (2011) have posited that certain inequities determined the educational experiences of minority youth that translated into "deficient teaching, lower achievement, and inadequate preparation for meaningful economic engagement" (p. 16). Zamudio et al. (2011) have argued that academic failure in the inner cities should not be ascribed to deficiencies of students, their parents, or their communities, but rather to the flaws in the educational institutions. Much attention has been given to educational access, but limited attention has been granted to quality of education since Black students have defeated Jim Crow Laws, legalized segregation, and other blatant forms of injustice (Lang, 1988; Levin et al., 2007). Consequently, critical race theorists have deemed that the majority of students of color in the United States have always received lower quality education in a system claiming to offer equal educational opportunities. This view of education has paralleled the cases of certain student-athletes. Some of these cases will be discussed later in the literature review.

Inequities in Financial Wealth

Degand (2013) has addressed the inequities between Whites and minority groups in economics, academics, and leadership status in the United States. There has been great disparity of household income by race (see Figure 3), which has translated into an even greater disparity in wealth accumulation. In 2009, Whites disproportionately accounted for the highest average household wealth of $113,149 compared to the low Black average household wealth of $5,677 (see Table 2 and Figure 4). Whites also accounted for 83.6% of corporate managers and 95.8% of Fortune 500 CEOs (Alliance for Board Diversity, 2012).

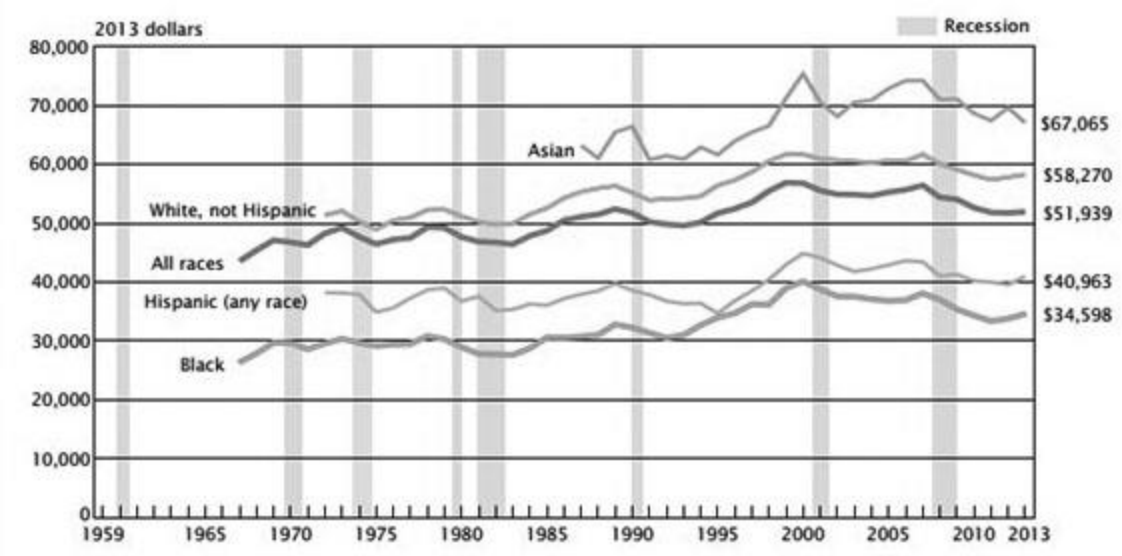

Figure 3. Real median household income by race and Hispanic origin, 1967 to 2013. Median household income data are not available prior to 1967. Adapted with permission from *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2013 Current Population Reports. U.S. Census Bureau,* by C. DeNavas-Walt & B. D. Proctor, 2014.

Table 2

Average Household Wealth by Race/Ethnicity, 2005 and 2009

Ethnicity	2005	2009	Change	% Change
Asians	$168, 103	$78,066	$-90,037	-54%
Blacks	$12,124	$5,677	$-6,447	-53%
Hispanics	$18,359	$6.325	$-12,034	-66%
Whites	$134,992	$113,149	$-21,843	-16%

Note. Adapted with permission from "Social Success Skills: Black Male High School Students' Perspectives on Society and Their Media Experiences," by D. Degand, 2013, p. 3.

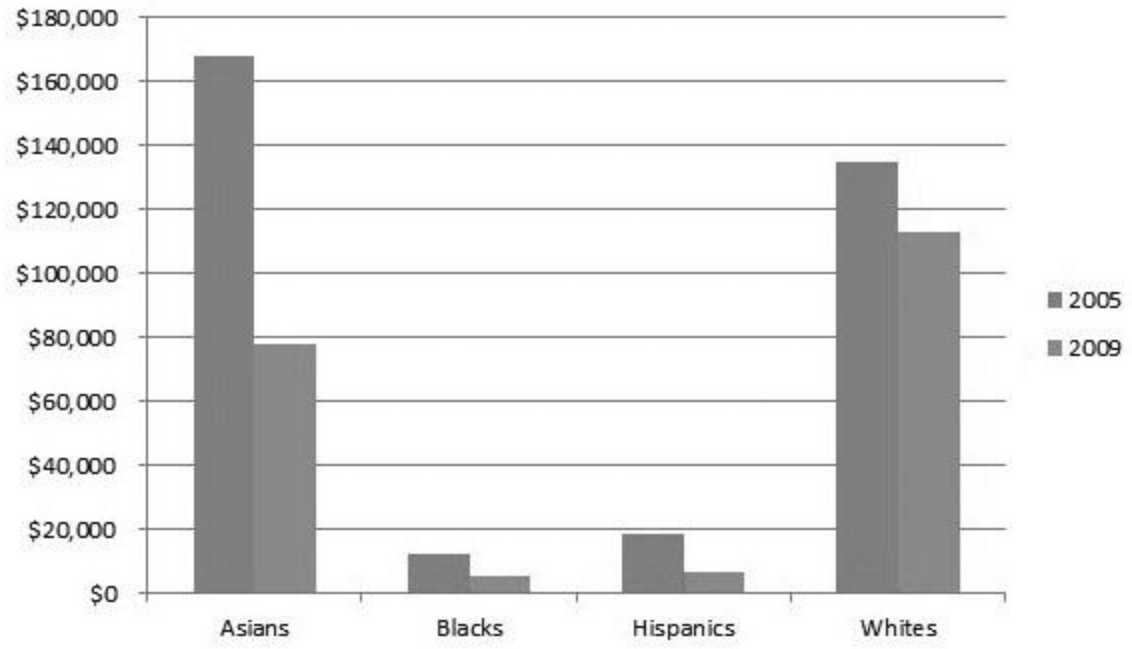

Figure 4. Average household wealth by race/ethnicity, 2005 and 2009. Adapted with permission from, "Social Success Skills: Black Male High School Students' Perspectives on Society and Their Media Experiences," by D. Degand, 2013, p. 3.

Black Males in the United States Post-President Obama

The status of Black male student-athletes in revenue-generating sports cannot be comprehensively analyzed without first addressing the status of the population of Black males in the United States. In the past, "sport, so it seems, was a model the rest of 'Americans' could aspire to as a symbol of dominant liberal individualist ideas about color blindness, racial integration, and cultural assimilation" (Brooks, Althouse, & Tucker, 2007, p. 128). Some researchers have asserted that society has entered a "post-racial state"; however, many have contended with this field of thought (Anderson & South, 2007; Brooks & Althouse, 2013; Cooper, 2009; Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2009; Smith, 2014). These researchers have tended to channel and relate the works of intellectuals such as Douglass (1881) and Du Bois (1890/2007, 1903/2013) to institutionalized racism and marginalizing structures that

disproportionately impact non-Whites in the United States. Yet, the inauguration of President Barack Obama saturated the United States with images of the elevated status of a Black male (Delgado & Stefancic, 2009; Smith, 2014), propelling many to reignite the notion of a colorblind society (Alexander, 2011; West, 2011), thereby sidestepping issues surrounding race or the conversations addressing racism and replacing them with discussions about diversity, inclusion, and multiculturalism.

Academics of Black Males

The trajectory of Black males in the U.S. education system has often been described as an existence of marginalizing conditions including intolerance, exclusion, and other inequalities (Laura, 2014). This arc has manifested in the so-called school-to-prison pipeline (Davis, 2016; Laura, 2014; Meiners, 2010; Noguera, 2003). Certain states have built more prisons than schools or colleges. Horace Mann (1848) stated:

> Education can counter-work this tendency to the domination of capital and the servility of labor. If one class possesses all the wealth and the education, while the residue of society is ignorant and poor, it matters not by what name the relation between them may be called; the latter, in fact and in truth, will be the servile dependents and subjects of the former. . . . It does better then to disarm the poor of their hostility towards the rich. (p. 2)

Singer (2015) has agreed with Mann's 19th-century argument that something must be done to provide more access for those who have been marginalized.

In writing about the school-to-prison pipeline, Singer (2015) has pointed out that in preK through university education, Black males ranked at the very bottom compared to other subgroups with regard to educational attainment and indicators of academic performance, pointing to the disproportionate effects of the schooling process. Kunjufu (2013) has questioned why a majority of Black boys has been isolated from the current educational systems, preferring

to take a chance of trying out for a basketball team and be cut rather than committing to current educational practices. Black student-athletes have been known to experience great success during athletic competition, thus increasing the finances of universities; yet, many have experienced less success in athletic retirement, some even "succumbing to depression or a small percentage conforming to the pressures that foster criminal behaviors" (Hawkins et al., 2007, p. 95). Instead of preparing Black males for success in life, schools have come to represent preparatory schools for prison (Davis, 2016). Meiners (2010) has noted that this model has promoted curriculum that reproduces racialized fears based on a history of White supremacy producing "public enemies" of color. Levin et al. (2007) has found five interventions proven to increase K–12 Black male student achievement: (a) a preschool program consisting of 2.5 hours per weekday, with a 5:1 student-teacher ratio, home visits, and parent meetings; (b) K–3 classes reduced from 25 to 15; (c) comprehensive school reform consisting of smaller learning communities whose teachers and families are dedicated to improvement; (d) public preschool program requiring parent involvement that commits to outreach and healthy lifestyle teachings; and (e) teacher salary increases. Still, in 2013, Kunjufu posed questions about teaching practice, learning styles, and cultural relevance of the curriculum (Bowles & Gintis, 2002). Kunjufu has also explained why Black boys have felt more of a connection with athletes that most have personally never met than with the teachers in their everyday classrooms. He has challenged educators to build relevant connections between the curriculum and the lives of Black boys.

Economics of Black Males

Forty-eight percent of Black people in the United States earn more than $35,000 per year. Annually, 11% gross more than $42,000. In major cities, employment rates of Black males

ranged from 43%–67% (Kunjufu, 2013). Near the end of the 20th century, the poverty rate of Blacks was three times that of Whites due to dead-end, low-wage jobs. Black males accounted for 50% of the country's homicide cases. The leading cause of death for Black males ages 15 to 24 was homicide, at a ratio of 1:21 (Franklin, 1994). Meiners (2010) reported that California, Illinois, and many other states had built more prisons than schools or colleges. In 2003, approximately 12% of Black males between 20 and 34 were incarcerated—seven times the rate of White males—while nearly a third of Black males in southern states were prohibited from voting due to previous incarcerations (Meiners, 2010). Franklin (1994) asserted that the general recognition of Black men had moved from fearsome and threatening to dangerous and sociologically pathological regardless of the various types of Black masculinity that existed.

Black Male Success

Despite the bleak narrative painted in much of the literature, some have dared to counter this narrative, illustrating examples of Black males who persisted despite facing huge challenges and inequities (Cooper, 2009; Harper, 2009a). Research and studies by both PWIs and HBCUs have illustrated many examples of such successes.

Hendricks (2012) conducted a phenomenological study involving 11 Black males who were able to complete university science, technology, engineering, and mathematics degrees. Interviews with these college students revealed that these Black males excelled when influential members of their lives established high expectations and believed and encouraged them to succeed. This provided an essential educational support model. In addition, Black males who maintained self-worth, had successful Black role models, and who were exposed to science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics fields and professions early in their educational careers found paths to academic success.

June (1996) studied a multicultural center serving various ethnic groups at a PWI. It was determined that Black students who frequented the center succeeded due to the close-knit community that developed within the center, allowing Black students to support one another academically and emotionally. They were there to encourage, motivate, and pull one another along, instead of succumbing to defeat when faced with adversity. Counselors who identified with students—not only ethnically, but also similarly in background—provided students with a strong support system and a nurturing environment.

Ross (1998) studied Black males, both international and American, at an HBCU and concluded that introspective, goal-driven Black males persisted and succeeded in nurturing settings where support systems, strong guidance, and positive role models allowed them to model responsibility and make constructive choices.

Allen (1992) conducted a quantitative study about the success of Black males at HBCUs and PWIs. His literature review revealed what happened to Black college students at critical points in their college careers: entry, election of major, and graduation. Despite academic, economic, and social disparities, Black students aspired to succeed in their collegiate endeavors. Black males at PWIs tended to have high grade point averages correlated to high career goals in terms of prestige and power. Black males at HBCUs had advantages over Black students at PWIs in the areas of psychological adjustments, academic gains, and cultural awareness and involvement. Data from the National Study on Black College Students from over 2,500 Black college students illuminated the highest success correlated to those who had the highest

aspirations and were certain college was the best choice for them. Additional correlations were found between gender identity and economic background.

Harper (2009a) studied 143 successful Black males from over 30 PWIs to counter the dominant narratives describing the failures of Black males. This qualitative study revealed that Black males achieved success through "resistant responses to subordination and racist stereotyping" (p. 1), including confrontations with low expectations and rejection of negative stereotyping.

CRT's approach has invited alternative perspectives and counter narratives as a response and solution to the challenges students of color face in traditional schooling. These alternatives could also be considered when addressing the educational needs of Black student-athletes (Harper et al., 2013). When observing the educational inequities and successes of many Black students in educational institutions, Black male student-athletes have also entered the conversation. As stated earlier in the literature review, Black male students have required supports at all levels of education—including the university level—so, through the use of CRT, this research looked at both successes and challenges experienced by study participants and evaluated how these athletes perceived the effectiveness of certain supports.

Sports Culture

Rowe and Gilmore (2009) noted that sport was viewed as an important part of all contemporary cultures. The world of sports has evolved into what has been defined as a social phenomenon (Lobmeyer & Weidinger, 1992). Over time, sports entertainment culture has grown in popularity worldwide and "spaces of sports consumption and rituals of fandom are marked by global cultural flows" (Rowe & Gilmore, 2009, p. 172). Rowe and Gilmour have posited that this

growth could be attributed to the global spread of instant media, increase in leisure economies, and growth of cosmopolitanism combined with local cultural identities and histories with sports.

Depending on the discipline or the individual, sport has taken on different meanings (Weis, 1990). Due to its far-reaching, leisurely, entertaining, and identity-constructing practice (Archer, 2002)—and its consistent presence in family life, media, and educational institutions, sport has been viewed as an inherent occurrence as opposed to having constructed and continuing to construct identities, culture, and related practices (Hawkins, 2010; Meân & Halone, 2010; Smith, 2014).

Weis (1990) accused Western culture of reducing and devaluing the body into a "soulless motor apparatus [for] the purpose of the best possible performance to a backgroundless, desubjectivized apparatus" (p. 22). In this scenario, winning is the primary goal not the means of achieving it. Lawyer and sports announcer Howard Cosell held the opinion that sport mirrored society, along with all of its issues (Smith, 2014). Nevertheless, the mirror's focus has made it easier to observe segregation and the discrimination that has resulted from it. Discrimination has surfaced in salary while a lack of Black owners of sports franchises has presented a challenge to the issue of equity.

Sports Replicates Society

Rowe and Gilmour (2009) have concluded that the sports world has constantly evolved as its practice replicated Western dominated power, while at times presenting challenges and modifications. This world has been governed by a specific set of values, norms, and practices (Matteucci, 2012). Many researchers have characterized sport as a major cultural and socializing force that reflects multiple inequities (Eitzen, 1989; Matteucci, 2012; Meân & Halone, 2010;

Rowe & Gilmour, 2009). These inequities have occurred in bureaucratization, commercialization, racism, ethnocentrism, misdirected patriotism and a host of other "isms" (Smith, 2014). Van Rheenen (2013) has described sports as a realm of ideological struggle. He further noted:

> Beyond entertaining people and providing a vehicle for physical expression, sports serve to support and maintain cultural values espoused at a given place in time. Sports also provide opportunities for cultural resistance, confronting the very social values promoted as worthy of being maintained. (p. 551)

Sport phenomenon has been shaped by numerous external factors (Lobmeyer & Weidinger, 1992). Some researchers have included in these factors media, business entities, and fans (Hawkins, 2010; Rowe & Gilmour, 2009). Others have seen them in more general aspects such as culture, time, area, class, gender, and situation (Eitzen, 1989; Matteucci, 2012; Rowe & Gilmour; 2009, Smith, 2014; Weiss, 1990). Thus, all factors share responsibility in the future direction of the global sport culture.

College Sports

Smith (2014) and Polite (2007a) have noted that the elements in global sport culture have been mirrored in intercollegiate sport culture as well. Smith has addressed how sports mirror society with transcending ability in sociology, economics, law, and politics. Singer (2015) has concurred that dominant societal patterns have been transmitted through college sports organizations. On the other hand, some have disagreed. Van Rheenen (2013) asserted that college sports were a social and geographic space of disparate power and potential. He has weighed in on the current debate by juxtaposing college being used as a tool of "racial integration and upward social mobility for many student-athletes from lower socioeconomic backgrounds" (Van Rheenen, 2013, p. 551) against the potentially damaging and exploitative

impacts of the NCAA, collegiate sports, and universities toward student-athletes, especially Black student-athletes (Van Rheenen, 2013).

Both heartbreak and joy combine to present the complete narrative of collegiate sports for Black males. A lengthy investigation into the University of North Carolina athletic department disclosed accusations that the department loaded student-athletes with bogus classes to secure academic eligibility. In 2014, a report presented findings that 18 years of classes requiring no attendance allowed athletes to remain eligible, but not to gain the education that they necessarily would have hoped for (Ganim & Sayers, 2014). In 1989, Kevin Ross, a former Creighton University basketball star sued the university after graduating while only reading at a third-grade level. Ross suffered from depression and gave rise to a huge scandal at the university. The then-president Morrison has stated in recent interviews that he was still haunted by Ross's plight and wondered when the scandal would ever go away. There have been similar cases such as that of Keith Frazier and Basketball Hall of Fame inductee Larry Brown. Keith Frazier, a 2013 McDonald's All-America high school player was recruited and admitted to Southern Methodist University. From high school to the university, he had been valued and commended by those closest to him for his athletic ability, with minimal attention to his intellect. Eventually things would come crashing down and a Black male athlete would bear the shame and brunt of the scandal, while others involved would remain in their positions or bounce back shortly thereafter to sometimes even more lucrative positions. Frazier would be haunted by high school grades forged by adults, and then have his team's wins forfeited. After revealing that he was the cause of the team's forfeits and then being demoted from star athlete into a position coming off the bench, he transferred to another university in the state of Texas.

Nevertheless, all Division I collegiate sports programs have not been riddled with academic scandals. Harper et al. (2013) found 10 universities that graduated the highest percentage of Black male student-athletes. Duke, Vanderbilt, Pennsylvania State, and Villanova State universities all had graduation rates of over 70%, while University of Notre Dame and Northwestern University had graduation rates of 81% and 83%, respectively. Clubb (2012) explained Drake University's strategic plan to align the foci of the athletic program and the university mission. Despite challenges and pressure to remain competitive and increase wins and resources, they have been committed to developing student-athletes who will experience personal and career success, in addition to fulfilling their roles as ethical and responsible leaders and citizens.

Varied opinions have circulated on the status and future of intercollegiate athletics. Garrett (2000) has affirmed that throughout the history of college sports, many advocated the positive results of intercollegiate athletics. Others opposed its inclusion and questioned the value of sports in an academic setting. Comeaux (2008) has maintained:

> Instead of enriching the academic environment, revenue-generating college athletics have limited student-athletes' educational experiences. . . . Compounded by the NCAA Academic Reform Movement, new strategies and forms of academic engagement must challenge university officials to apply student-athletes' competitive spirit beyond the game and into the classroom. (p. 1)

Clark, Horton, and Alford (1986) questioned the motives behind the NCAA Rule 48, which increased academic admissions criteria for incoming student-athlete freshmen. To these researchers, it was unclear whether this attempt at reform was racially motivated or an attempt to further marginalize people of color from accessing higher education.

K. Harrison (2009) believed that our nation and its institutions of higher education needed to examine deeply what type of student was recruited for competitive athletics. On the other hand, Gayles and Hu (2009) encouraged finding the proper balance between intercollegiate athletics participation and the goals of higher education. Sandy Clubb (2012), the athletic director at Drake University, has focused on attracting athletically gifted students who strove to achieve excellence in both academics and athletics. Opinions will continue to vary, and several issues remain to be fully addressed, such as what effects changes would have on current and incoming students from lower socioeconomic areas.

History of college football. Intercollegiate sport in the United States began with college football. In the 1880s and 1890s, college football began at Eastern institutions, with Walter Camp of Yale University serving as the model football coach and athletic director (Watterson, 2000). In its early days, "it celebrated primal loyalties to race, economic class, and social caste" (Watterson, 2000, p. 308). Due to segregation, few Black athletes competed prior to 1950. Nevertheless, those who did, played predominantly for prestigious Eastern or Midwestern schools and were described as outstanding student-athletes, in addition to innovators of the game, and football continued to gather the interest of the American people. In 1905, after growing concern surrounding the numerous deaths of football players on college fields, President Roosevelt summoned a meeting between the presidents of Harvard, Princeton, and Yale at the White House. During this meeting, the president asked these men to address the issue of brutal play on college campuses. Two months after the initial meeting, representatives of 61 colleges formed the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (Lapchick, 2006).

History of college basketball. In 1891, James Naismith of the Springfield YMCA invented the game of basketball with two peach baskets as the hoops (Hollander, Sachare, & National Basketball Association, 1989; Nelson, 2008). Initially, the game was intended to have youth lift their eyes and extend their reach. By 1920, most major colleges had basketball teams that competed against other college teams (Nelson, 2008). "Basketball in 1946 primarily meant college basketball" (Hollander et al., 1989, p. 39). Even though professional teams had existed for years, college basketball was what attracted the fans with revenue. The college fan base during this time was primarily middle and middle-upper class, in contrast to the working-class fans of the professional teams, whose players were also from working class families (Nelson, 2008). Similar to football, basketball suffered from the plague of segregation and racism in both college and professional sports.

NCAA oversight. The NCAA, originally the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States, was founded in 1906 (Bowen & Levin, 2003). From its inception, the organization's actions have been viewed as reactionary. The association "was charged with the responsibility of regulating college sports and minimizing the dangers they entailed, particularly in football" (Bowen & Levin, 2003, p. 26).

Nearly 2,000 U.S. institutions of higher learning sponsor collegiate teams, but the United States has been the only country in the world where academia and athletics are linked so closely (Suggs, 2009). Satterfield (2015) has referred to the NCAA as the policy arm for a variety of sports, schools, and organizations in the United States. The NCAA is comprised of three divisions: I, II, and III. These divisions are often distinguished by student body population and revenues. Division I contains a total of 347 schools, Division II, 309 schools, and Division III,

442 schools. Although a greater percentage of its schools are Division III, the majority of NCAA funds are generated from Division I sports participation. Division I schools have granted their students multiyear cost-of-attendance scholarships, while Division II schools have offered partial athletic scholarships and Division III schools offer no athletic scholarships at all. NCAA research has revealed that while Division I schools have controlled the largest athletic budgets, Division II schools have provided the most championship opportunities, and Division III schools have graduated the largest number of student-athletes. Each NCAA division is divided into smaller conferences to determine regional competitions. The Power Five conferences are the five conferences highly regarded for having the best football programs. At the time of the literature review, approximately 1,100 member colleges comprised the NCAA, which served more than 450,000 student-athletes from three divisions (NCAA, 2016). As of 2016, there were 31 Division I conferences, including the Power Five conferences: Atlantic Coast Conference, Big 10, Big 12, Pac 12, and Southeastern Conference.

NCAA academic progress and graduation rates over the years. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan delivered a commission's findings on the nation's education system and demanded a call to action:

> All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgement needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself. (Gardner, Larsen, Baker, Campbell, & Crosby, 1983)

Within that same year, the NCAA, which previously had not recorded student-athlete graduation rates, answered President Reagan's call to action by designing Proposition 48, an attempt to bolster student-athlete academic performance. The new rule required that, beginning

in 1986, incoming student-athletes achieve an SAT score of 700 or ACT score of 15 and a 2.0 high school grade point average in 11 academic core courses for athletics eligibility. Proposition 42 followed in 1989, preventing partially qualifying student-athletes from receiving financial aid within their first year; but amid intense protest, Proposition 42 was rescinded at the 1990 NCAA convention.

In 1990, both the U.S. Federal government with the Student Right-to-Know Act and the NCAA with the Integrated Postsecondary-Education Data System Graduation-Rate Survey (IPEDS GRS) passed legislation that would monitor student graduation rates, including student-athletes. The federal government also required the disclosure of these rates to all students and prospective students. Furthermore, the disaggregation of graduation data was to include race/ethnicity, gender, sport, and the average completion or graduation rate for the four most recent years. Based upon the NCAA's first year of graduation rates data collection, The Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics issued its first report in 1991, calling for a three-pronged approach (presidential control, and academic and fiscal reform) to improve college sports. This would be the first of two reports.

Program reform and increasing graduation rates remained high on the NCAA's radar, so, in 1992, Division I adopted Prop 16 as a modification to Prop 48. Prop 16 established a "sliding scale" of test scores and high school grade point average that required a minimum of 700 SAT or 17 ACT combined with a 2.0 GPA, but in 1995 the implementation scheduled for the 1996–1997 school year was delayed while officials agreed upon a minimum test score for partial qualifiers. Nevertheless, the increase from 11 to 13 courses was included prior to the calculated GPA, which was implemented after the 1995 convention meeting. A more autonomous governance

structure was adopted in 1997, allowing Division I institutions to meet more frequently than other divisions to approve legislative changes.

The academic reform of the early 2000s came from NCAA membership's frustration that the federal rate did not accurately reflect their students' academic success (Brown, 2014). In 2002, Division I developed a Graduation Success Rate (GSR) that more directly accounted for transfer students to accompany the annual federal required report. Focused on graduation rates, while also responding to critics who believed the hard-cutoff SAT scores adversely affected minority and disadvantaged prospective student-athletes, the division increased core course requirements to 16 and eliminated the hard cut-off for test scores from eliminating full qualifier status by test score alone. In 2003 the 25-50-75 model for progress toward degree was replaced by 40-60-80% rule, which required student-athletes to have completed 40% of their graduation requirements by the start of their third year, 60% by the start of their fourth year, and 80% by the start of their fifth.

The academic progress rate (APR), a system that rewards teams whose student-athletes are making progress toward a degree, was also created in 2003 (NCAA, 2017). The APR holds institutions accountable for the academic progress of their student-athletes through a team-based metric that accounts for the eligibility and retention of each student-athlete for each academic term. Many universities' athletic programs have begun to revisit the academic provisions in place for monitoring and supporting student-athletes (Dilley-Knoles, Burnett, & Peak, 2010). The APR assigns one point for each scholarshipped student-athlete staying in school and one point for being academically eligible. The team's points are divided by points possible and then multiplied by 1,000 to equal the team's APR. Awards are given to teams whose APRs are in the top 10%. In

the 2018–2019 school year, the NCAA will begin utilizing revenues generated from television contracts to reward academic performance (Hosick, 2016). While APRs are incentive based, over time, teams may incur penalties for a history of academic underperformance.

Teams must earn a 4-year APR of 930 to compete in NCAA championships. The first penalty level limits teams to 16 hours of practice per week over five days instead of 20 hours over six days, with the reduced four hours serving as academic time. A second level further reduces practice and competition time. The third level includes a list of possible penalties, including coaching suspensions, financial aid reductions, and restricted NCAA membership (Brown, 2014). After an inability to make academic progress for three consecutive years, the Division I Committee on Academics has the discretion to apply appropriate penalties to equally foster achievement both in athletics and in the classroom.

Revenue-Generating Sports

The NCAA has sometimes been likened to a cartel (Fizel & Fort, 2004; Smith, 2004) due to its collection—and redistribution—of revenues derived from championship games, television rights, and other sources of income. In the 2012–2013 financial year, the NCAA revenues totaled over $900 million, mostly derived from NCAA men's basketball television and marketing rights (Gould et al., 2014). Van Rheenen (2013) reported that the college sports of basketball and football generated $6 billion in annual revenue. That was more than the annual revenue of the National Basketball Association. Major college sports programs had the "largest budgets, highest media visibility, largest fan bases, and the most competitive football and basketball programs" (Singer, 2015, p. 346). The NCAA and universities have continued to broker multi-billion dollar contracts with national, regional, and local networks (Singer, 2013). According to Gould et al.

(2014), 91% of the NCAA's division-specific revenue has been directed to Division I institutions, championships, programs, and tournaments, specifically those that perform well in the men's basketball championship.

Although the NCAA publicly reports its finances and expenditures by division, these reports are not readily available or easily accessible by conference. Through a compilation of national media reports, not actual financial statements, Gould et al. (2014) found that the Power Five conferences received between $14.5 and $28.7 million from the NCAA basketball fund in 2012–2013, while non–Power Five conferences received distributions ranging from $1.4 to $8.1 million. In the 2013–2014 fiscal year, the SEC received over $ 15.2 million in distributions from the NCAA basketball fund while nearly $300 million in SEC revenue was derived from sources outside the NCAA men's basketball fund distributions, including a $55 million-a-year television contract to broadcast weekly games and conference championships. In 2013, the conference announced a 15-year $2.25 billion contract and co-venture with ESPN. In 2014, each SEC institution would receive approximately $20.9 million, not including bowl game payouts or additional NCAA funding. Other Power Five conferences are also profiting from multiyear billion-dollar media contracts, including the Big 10 Network, a 20-year co-venture with Fox that increased its revenues to $318.4 million in 2012–2013 and the Big 12's 2014 record distribution of $220 million in revenue to member institutions.

Fizel and Fort (2004) reported that the marginal revenue product of the elite football player exceeded one million dollars. In addition, college coaches' salaries in major college sport can reach the multimillion dollar level, making them sometimes the highest paid employees at public institutions. This has led to debates and litigation on student-athlete compensation, NCAA

revenue distribution, and amateurism. Despite the hypervisibility of Black male athletes in the overly commercialized media-saturated Division I basketball and football programs, the majority of students served by the NCAA have been non-Black student-athletes (Cooper, 2009; Harrison et al., 2002; Hawkins, 2010; S. M. Lawrence, 2013). Black athletes have generated the revenue in major college athletics that has supported non-revenue-generating sports (Hawkins, 2010; Singer, 2015). Hawkins has revealed that these athletes expected that, in turn, the universities would enhance their skillsets so that they could earn a valuable degree or play sports professionally.

Coaches and Athletic Administrators

Smith (2014) asserted that all social relationships are relationships of power, specifically social class and race, related to capital and ideology. He applied the Wallenstein World System to the world of sports. Although sport has been described as a cultural expression where, historically, talent has been valued, and work ethic, sacrifice, and contributions to the organization resulted in social mobility, Brooks et al. (2007) discussed the limited mobility opportunities for Blacks into non-entry-level coaching positions and higher administrative positions in college sports despite the fact that the NCAA Self Study in 1999 claimed to promote diversity. Recently, Black coaches and athletic administrators have been more visible; yet, this illusion has overshadowed their scarcity and the unequal hiring and termination practices associated with isolation, networks, stereotyping, racism, tokenism, and nepotism (Polite, 2007b). Data revealed that White men tended to be the majority hired in positions of development managers, marketing managers, and business managers, while Black men and women of all races were predominantly hired for positions of assistant athletic directors,

associate athletic directors, and athletic directors. Black employees held a disproportionate amount (86%) of administrative assistant positions, while only 9% of White males held similar positions.

Joseph (2016) contended that more than half of the current NCAA head football coaches within the power conferences began as graduate assistants. Yet, only two of the seven Black coaches in the power conferences had taken this path. Highly competitive graduate assistant positions offset tuition for currently enrolled graduate students. The 12 to 15 hour days are intense and comprised primarily of game strategizing efforts. Yet, the majority of graduate assistantships are still filled by White males.

NCAA Staff Support Programs

To more effectively meet its mission, the NCAA also has supported staff with several leadership and equity programs, but for the purpose of this dissertation, the focus will remain on student-athlete support programs. In 1994, the NCAA developed a NCAA Fellows Leadership Development Program to provide access for minorities and women in senior management leadership positions. The Life Skills Symposium was developed as a 3-day program providing toolkits and training through workshops, breakouts, and general sessions for professionals working within the ever-changing area of student-athlete development. Attendees have networked and participated in train-the-trainers' activities to develop skillsets for facilitating discussions with student-athletes on campus (NCAA, 2016).

Black Student-Athletes: Power and Leadership

According to Meân and Halone (2010), sport has had a heavy impact on the identity formation of male athletes. As such, sport has had a major bearing on understandings, and

definitions of gender and sexuality that have reached beyond the boundaries of sport and into wider culture (Meân & Halone, 2010). “Within this dynamic site of resistance and reproduction, college sports are a social and geographic space of disparate power and potential” (Van Rheenen, 2013, pp. 550–551). Although traditionally, Black male student-athletes have suffered marginalization, silencing (Arnold, 2003), and the impacts of systemic racism, in 2015 this population paralleled moments of immense empowerment from the past.

In November 2015, the University of Missouri football team stood in solidarity with students looking to address systemic oppression on campus. The team, with the support of its coach, posted a picture of more than 30 Black student-athletes linking arms and posting this message on Twitter:

> The athletes of color on the University of Missouri football team truly believe “Injustice Anywhere is a threat to Justice Everywhere” We will no longer participate in any football related activities until President Tim Wolfe resigns or is removed due to his negligence toward marginalized students’ experience. WE ARE UNITED!!!!! (Fernandez, 2015, para. 5)

Before the entrance of football players into the protests, racist incidents brought to the attention of school administration through student protest were dismissed or granted scant attention. When asked about his knowledge of systemic oppression, the President Tim Wolfe responded, “Systematic oppression is because you don’t believe that you have an equal opportunity of success” (as cited in Peralta, 2015, para. 11). Protesters were outraged by his response. However, when Black football players threatened to sit out of the upcoming game against Brigham Young University, administration took issues seriously. Forfeiture would have had an enormous financial impact on the university and would have meant paying Brigham

Young University a million dollars, refunding money for ticket sales, and paying the television network for a missed game (Peralta, 2015).

After the statement from the football players, the university president issued an official statement on the issue of racism on campus:

> Racism does exist at our university and it is unacceptable. It is a long-standing, systemic problem which daily affects our family of students, faculty and staff. . . . I am sorry this is the case. I truly want all members of our university community to feel included, valued and safe. (Fernandez, 2015, para. 13)

The statement had come too late, and protesters would only accept Wolfe's resignation. A day later, the president resigned. In that brief moment and small victory by student protesters, Black student-athletes recognized that they had a great deal of power, which the university was forced to acknowledge.

Smith (2014) covered the subtleties of racism and the covert—rather than the overt—actions, including networks of Whites and bench-warming duties that contributed to lack of access for Black males in sports leadership. It was his belief that an analysis of the lack of access to sports management positions for Black men has been rooted in the understanding of chattel slavery and its aftermath on Black descendants. He pointed out an often-held misconception that focusing attention on history should not be equated with blaming individuals today for issues of the past, but instead an understanding of how a long-standing existence of racism has impacted current social interactions.

Cooper (2009) discussed the NCAA's creation of a Life Skills Program that has privileged Black student-athletes to:

> Develop non-sports identities, learn job-related skills, enhance their knowledge about life outside sport, create meaningful relationships with influential people in positions of power, gain material resources, and develop an awareness of abilities needed to nurture careers outside of sport. (p. 22)

Wiggins (1991) noted that this program perpetuated more opportunities for some and a lack of access for many others, specifically Black males in the sports world and society overall. He questioned why more former Black student-athletes were not part of the professional labor force or providing for their families, and attributed it to the fact that most do not make it to professional sports leagues. In addition, he pointed out that of the 279 Football Bowls Subdivisions, only nine were run by Black leadership due to racism or lack of knowledge of careers in the business of sports after sports careers. From childhood, many Black families have viewed sports as a "possible social equalizer." He explained that although the sports world appeared to be "a realm of equal opportunity," it was filled with as many loopholes and false hopes as other structures in the United States, including educational and religious institutions. Also noted has been the discrimination in salary. In addition, lack of Black owners of sports franchises has presented another challenge to the issue of equity. Wiggins defined the relationship between owners and players as an antagonistic one, equating Black athletes to workers in terms of class. Consequently, this positioning has resulted in a manifestation of opposing interests and feelings of vulnerability and exploitation in the workers.

O'Bannon, Alston, and Jenkins

In 2016, the O'Bannon vs. NCAA case came to a close after the U.S. Supreme Court refused appeals from both sides to hear the case. In 2008, Edward O'Bannon, former college basketball player for the University of California, Los Angeles, brought suit against EA Sports and the NCAA. Many years after retiring from college sports in 1995, he discovered that EA

Sports still utilized his likeness in its video games without compensation. O'Bannon, along with Sam Keller, former Nebraska and Arizona State football player, and Ryan Hart, former Rutgers football player, served as lead plaintiffs and sued on their own behalves, as well as for other former and current college athletes. They viewed the denial of monetary compensation and the full rights to their names, images, and likenesses as an injustice. Before the case entered the trial phase, EA Sports and College Licensing Company agreed to a $40 million settlement with players (Berkowitz, 2015). The NCAA also reached a $20-million-dollar settlement with players for disputes related to the EA Sports video games. After lawyer fees, eligible players shared funds that provided approximately $300 to $7,200 for each claimant, according to the settlement distribution formula (Berkowitz, 2015). Following the 2013 settlement, the EA Sports halted plans for the production of a college football game that would utilize the likenesses of college athletes.

While the video game portion of the case was settled, O'Bannon, Keller, and Hart continued with their antitrust suit against the NCAA. After a Ninth Circuit judge initially ruled in favor of the plaintiffs' argument that college athletes should have monetary rights to their images and likenesses capped at $5,000, the NCAA immediately appealed the ruling. The court of appeals concurred with the previous ruling that the organization had violated antitrust laws, but ruled that student-athletes should not be compensated beyond the cost of full school attendance, including school fees, books, and room and board. The latter ruling aligned with the most recent NCAA policy and required no immediate changes in current organization policies. O'Bannon, Keller, and Hart took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court and hoped for clearer guidance in terms

of student-athlete compensation. The NCAA agreed that the high court should hear the case to grant clarity in the issue of student-athlete amateurism.

When the Supreme Court denied both appeals to hear the case, this decision left in place the judgement of the Ninth District Court of Appeals, but also left room for other antitrust and amateurism lawsuits to follow where the O'Bannon, Keller, and Hart case left off. In 2014, Shawne Alston, former West Virginia football player, and other student-athletes argued that the NCAA's previous cap on grant-in aid below the cost of attendance was a conspiracy against student-athletes. Recently, the NCAA, 11 major collegiate athletic conferences, and the lawyers representing the plaintiffs agreed to the terms of a class action settlement that would require the NCAA to pay $208.7 million to approximately 40,000 former Division 1 football, men's basketball, and women's basketball players dating back to March of 2010 (McCann, 2017). The Jenkins vs. NCAA case is currently in litigation. Martin Jenkins and other players represented by sports attorney Jeffrey Kessler view the NCAA scholarship cap as an unlawful conspiracy. It is their belief that student-athletes should benefit from revenues generated by the NCAA as early as during their recruitment period in high school. The NCAA has retained top trial lawyer Beth Wilkinson as its lead counsel. At the time of this literature review the Jenkins case had not yet gone to trial.

NCAA Support for Black Male Student-Athletes

In the past, Black student-athletes rarely found their social, cultural, or educational needs met with the sensitivity and support necessary for academic success. Not only did Black athletes have to deal with coaches complying with the requests of other teams who refused to participate in games if Black players engaged in competition, but Black athletes also had to endure injuries

from teammates without support from staff or the NCAA (Wiggins, 2007). Over the years, the NCAA has increased revenue generated from Division I sports, but has also attempted to increase the supports provided to student-athletes and those who have worked closely with them. Besides financial assistance through scholarships and grants, programs have existed that directly impacted the academics, behavior, and well-being of certain students, while others indirectly affected students by informing or providing opportunities for staff who work with them. Supports have included handbooks, guides, videos, trainings, workshops, conferences, and a host of programs and initiatives. The most recent NCAA resolution offered multiyear scholarships and increased grants-in-aid from $2,000 (Van Rheenen, 2013) up to between $2,500 and $5,000 a year (McCann, 2017). In addition, the NCAA entered a 3-year partnership with the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A) beginning in 2016. As a response to self-study reports and Knight Commission Reports, the NCAA has created programs to support students, while enabling the athletic staff to be of better service and support to the student-athletes at member institutions. In 2016, NCAA officials agreed to create a fund that would allow teams who achieve the highest APRs to achieve financial incentives.

Success for Black Male Student-Athletes in the U.S. Educational System

The majority of studies on Black male athletes have found exploitation high with beneficial academic attainment low as the most prevalent scenario. Yet, counter narratives to these findings did exist (Glass, 2015; Harper, 2009a; Singer, 2015). Glass (2015) traced African American male athletes' and non-athletes' failures in the education system, but through research found several programs that were used to improve academic achievement and athletic aspirations for K-12 and beyond. These included Whiting's (2006) scholar identity model, Levin et al.'s

(2007) research on five successful interventions, and Comeaux and Harrison's (2007) Scholar Baller program.

Through their qualitative case study, Dawkins, Braddock, and Celaya (2008) evaluated two competing hypotheses—sports impede mobility and sports enhance mobility—but concluded that the two did not have to compete in relation to African American male athletes. The researchers introduced a conceptual framework named Typology-3 that created three ideal types that characterized the connection between sports, participation, and academic engagement: (a) maintenance, (b) incentive, and (c) integrative. The types correlated African American males and sports from early childhood to the collegiate level. Although the researchers presented the connection between academic engagement and sports participation in a detailed analysis, one case study sampling limited its generalizability.

Garrett (2000) conducted quantitative research using a Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) dataset to inspect the outcome of both Black and non-Black college male athletic participation in football and basketball compared to other sports on academic performance. This study responded to the 1981 Knight Commission study that called for stricter academic guidelines based on solely cognitive factors. Garrett's T-test, simple regression, and multiple regression analysis reviewed the best predictors of all male basketball and football players' success beyond cognitive measures, such as SAT scores and GPAs. Garrett arrived at different findings than those of the NCAA. This study utilized quantitative measures to humanize student-athletes beyond the numbers of the NCAA, recognizing that other factors should be considered when making decisions that affected human life. Garrett's study revealed no significant relationship between the types of sport played, grade point averages, ethnicity, and

SAT scores, and their significant impact on the athletes' academic success. He concluded that boosting the student-athlete's confidence in academic performance through workshops and meetings early in the admissions process might have had a greater effect on the student-athletes' academic careers. His study revealed that the most significant predictor of student-athletes' success was self-perception.

Comeaux (2008) used the CIRP Student Information Form to survey freshmen and follow-up college students. He acknowledged that the reliability of this dataset had not been formally measured, but provided normative, substantive, and methodological research. Baseline data longitudinally collected provided demographics and other precollege variables. Similar to the NCAA and converse to Garrett's (2000) study, Comeaux found high school grade point average was a strong predictor of college grades. Faculty encouragement was also seen as a strong factor in Black student-athletes' grade point averages. He concluded that faculty should work more closely with Black student-athletes, facilitate academic development and self-identity, and learn about types of unconscious prejudices or discriminatory attitudes directed toward Black male students and the adverse effects they could have on Black males at the university.

Bimper, Harrison, and Clark (2012) conducted a study with seven academically and athletically successful Black student-athletes from the same southwestern PWI. This group of scholarship recipients was heterogeneous in different factors, including majors, socioeconomic status, household type, and educational background. Findings revealed that these Black male athletes consistently navigated the complexities of their academic, racial, athletic, and social identities. Participants countered the one-dimensional perception of their presence on campus as

being linked solely to their athletic status. A sense of community among Black athletes, and an understanding of and ability to navigate social networks, helped these athletes succeed. Finally, these student-athletes learned to become self-empowered and to negate stereotypes through educational endeavors, not through athletics alone.

NCAA Supports for Student-Athletes

The NCAA provides different supports to assist student-athletes transitioning from high school, into the university, and exiting from college. In response to the Knight Reports and several other reports, the NCAA has developed several programs to support the needs of student-athletes:

- The NCAA Clearing house is mandatory for all student-athletes who wish to engage in intercollegiate play. Community college transfer student-athletes must also meet established eligibility guidelines. Upon submitting all of the required information to the NCAA Clearinghouse, student-athletes receive academic certification determining their academic and competition status.
- Initial eligibility for NCAA Division I sports participation has been determined by corresponding test scores and GPAs on a sliding scale (NCAA, 2016). In August 2016, incoming freshmen entered with a 2.3 minimum GPA, completed 16 NCAA core courses during their high school years (10 completed before the start of the seventh semester), and attained the matching SAT or ACT test score. Freshmen who entered with between a 2.0-2.29 GPA were placed on the roster as mandatory academic redshirts.

- Through student-athlete health and safety programs, the NCAA has endeavored to protect student-athletes and ensure equitable competition. The NCAA has provided various insurance coverages and behavioral assessments to ensure student-athletes' health and well-being. The catastrophic injury insurance program has covered student-athletes who have been catastrophically injured during covered intercollegiate athletics activities.
- NCAA Student-Athlete Advisory Committees (SAACs) has aimed to generate a student-athlete voice, allow student-athletes the opportunity to respond to proposed legislation, and promote a positive student-athlete image both at the national and campus levels.
- A Life Skills Program has attempted to assist student-athletes with the high-school-to-college transition, as well as academic, athletic, communication, career, and interpersonal skills development (Cooper, 2009; Petitpas, Van Raalte, & Brewer 2004).
- The Leadership Development Department has coordinated and customized expert-designed training for student-athletes from NCAA membership institutions, conference offices, and the national office. The website also provides student-athletes with searchable information on making responsible financial choices. Student-athlete specific workshops are the Career in Sports forum and Student-Athlete Leadership Forum. The Career in Sports Forum, an annual NCAA educational forum held in early June, brings together 200 selected student-athlete nominees to learn and explore potential careers in sports, specifically college sports. In early November of each

year, the NCAA Student-Athlete Leadership Forum offers a maximum of two student-athlete representatives per school an opportunity to obtain leadership skills, explore personal core values, more deeply understand the NCAA, and evaluate the value of SAACs on a first-come, first-serve basis.

- In 2011, the Leadership Development Department partnered with Kaplan to offer test preparation and discounted testing for student-athletes. Over 253 student-athletes representing more than 50 schools and 23 sports gained preparation for graduate school exams in various subject matters, including law, medicine, pharmacy, and business. Due to the overwhelming demand and the NCAA's inability to meet every student-athlete's request, the NCAA negotiated an institutional, discounted rate for the membership, which allows athletics departments and conferences (if approved) to run high-quality classes at school facilities during times that best benefit the needs of each academic and sports community. Additionally, athletics departments have been trained on how to support student-athletes in the transition to graduate studies.
- The NCAA Postgraduate Internship Program has provided year-long on-the-job learning experiences at the national office in Indianapolis to passionate college graduates interested in pursuing careers in college sports administration. The focus of the 25-year-old program has been specifically for people of color, women, and former student-athletes. University athletic departments also offer graduate assistant programs that support student-athletes in making the life transition after college sports. NCAA grant awards are available to create athletics administration positions specifically for the advancement of women and minority careers.

Effectiveness of NCAA Supports

This section focused on the life skills, post graduate and leadership development aspects of NCAA, and university supports. Broughton and Neyer (2001) advocated a practical approach to supporting student-athletes, and categorized their needs into four areas: "academic advising, life skills development, clinical counseling, and performance enhancement" (p. 34). During the search for literature on the effectiveness of NCAA supports specifically, the researcher located minimal research in this area. This investigation revealed that student-athlete support programs were considered successful when adult professionals communicated and shared information in five ways:

1. Educate faculty and coaches about the unique and complex balance between the academic and athletic life of a student-athlete;
2. Design courses and seminars to help student-athletes balance both academics and athletics;
3. Be flexible and creative when offering programming, counseling, and advising sessions;
4. Maintain a network of former student-athletes by working in partnership with graduates who were student-athletes; and
5. Arrange opportunities for faculty and coaches to talk about student-athletes (Watt & Moore, 2001).

Powell (2009) reviewed a National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) university study of supports to student-athletes utilizing surveys rating service usage to collect data from 90 student-athletes. Usage results were ranked from most used to least used (1 to 19)

according to means and included standard deviations. Powell suggested a holistic approach including student-athlete services, mandatory athletic program orientation plus the school-wide orientation, and career and life skills.

The NCAA program that continued to resurface in the research results was the CHAMPS/Life Skills program. The Life Skills program was initially modeled after the "Total Person Project" principles of academic achievement, athletic success and personal well being established by athletic director, Dr. Homer Rice of Georgia Institute of Technology (NCAA, 2016). Even with the positive aspects of this program, only a few follow-up studies have been conducted to determine its effectiveness. Hawkins et al. (2007) described the program that began in 1994 in terms of its commitment to academic and athletic excellence, personal and career development, and service. Forums were presented on the topics of sexual assaults and eating disorders, but Hawkins et al. found that the program was lacking in comprehensiveness. Wisdom (2006) conducted research involving NCAA Division I student-athletes to determine whether the program was effective in meeting needs of student-athletes and found that it did enhance unique student-athlete needs (Powell, 2009). Samuelson (2003) identified the value of the program, but also recognized areas for program improvement, specifically in academic supports (Powell, 2009). Goddard (2004) observed that the duration of student-athlete participation in the program correlated with the perception of preparation toward career transition.

Starting in 2016, the NCAA began a 3-year partnership with the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A) for daily oversight and operation of programming for student-athletes and life skills professionals at NCAA member institutions (NCAA, 2016). One

of N4A's first offerings was a 2016 Life Skills Symposium in conjunction with its National Convention.

Need for More NCAA Supports for Black Student-Athletes

In Cargill's (2009) study of 26 Division I Black male student-athletes' areas of need consisted of academic advisement and psychological support—including balancing student identity with athletic identity and cultural support.

Alexander (2015) identified that academic year and parents influenced career development more significantly than race, gender, or athletic status. Black male student-athletes indicated a career path close to 5 times more important than Black student-athletes need for more supports. Black male athletes indicated a pursuit of a professional career path almost five times more than Black female athletes did (60% vs. 13%).

Person and LeNoir (1997) studied the retention of Black male athletes in response to the 1987 NCAA Report on Division I Black intercollegiate athletes. They conducted a 5-year study of 2,395 Black students with a focus on 31 male athletes through the use of surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The report revealed low graduation rates among mostly low socioeconomic, first-generation college students. In addition, it exposed the inequity in the amount of time spent preparing for athletic events compared to the amount of time spent studying for classes. The authors addressed the negative and positive factors associated with being a Black male athlete. Person and LeNoir (1997) analyzed Tinto's theory to create a retention plan. One must understand why students left (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000) in addition to describing several retention plans at various institutions of higher learning.

Studies on Supports for Black College Athletes

The NCAA's Principles of Student-Athlete Welfare were intended to "protect and enhance the . . . welfare of student-athletes" (Hawkins et al., 2007, p. 98). The authors believed that the principles should be directly connected to the retirement of student-athletes. Section 2.2.5 imparted coaches and athletic staff with the responsibility of being fair, open, and honest with student-athletes. They discussed the huge impact that coaches had on shaping their players' collegiate experiences. Section 2.2.6 addressed the importance of involving student-athletes in meaningful matters that would impact their lives. The authors cited that while Section 2.2.1 presented a harmonious connection between student-athlete requirements and their overall educational experiences, the Knight Commission Report (2001) revealed contradictions. Study hall, tutors, and academic supports were provided for student-athletes, but the authors suggested the presence of hidden agendas that sought to keep students eligible with little concern about their academic experience or career aspirations and guidance.

The 1994 CHAMPS/Life Skills Program included a commitment to academic and athletic excellence, personal and career development, and service. Although workshops covered topics of sexual assaults and eating disorders, the authors found no discussion of athletic retirement. Mihovilovic (1968) was cited as conducting the most definitive study, "The Status of Former Sportsmen," on athletic retirement and the athlete's adjustment following retirement (Hawkins et al., 2007). Coakley (1983) noted, "Some ex-athletes have made a successful transition from activities involvement in competitive sport to other satisfying activities, but others cling on to their trophies, sport identities, and memories in ways that seem to impede their development" (Coakley, 1983, pp. 2-3). They ask, "Why do some athletes transition out of sports and into a

second career without much difficulty while others fall victim to depression and other traumatic responses?" (Hawkins et al., 2007, pp. 100–101). Their research has been followed by other studies.

Ogilvie and Taylor (1993) explained, "The personal investment in and the pursuit of elite athletic success, though a worthy goal, may lead to a restricted development" (p. 101). The authors conducted a study of 21 Black former college athletes. A majority of the participants revealed that they received career planning or attended a workshop or lecture that addressed athletic retirement. However, only 25% of the participants who received any information on athletic retirement obtained the information from coaches or counselors. Of those, one revealed that athletic retirement was implied through vague questions like, "So, what are you going to do next year?" (p. 108). Fifty percent of the participants reported having friends outside of the team and 52% believed that the athletic department staff was a good source of support. Fifty-two percent did not look forward to the end of sports career, while 48% felt prepared to move onto something different—another phase, other responsibilities, or a new career. Nevertheless, the majority of participants remained connected to sport despite retirement. This connection explained the satisfaction with sports retirement for the majority of participants, although many were left to fend for themselves after their eligibility expired. They suggested that support for Division I athletes, specifically basketball and football, should go beyond resume workshops, interview techniques, and a few postgraduate scholarships. Such support should provide student-athletes with job skills training and compensation packages after graduation to assist with transition to graduate school or careers due to their contribution to non-revenue generating sports, product endorsements, sponsorship packages, and broadcasting monies. They suggested

that alumni, athletic donors, and companies could be better utilized to support student-athletes in preparation for athletic retirement through paid internships.

Despite their various challenges, Black student-athletes have been believed to benefit from NCAA and Division I athletic program supports (Cooper, 2009). Wiggins (1991) described these advantages stating that Black college student-athletes were privileged with opportunities to develop non-sport identities, learn job-related skills, or enhance their knowledge about life outside sport, create meaningful relationships with influential people in positions of power, gain material resources, and develop an awareness of abilities needed to nurture careers outside of sport (Cooper, 2009). Nevertheless, there have been many that have disagreed with the aforementioned benefits, believing that not all benefits have been distributed equally and that the risks and shortcomings of college athletics far have outweighed the advantages.

Conclusion

While new laws have been enacted since the time of slavery, the antebellum period, segregation era, and civil rights movement, old laws, customs, traditions, and extreme socializations have contributed to the negative view and status of Black males in American society. Political climates, movements, and events have helped to shape negative attitudes towards Black males (Majors & Gordon, 1994). The spread of certain policies and systemic racism has contributed to shaping the opinions, attitudes, and procedures in relationship to Black males.

Black males have struggled in both the U.S. education and economic systems (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Edwards, 1988; Franklin, 1994). As a result, Black males have found refuge through interactions with peers who have had similar experiences and have learned to cope

(Franklin, 1994; Harper, 2009a; Smith, 2004). Some have viewed this coping mechanism as dysfunctional, while others believe it to be a logical strategy necessary for function in society (Franklin, 1994).

Black male student-athletes have experienced dual, if not multiple, existences in their different spaces (Cooper, 2009). Expectations of Black student-athletes have varied from high athletically to low cognitively (Cooper, 2009; Daniels, 1988; Edwards, 1970; Glass, 2015; Kunjufu, 2013; Singer, 2015; Smith, 2014). Hawkins (2010) equated the existence of Black male student-athletes in PWIs to the existence of Black men in society as a whole. One might refer to this sense in the Black student-athlete as a multi-consciousness. W.E.B. Du Bois painfully, yet poignantly, delineated the overwhelming struggles and identity issues concerning Black men in America. Although other groups also have faced challenges in the United States, Black males have been faced with a particularly interesting phenomenon.

When observing the experiences of revenue-generating student-athletes, one cannot avoid the overrepresentation of Black males in revenue-generating Division I basketball and football programs compared to their low representation in other NCAA Division I sports (Hawkins, 2010). Also unavoidable has been the media sensation, fanfare, and large revenues generated by the two sports predominantly played by Black male students at Division I institutions—60% who come from the lowest socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the largest percentage of Black males attending PWIs have been those who have been granted access through participation in sports. Yet, the overall representation and retention rate of Black males at universities other than HBCUs has been extremely low (Harper et al., 2013; Hawkins, 2010). Subsequently, these young men need a great deal of support.

The overrepresentation of Black males participating in basketball and football has been transmitted through mass media (Harrison et al., 2002; Smith, 2014). This has caused many to dangerously interchange certain preconceptions about this population while making harmful generalizations about many Black males (Cooper, 2009; Daniels, 1987; Smith, 2014). Thus, this practice has made them susceptible to stereotype threat (Majors & Gordon, 1994; Marable, 1994; Ross, 2004; Steele, 2011).

New research must continue to analyze negative statistics concurrently with those that counter negative stereotypes illuminating Black males as fathers, husbands, working class decision makers, caretakers, protectors, teachers, authority figures, heads of single families, and non-deviant Black males ultimately allowing for more accurate and efficient representation of a diverse population (Majors & Gordon, 1994). The accumulation of issues revealed through the literature review combined with the researcher's personal experiences drove the interest to study supports in place to assist Black male student-athletes currently involved in and retired from collegiate revenue-generating sports.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

> Stories are important. They keep us alive. In the ships, in the camps, in the quarters, fields, prisons, on the road, on the run, underground, under siege, in the throes, on the verge—the storyteller snatches us back from the edge to hear the next chapter.
>
> C. R. Lawrence (1991, p. 2264)

Arriving at the Methodology

After embodying C. R. Lawrence's (1991) words above and the ones that followed, I continually fought through the attempt of tears to blur my vision, cloud my thoughts, and obscure the pages of his ongoing prose. I experienced an awakening of mind, soul and spirit. His words spoke so vividly to my soul while also spotlighting the life's journey that so many people of color have experienced within educational and social settings in the United States. At that moment, I made a conscious decision to utilize my dissertation as a means for breakthrough and a platform for not only Black male athletes, but also for myself and others who have been silenced by the imposed representation of others and dehumanizing ideologies. This study was also meant to provide the open ears, minds, and hearts of bystanders, fence sitters, and well-meaning individuals with an opportunity to connect and engage with 12 Black student-athletes in an up-close and personal manner.

Critical race methodology was selected as the most appropriate method to address the direct discussion of race in college athletics. Although the disruptive capabilities of critical race methodology have been confirmed by a great deal of literature, the literature review also revealed a lack of guidance in the fieldwork stages, specifically data analysis. While constructing

and presenting research that allowed participants and the researcher to think critically about the topic, the researcher also hoped to find more support in conducting the fieldwork stages of this methodology. While critical race methodology and narrative inquiry are complementary, components of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2007; Erickson, 2011; Trahar, 2009) were borrowed for the purposes of data collection and data analysis. The researcher utilized narrative inquiry components to describe and map the research for those planning to use critical race methodology or conduct similar research in the future.

Black male athletes, although extremely visible, have been "veiled in a shroud of silence" (C. R. Lawrence, 1991, p. 265). Smith (2004) noted that Black student-athletes have remained voiceless in several aspects of collegiate sports, including the shaping of policies and the evaluation of programs implemented for their academic, social, and postcollegiate support. Although many have been the poster athletes for their universities, they are not at will to talk openly. Very often they are given talking points, and they are coached about what they can express in interviews and press conferences. Specially appointed personnel have handled student-athletes and the inner workings of collegiate athletic programs, while those who are not directly linked to the sports program or media have been permitted very limited access within controlled settings.

Introducing the Methodology

This dissertation utilized a qualitative approach: critical race methodology to resist commonly held messages about Black male student-athletes and borrowed from narrative inquiry to conduct in-depth interviews and narrative analysis. Qualitative research is a tool used to arrive at a better understanding of people's experiences and the complexities within their world and as

it relates to others (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Through the complexity of its contextual descriptions and receptiveness to interpretation, this research facilitated deep reflection and the opportunity to grow from the knowledge of others marginalized by the majority of mainstream narratives.

Narrative is both a method and phenomenon (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2007). Since stories are vital to human existence and persistence, the "Word" should seek to value and validate the lived experiences of those who have been silenced by dominant narratives (C. R. Lawrence, 1991). According to C. R. Lawrence (1991), the Word is the question-raising articulation and validation of those who struggle against dehumanization and seek to be liberated. This study provided a liberating space for Black male student-athletes to narrate their Division I experiences and evaluate the supports provided by the NCAA and universities to complete their 4-year degrees and attain positions of leadership after athletic retirement.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were designed to elicit the participants' personal stories and to shed light on the narratives of the larger population to which they belong:

1. How do Black male student-athletes perceive the effectiveness of supports implemented by the university and the NCAA to help them successfully complete their college degrees?
2. How do Black male athletes articulate the supports provided by the university and NCAA to help them attain postcollegiate opportunities and positions of leadership after athletic retirement?

Research Design

This study examined the lived experiences of Black male student-athletes as it relates to NCAA and university supports through narrative research. Critical race methodology captured the complex nature and various experiences of Black male student-athletes. Through counter narratives, this research provided insight into their experiences and better understanding of what contributed to these experiences.

Specifically, critical race methodology was used to ponder data collected from Black male student-athletes and evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the supports Black male athletes have received from their universities and the NCAA, while situating their experiences within social context and the literature of Black males and collegiate sports. The researcher sought to understand the words of these Black male student-athletes and make meaning of the data sources. In this exploration, the researcher listened to the narration of multiple participants, read about their lives, analyzed their stories, and reflected upon their worlds, not only their sports worlds, through a CRT lens. Ultimately, these data composed counter narratives.

Critical race methodology is viewed as both pedagogical and political. The method lent itself toward this study on Black male student-athletes for both of these reasons. Although creating counter narratives was complex, time-consuming, lengthy, and ambitious (Creswell, 2007), the researcher was prepared to embark upon this journey due to a need to hear the personal thoughts, feelings, and voices of Black male student-athletes, specifically related to academic, social, and career supports. It was extremely important that Black male student-athletes be given an opportunity to reflect upon and speak sincerely about their personal lived experiences, instead of being imposed upon (Delgado, 1995; Harper, 2009a) by those assigned to

script their statements and handle their matters. The researcher did not assume what would be discovered, but there was certainty that relationships would develop despite what emerged from the study.

Research Approach

For this study, the researcher utilized a qualitative research approach: Critical race methodology to capture counter narratives. Even though qualitative research emerged from the desire of the Academy to understand the "other," and has been dominated by White male researchers (Huber, 2008), the researcher consciously chose a method that would be most resistant to the status quo. Despite the problematic origin of qualitative research, critical research emerged and recognized the need for different perspectives, the impact that race has on research perspectives, and the necessity to examine traditional paradigms of the subject-researcher relationship (Huber, 2008). The researcher was mindful of how relationship building, setting, sources of data, and the researcher's role as an instrumentation tool impacted the study (Creswell, 2014). This study did not rely on the knowledge of the researcher as expert, but rather it encouraged deep discussion and authorized stories from ordinary people (Fraser, 2004). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) defined critical race methodology as a theoretically grounded approach to research that worked through the use of interdisciplinary knowledge base and experiences of students of color. As of 2009, the research on the effectiveness of NCAA life skills and career support for student-athletes was minimal. Thus, how Black male athletes perceived the effectiveness of the supports situated for their academic, social, and postcollegiate success was an area that has been even more minimally researched and in need of more attention.

Critical Race Methodology

Since race served as a pivotal point of this research, the use of critical race methodology was a fitting method to amplify the voice of Black male student-athletes. These athletes have often been spoken for or talked about as if invisible, mute (C. R. Lawrence, 1991), or having no desire to express their own opinions (Harper, 2009a). Critical race methodology provided a needed platform for the voices of Black male student-athletes on the issues and policies that have affected their existence. The platform allowed for the creation of meaning and the facilitation of "social, political, and cultural cohesion" (Merriweather Hunn, Guy, & Mangliitz, 2006, p. 245). The researcher utilized this study to build upon the few counter narratives of Black male athletes manifested in recent literature (Bimper et al., 2012; Harper, 2009a).

Counter narratives in critical race methodology. As part of critical research methodology, counter narratives are a type of disruptive critical narrative that expose the complexities and contradictions that exist within the mainstream discourse (Mutua & Swadener, 2004). This research operated within a complex historical field that encouraged multiple voices and different observations of the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Through counter narratives, the marginalized can contradict the master narrative (Arnett, 2002) and discern ways toward liberation (Leonard & McLaren, 2002). During the several interviews, Black males expressed the necessity to be heard and seen on their terms. They refused to let the NCAA, universities or media perspectives define their stories or existence.

Narratives and storytelling have been present since ancient times (Delgado, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Before, during, and after the transatlantic slave trade, Africans engaged in the art of storytelling to persist (Lawrence, 1999). C. R. Lawrence (1991) reminded

that narratives have kept Black people alive through and beyond the horrors of the middle passage, inhumanities of colonial slavery, the dismays of segregation, and the multitude of turmoil faced in the past and present. The term counter narrative was initially used to describe the form that critical legal scholars took to counter positivist and liberal discourse (Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado, R., Stefancic, J., & Liendo, E. (2012); Lawrence, 2009) in work such as Bell's (1992) *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* and Delgado's (1995) *Rodrigo's Chronicles*. Freire (2000) explained how narratives had the power to include and exclude; he rejected the concept of narratives that did not meet the needs or concerns of the Other. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) have been credited with bringing counter narratives to the field of education (Huber, 2008).

Origin of critical race methodology. Critical race methodology has its roots in CRT and has been a search tool investigating "theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical questions related to the experiences of people of color" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26) within "an explicit anti-racist, anti-hierarchical, racial, and social justice agenda" (Huber, 2008, p. 166). This methodology challenges "the Eurocentricity of traditional research paradigms" (Huber, 2008, p. 166) and offers liberating transformational meaning to qualitative research.

Purpose of critical race methodology. If methodologies have been used to silence and marginalize people of color, then methodologies can also give voice and turn the margins into places of transformative resistance (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002. Imperial scholarship and apartheid of knowledge within the Academy often have excluded alternative voices by their dominion in power and determination of what constitutes valid knowledge (Delgado, 1992; Huber, 2008). Critical race methodology was developed to value the

histories, experiences, and lives of people of color and encourage resistance through counter-stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Through the use of CRT elements, the experiences of those who usually have been silenced have been illuminated (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Critical race methodology has utilized counter narratives to spotlight racial structures, policies and practices in education, and also has humanized struggles and injustices that people of color continue to face (Huber, 2008). The researcher as narrator had several purposes, including the provision of explanation, engagement, information, resistance, criticism, and confirmation or challenges of the status quo (Chase, 2005). After gathering deeply personal stories, the researcher analyzed and chronicled the experiences of Black male student-athletes in revenue generating athletic programs as told in their words to create narratives.

Limitations of critical race methodology. Critical research has been criticized for preferencing the voice of the marginalized over the dominant. Also, narratives have been described as a version of reality (Bruner, 1991). Due to the co-creation involved in narrative writing, questions arise about ownership, competing narratives, who has the right to reframe, rearrange, and re-story narratives, as well as who has the more convincing version (Huber, 2008; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Critiques of counter narratives include rigor, generalizability, and truthfulness (Trinchero, 2011). When selecting methodology, the researcher engaged in several discussions about rigor. The tendency for others to dismiss narratives as a valid research method ascends from the perception that it is a collection of stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Counter stories were not meant to stand for an entire community's generalizability (Trinchero, 2011), but instead to contend structures of racism experienced by people of color one story at a time (Delgado, 1995; Hubert, 2008). Delgado (1992) argued that the majoritarian story is often

viewed as truth and general knowledge. It is exactly this perception that counter narratives promoted by CRT have challenged. The use of critical race methodology in this study added richness to the conversations surrounding narratives in educational research and revealed the complexities experienced by Black male student-athletes in revenue generating sports. Bruner (1991) noted that since narratives will not follow logical and scientific procedures or pass empirical verifications, they become versions of reality.

Negotiating Entry

The researcher spent August 2016 through January 2017 engaging in field research. The researcher interviewed 12 current and former Black male student-athletes who participated in Division I basketball and football. Existing relationships between the researcher and athletes, faculty, and staff from several Division I universities developed over the course of the study. All participants expressed great interest in the topic and valued the researcher's attention in this area of research. It was the goal of the researcher to mutually construct trusting relationships with research participants, allowing ample opportunities to listen to and uncover their layers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Selection of Participants

Due to the researcher's previously established relationships with coaches and sports administration, and the limited time to conduct research, purposive, nomination, and maximum variation sampling were used to recruit participants willing to share deeply (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2007). Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to choose informants deliberately based on their experience (Tongco, 2007) as Black male student-athletes in the area of Division I athletics. As a nonrandom technique, its bias contributed a limitation of

the study. In using this sampling technique (a) a list of informant qualities was created and utilized to locate qualified participants; (b) potential participants were assessed for reliability; and (c) when analyzing data, the bias of purposive sampling was documented. The researcher also garnered nominations from the referrals of expert sports administrators and coaches in the field of Division I sports.

Through nominations and referrals, the expectation was that a friendship and a mutual environment of respect during and after the study would be established between the researcher and the 12 study participants. The researcher would have preferred a larger sampling of current Black student-athletes, and retirees, but due to time constraints, guarded access to Division I players, and lack of one particular site, this research remained flexible, but employed maximum variation sampling to allow the inclusion of the selected participants at various stages of their athletic careers. In general, the pool of participants who fit this study was extremely large, but due to the limited amount of time and resources, participants were selected from referrals or those whom the researcher believed were able to address the topic of Division I athletics and university and NCAA supports. The rigid schedule of current student-athletes and athletic programs' distrust of outsiders also limited the number of current participants who could agree to participate. The study did contain certain participants with whom the researcher was familiar. This was stated upfront in the opening of each narrative. Regardless of pre-established relationships or non-familiarity with participants, the researcher was unable to foresee how they would respond to the research questions. Thus, she gathered several unexpected revelations among this diverse group of Black males who shared Division I academics and athletics as common factors.

Participants

The ideal subject composition for this qualitative research was four seniors and six collegiate athletic retirees, equally divided among those who participated in Division I basketball or football programs, for a total of 10 participants. Due to challenges with accessing current student-athletes, late entry of two current student-athletes brought the study sample to 12 participants, including three seniors and one graduate student currently participating in a Division I basketball or football program. The remaining participants were split among three former Division I basketball players and five football players. Current players had more university units than other players on the team, but some had not had the most experience with the same university and athletic department staff over an extended period of time. Collegiate athlete retirees ranged in age from 21 to 55.

Setting

The setting of a study has the ability to impact participants and the researcher. With 12 different participants, residing in different areas, surprisingly, the researcher engaged in a limited amount of traveling to participant sites during the research phase. Most participants preferred traveling to a location closest to the researcher to participate in the interviews. The farthest that the researcher travelled was to Northern California to interview a participant at a nearest to that participant's residence. The next farthest interview site was a coffee shop in Orange County. After the initial round of interviews and transcripts, the researcher found that the public locations, such as coffee shops, cafes, and restaurants detracted from the quality of the audio recordings. This impacted the selection of the follow-up interview locations.

Data Collection

Although the research design is emergent (Creswell, 2007), there are steps that the research followed. The researcher was NIH certified. This certification was submitted to Loyola Marymount University Institutional Review Board along with an application to conduct field research. After receiving approval, the researcher sought referrals from those associated with Division I basketball and football. Then a list of participants was created, merging referrals with researcher selected study participants. After reaching the number of 10 participants, the study only contained two current student-athletes.

When a former athletic director reached out with two out of state current football players, the researcher expanded the list from 10 to 12 participants. Participants were Black males who currently or formerly participated in Division I basketball and football. Ages ranged from 21 for current players and up to age 55 for student-athlete retirees. Participants were contacted first by text message for an initial introduction, then over the telephone with further introduction and study details, and afterwards through email to provide consent forms and dates for follow-up conversations. After commitment from 10 participants, recruitment stopped. The primary instrument utilized to collect data needed to address both research questions were the in-depth interviews of 12 participants and the researcher's journal. Document analysis of transcripts and participant autobiographical writings did not add significantly to data since most participants opted not to provide the requested documents.

Interviews

Participants were interviewed at least once individually during the study. The researcher requested that participants provide three possible dates for the interview. A follow-up interview

was scheduled as needed after the initial interview. Although the preference for the first individual interview was a 90-minute audiotaped, face-to-face, in-depth interview, allowing for the collection of in-depth information ranging from background to perceptions, two interviews with current out of state football participants had to be conducted via telephone. After receiving vague details in the initial interviews on university and NCAA postcollegiate supports, the researcher followed up with eight of the 12 participants. Neither of the two current football players was available for follow-up. Geographic location and a public location was decided upon by participants and agreed to by the researcher.

Prior to the interview the researcher contacted participants first via text, then by telephone, and afterwards through email to provide research study details, send consent forms, and obtain consent. Before beginning the initial interview, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study, confidentiality, audio recording, and any questions participants had about the consent forms. Forms that had not been obtained prior to the initial meeting were signed and obtained before beginning the interview. The researcher began the in-depth interview and took hand-written notes on the details of the interview. Dependent upon participant responses and information that emerged, the researcher asked clarifying questions to illuminate participants' experiences. To conclude the interview, the researcher restated the confidentiality measures related to pseudonyms, recordings, transcripts, and notes. Next stages, including focus group interviews and follow-up interviews, were discussed. Participants were informed about how they would provide data checks and other feedback on findings. The interviews were transcribed professionally and made available to participants prior to the follow-up interviews. Those who

were unable to attend the follow-up interview were emailed transcripts for review. The researcher also maintained a reflective journal during the research process.

Focus Groups

The researcher intended to schedule two focus groups for greater participant participation. Nevertheless, the researcher desired to more deeply understand the responses that were collected during the initial interviews. Thus, the researcher scheduled a second round of interviews prior to the focus group. The focus group was scheduled to allow participants the opportunity to share thoughts and experiences in person with other study participants. After the 12 participants were contacted via text, telephone call, and email to select a choice of date for the focus group, only two participants could agree to a date. The focus group was scheduled in middle January after the follow-up interviews. The focus group added to the trustworthiness of the study. Participants were able to confirm the emerging themes and coincide with many of the thoughts and feelings of their counterparts. The researcher engaged in a reflection on Division I sports and supports. At the beginning of the focus group interview, participants were reminded about the purpose of the study, purpose of the focus group, confidentiality, digital recordings, and consent. Participants received interview questions as a guide, but the researcher was prepared for an emergent natural conversation among the group members. The researcher took notes on the setting, participant interactions, and events during the focus group. At the end of the focus group, the researcher reminded participants about confidentiality, pseudonyms, locked storage of research data, and any identifying materials.

Researcher Journal

The researcher kept a daily journal during the data collection and data analysis phases. She recorded thoughts on interviews, focus groups, and daily occurrences or current events that impacted her thoughts, feelings, and emotions about the study. She noted any connections to differences that she discovered among the participants.

Document Analysis

In addition to observation of participants, the researcher requested that participants voluntarily provide copies of transcripts and autobiographical writings that would add depth to the narratives. The documents were intended to add depth to the narrative by checking whether scheduled classes matched participant interest and passions discussed during interviews and in autobiographical writings. Autobiographical writings were also requested to add another layer to the participants. Since participants may at times develop a shyness to share certain information during an interview or focus group, autobiographical writing would allow participants to freely share innermost thoughts, feelings, reflections, history and dreams. Nevertheless, only one participant shared academic transcripts. Three participants shared autobiographical writing, but did not go in depth with family history and personal experiences beyond the extent of the audiotaped interviews. The researcher found the individual interviews to be much more in depth and personal than the autobiographical writings that were provided.

Data collection spanned a 5-month period. A data recorder and cellular phone recorded interviews that were later professionally transcribed. The researcher also took notes. Pseudonyms were created for all participants. Data recordings were compared to data transcriptions. In addition, data was coded for future analysis.

Data Analysis

To develop deeply rich and holistic counter narratives, analysis of data sources must be equally as rich. The analytical lens of this research was critical race (Harper, 2009a) retrospective (Chase, 2005), and historical (Freire, 2000). In addition to chronicling, the narrator expressed why the narrative is worth telling. Chase (2005) further described narrative analysis as: (a) distinct discourse, (b) verbal action, (c) both enabled and constrained by social resources and circumstances, (d) socially situated interactive performances, and (e) researcher narrator interpretation.

Data analysis consisted of emergent analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). As the study continued, more information arose that prompted questions. After the interviews, initial thoughts were recorded. The researcher kept a journal for thoughts that arose, including those that linked one participant to other participants. This also allowed time for thoughts and questions to surface.

Both critical race and narrative researchers have been hesitant to provide a sequential order for research and analysis (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Chase, 2005; Fraser, 2004; Richmond, 2002;), but have recognized the need for more guidance in the research. Although suggestions were provided, because of the emergent style of this research, phases were altered to fit the particular needs of the research study. Fraser (2004) described seven overlapping phases of line by line narrative analysis: (a) hearing the stories, experiencing each other's emotions; (b) transcribing the material; (c) interpreting individual transcripts; (d) scanning across different domains of experience; (e) linking "the personal with the political," (f)

looking for commonalities and differences among participants; and (g) writing academic narratives about personal stories.

Phase 1: Hearing the Stories, Experiencing Each Other's Emotions

Fraser (2004) explained the importance of the researcher listening with ears, eyes and heart during the actual interview and when reviewing the audio files. Journal and interview notes supported the analysis and narrative writing phases. Fraser (2004) urged that being mindful of how the interview begins, unfolds and concludes is also important. Taking time during the interview to register emotions reflected in body language and the setting, including "time, place and emotional climate" (p. 186) impacted the interpretation of the narrative (Fraser, 2004). The researcher took notes during the interviews and reviewed audio recordings of the interviews.

Phase 2: Transcribing the Material

Fraser (2004) described the importance of interview transcription complete with incomplete sentences, ums and pauses. Every moment in the interview has meaning and potential to add to the narrative analysis. Interviews were professionally transcribed and then matched against the audio recording. Subsequently, an initial text analysis was conducted to obtain key words. After meetings with the dissertation chair, a second round of text analysis was conducted to narrow key words, present emergent themes, and prepare for the focus group interviews. Next transcripts were presented to participants for checking. To assure accuracy, participants reviewed the transcripts and made clarifications to the presentation of responses. After the participant check, a third round of text analysis was conducted further narrowing key words, repeated patterns, and the necessity for follow-up interviews.

Phase 3: **Interpreting Individual Transcripts**

Each interview was studied on its own day to be as authentic to that individual as possible, although after interviews began, it was difficult not to recount previous interviews when writing thoughts on one interview. Edge (2011) explained this as finding the stories, critical events and turning points. Interviews were coded as part of the analysis. The coding allowed for the identification of unique characteristics and similarities for each participant (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The initial coding was an open coding (Bowen, 2008), followed by the creation of a schematic organization of the story map (Richmond, 1999, as cited in Richmond, 2002), and then concluded with axial coding as the final coding (Bowen, 2008).

Phase 4: Scanning Across Different Domains of Experience

This phase was particularly important for describing the experience of Black male student-athletes in Division I athletics. Observations of participants were recorded during individual and focus group interviews. Participants had questions and suggestions that they shared during follow-up interviews. Document analysis of transcripts and autobiographical writings contributed minimally to the understanding of a few of the participants' experiences.

Phase 5: Linking the Personal with the Political

The tenets of CRT were utilized as a lens to code data. Edge (2011) distinguished this as focusing the analysis on a theoretical interpretation of the connections. Recognizing what data fell under each tenet allowed for a close examination of the critical events, turning points, and language in the stories. It also made connections between narrated events and the context of CRT.

Phase 6: Looking for Commonalities and Differences Among Participants

This analysis was repetition of the earlier phase of interpreting individual data. Upon analyzing individual narratives, both commonalities and differences among narratives emerged. Axial coding determined patterns of connection. Big pictures emerged, but outliers and negative cases that countered the patterns were also addressed in the analyses (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Phase 7: Writing Academic Narratives About Personal Stories

The goal of this research study was to present the richness, struggles, triumphs, and complexities of how Black male student-athletes experience university and NCAA supports. It utilized data from the schematic organization of the story map (Richmond, 1999, as cited in Richmond, 2002) and other coded data to organize the narratives. The writing structure required "experimentation and flexibility" (Creswell, 2007, p. 185). In addition, it entailed a progressive-regressive method based upon life events (Creswell, 2007). There was a great deal of meaning making that required the time to sit and think with the data, writing, and revisions. Furthermore, the narrative writing process required a significant amount of time to interweave chronology, themes, reflexivity, and detail key events (Creswell, 2007). Multiple possibilities existed for presenting coherent and credible narrative research, but before presenting the final draft, the researcher kept in mind those who were provided a platform from which to speak and the purpose of the research (Fraser, 2004). At the forefront of this researcher's mind were the Black male student-athletes who presented their thoughts and feelings about Division I basketball and football experiences.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness took into account the validity and reliability of research findings. Oftentimes in qualitative research, the two terms are viewed in different aspects.

Validity. For counter narratives, validity has depended upon the truthful presentation of the collected data. How the researcher formulates and presents the angles and perspectives of data impacts the truthfulness that is determined by trustworthiness. Expressing the background and bias of the researcher allowed for readers to understand the impact it may have had on the study.

Reliability. Reliability for the counter narrative was addressed, but was not a huge concern. Reliability is established by the consistency of responses from participants resulting in transferability and plausibility. Nevertheless, qualitative research allows for a variety of responses, yet seeks to understand the explanations.

Checking the narrative. Qualitative research has utilized different terms to check and authenticate narratives. After completing the writing phase of the critical narratives, the researcher checked the narrative for an invitational element, trustworthiness, plausibility, and transferability.

- The invitational element of a narrative is assessed by readers' responses to participate in questions surrounding the research topic (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).
- Trustworthiness applies to the amount of trust the reader can have in a study and its findings (Robson, 2011, as cited in Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Acknowledging the implausibility of distancing themselves from positionality and bias, yet continuing to act in integrity creates trustworthiness in the researcher (Pinnegar & Daynes,

2007). In addition, fidelity has addressed the researcher's ability to reach a form of objective truth. Since all truth is subjective based on each individual's life experience, then the author of critical narratives must maintain integrity while accurately chronicling events into a realistic story (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Doing so should include a participant check of the written narrative. Another component of truthfulness has been legitimacy in producing educational knowledge (Moss, 2004). The researcher has been responsible for crafting a narrative that will engage readers in a personal and critical reflection within educational discourse.

- Plausibility has been measured by the tendency of the issues addressed in the research to resonate as true with those who have dealt with similar issues (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).
- Although it has been assumed that the findings of qualitative studies are content specific, transferability is measured by the extent of the findings application among other participants (Petty et al., 2012). Transferability has occurred when others sharing the same experience are able to relate and/or agree with the perspective of research participants (Harper, 2009a).

Follow-up interviews, data coding, and multiple reviews of the narrative included the aforementioned elements in the final narrative. When the researcher verbally shared the research topic and initial findings with classmates, colleagues, relatives, and even strangers, they probed with further questions and appeared genuinely interested in learning more about the topic. The researcher stated her bias early in the study, but despite her personal connection to the topic, the narrative was able to engage readers with no background on the topic including the dissertation

chair and editors. Despite their differences, each of the participants in the follow-up interviews were able to agree with all of the themes that emerged from data analysis.

Limitations

Critical race methodology has been criticized for lacking rigor in procedure and analysis, having weakened generalizability, and giving preference to the voice of the Other. Narratives have often been misrepresented as just a collection of stories that lack in-depth data analysis. What critics have viewed as a lack of rigor in narrative research procedure could be attributed to its emergent style. Through the use of interview protocols, the researcher provided a form of standardization, but remained open to the different directions that participants went during the study. Coding and mapping techniques of data yielded rigorous analysis to create rich counter narratives. Providing attention, space, and opportunity for multiple voices validated the authenticity of the counter narratives. The sampling method and size limited the generalizability of study results, but critical race methodology anticipated that participants would bring unique perspectives to subject matter at hand.

Qualitative researchers recognize that regardless of how objective they attempt to be that research will be subjective to the lived experiences of both the participants and the researcher. Feeling, thinking, and caring are difficult to measure as they are not concrete objects. However, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) resisted the confines of normal social science basing the research in metaphoric language combined with exposition, argumentation and description. The concept of objectivity has come to assume a neutral position that what is being studied lacks a connection to the researcher. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argued that in claiming objectivity, researchers failed to consider choices, passion, interests, caring, curiosity, and change. The concept of

generalizability has favored the tempting qualities of prediction and control over the rich complexity of the individual, local, and particular (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Finally, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) rejected the rigidity of reliability and the insistence that there was a particular way of knowing.

The time constraints of narrative analysis presented a challenge for one researcher to engage with 12 participants. Although some researchers have questioned the generalizability of narrative research findings, the power of counter narratives has lied within their ability to add multiple voices and perspectives to the discourse and powerfully question the marginalizing conditions that have come to be accepted as status quo.

Another critique of critical narratives has been the preference given to marginalized voices over the dominant narrative. Critical researchers have perceived this as a democratizing value where multiple voices have an opportunity to add to the narrative. Critical race methodology did not limit, but rather added depth, authenticity, and richness to this research.

Summary

This qualitative research journey is one that the researcher was prepared to experience. The researcher was and remains passionate about the topic of Black male student-athletes in revenue generating sports and the supports they receive to navigate academic and life experiences. The use of counter narratives provided room to analyze the experiences of Black males in multiple aspects of their lives including academic, social and career supports, but also presented these men with a platform to express their feelings, concerns, and ideas.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Context of the Study

The majority of Black males who have gained access to Division I universities have been granted this access through participation in sports (Wiggins, 2003); yet, it has remained unclear exactly how much Black athletes have benefitted academically, socially, and financially during and after their participation in Division I sports programs. While many universities generate revenue and prominence from the athletic command of Black male student-athletes, Black male students have steadily ranked at the bottom of academic progress markers (Comeaux, 2008; Cooper, 2009; Daniels, 1987; Glass, 2015). At the completion of their collegiate careers, most of these athletes have not been promoted in university athletic departments, the NCAA, or sports franchise leadership. When professional sports dreams crumble, many Black male college athletes are left unprepared for a world in which their athleticism no longer serves the university's interest (Clubb, 2012; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993).

Student-athletes in revenue-generating sports hardly have the time to plan or envision a life without sports. Their tightly scheduled collegiate careers (Harris, 1993; Person et al., 2001) leave their collegiate and postcollegiate interests and needs overshadowed (Daniels, 1987; Horton, 2011). Due to the self-contained privately controlled athletic world, the voices of Black male student-athletes are rarely heard surrounding the conversations of the support system provided by universities and the NCAA. The athletes who have generated the most revenue for the NCAA and universities should also benefit as greatly from the NCAA and university academic, career, financial, and leadership supports.

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

This study focused on Black players' NCAA Division I basketball and football experiences and their perceptions of NCAA and universities' supports designed for athletes' academic and life success. In addition, this exploration allowed Black student-athletes in revenue-generating sports to think critically about the direction of Division I athletics, current supports, and the future of intercollegiate sports for generations of Black student-athletes following their precedent. Black student-athletes were able to provide reflection and advice for future generations. Understanding the experiences, concerns and aspirations of Black student-athletes is critical to educators and sports administrators concerned with the future direction of intercollegiate sports. This investigation meant to provide a critical examination of the current approach to Black student-athletes and the future direction of intercollegiate sports to prompt dialogue, more questions and action toward social justice among NCAA administration, university officials, critical educators, and student-athletes.

Research Questions

Two questions focused on Black student-athletes and their perceptions of NCAA and university supports from an academic skills level, and postcollegiate standpoint guided the research in this study:

1. How do Black male student-athletes perceive the effectiveness of supports implemented by the university and the NCAA to help them successfully complete their college degrees?

2. How do Black male athletes articulate the supports provided by the university and NCAA to help them attain postcollegiate opportunities and positions of leadership after athletic retirement?

Research Process

The researcher began dissertation fieldwork in August of 2016 and concluded in January of 2017. During this 6-month period, the researcher conducted interviews with three former Division I basketball players, five former Division I football players, two current Division I basketball players, and two current Division I football players from seven different athletic conferences. Based upon the relationship between the participants and the recommenders, the researcher was able to establish a good amount of trust between them and herself. By trusting the individuals who recommended that they participate in her dissertation study, participants were open and interview conversations were quite natural. Participants were willing to share deeply and freely. Autobiographical writings containing similar amounts of depth were difficult to obtain. The three written pieces that were submitted added no depth to the research because of their brief and surface nature. The lack of substance prompted the researcher to exclude analysis of this data. Additionally, only one participant provided academic transcripts. Therefore, the incorporation of transcripts into the analysis was not useful. Since the study did not include a specific site to conduct research, establishing trust was crucial to the outcome of this study. Since the researcher came highly recommended to participants, they were extremely comfortable with her during interviews. Additionally, her knowledge of Division I revenue sports and Black history allowed for a deeper connection during the meetings. This provided plenty of opportunities for post reflection in the researcher's journal. Critical race methodology and

narrative analysis amplified the voice of Black student-athletes and emphasized their triumphs despite the several challenges they experienced during their college years. Since there is limited research that studies the academic and postcollegiate supports provided for Black male student-athletes after collegiate sports careers, these counter narratives provided insight into their Division I experiences and perceptions of NCAA and university supports.

Participant Interviews

This study explored the experiences of 12 Division I Black male student-athletes (see Table 3) ranging in age from 21 to 55 who willingly shared their thoughts and feelings about their Division I participation and the supports in place during their time at the university. The participants in this study were comprised of both active and retired players. Five participants remained at one univesrsity for their entire student-athlete career, five were transfer students from junior colleges or another 4-year university, one participant transferred out after freshman year, while another participant spent his entire academic career at one university, but walked-on to the team during his sophomore year. Four participants were current Division I players. Two players had recently graduated from their universities and were playing at the international or semi-professional level, while pursuing business ventures at the time of the study. Another player had recently graduated and signed an international basketball contract. The final five participants were retired and self-employed or working for different companies. The time spent during the interviews passed naturally and the researcher felt like she had known the players for many years before the referrals.

Table 3

Participants in the Study

	Name	Age	Major	Admission Classification	Conference	Sport	Player Status
1	Alamishus	35	Business Management/MBA	Freshman	Big West	Basketball	Retired
2	Allen	21	Communications	Transfer	West Coast	Basketball	Current
3	Carter	26	Sociology	Transfer	Sunbelt	Football	Arena Football
4	Charles	21	Sociology	Freshman	American Athletic	Football	Current
5	Clark	33	Political Science	Freshman	Pac12	Football	Retired
6	George	24	Religious Studies	Freshman/ Walk-On Sophomore	Pac 12	Football	Retired
7	Jake	27	Business	Freshman	Pioneer Football League	Football	Arena Football
8	Johnny	21	Urban Studies	Transfer	West Coast	Basketball	Current
9	Nathaniel	55	Physical Education	Transfer	Mountain West	Football	Retired
10	Sebastian	47	English	Freshman	Pac 12	Basketball	Retired
11	Tyrone	22	Communications	Transfer	Pac 12	Basketball	Overseas
12	Tony	21	Managerial Leadership Business	Freshman	Sunbelt	Football	Current

Alamishus

Straight from the office, Alamishus entered the restaurant with a smile bright enough to light the entire building. He stood 6'5" in height and about 235 in weight. His presence coupled with a radiating smile held the room. He apologized for arriving a few minutes late and began to chat. When I asked if I could get him anything to eat or drink, he turned his head slightly to side,

wrinkled his forehead and said, “No, I got this. Do you want anything?” I informed him that I had already ordered. He excused himself, and I used this time to double check that I had everything prepared for our conversation. Alamishus arrived back at the table, opened his chopsticks, and began to eat his California roll. He casually informed me that on his way to our meeting, he got into a fender bender. I screeched out a multitude of questions, “What? Is everything okay? What happened?” He took another bite of his California roll, and responded, “I was trying to plug my phone charger in when the guy in front of me suddenly hit his breaks. I tried to stop, but still ended up rear-ending him.” I responded, “Wow! You should have told me. We could have rescheduled.” His curt reply, “For what? We exchanged information. That’s why we have insurance. I called my insurance company. They can take it from here.” I said okay and began to review consent forms, confidentiality, and the conversational style of the interview, and he joked, “This is an interrogation.” His lightheartedness and willingness to share allowed our conversation to move smoothly before he had to gather his son and daughter from their after-school programs.

Alamishus entered this study after a colleague suggested I contact him as a potential participant. This colleague and Alamishus were long-time friends. Once contacted about my study surrounding current and former Black male Division I student-athletes, Alamishus agreed to participate if I believed that his story would add value to the study.

Alamishus, 35 years of age, has resided in Los Angeles, California with his two young children. He has been actively involved in his daughter and son’s education and extracurricular activities. Raised primarily by his grandparents, he attended predominantly Black Los Angeles Unified School District K-12 schools in South Central Los Angeles and was a part of the Gifted

and Talented Education program. Alamishus attained a bachelor's degree in business management and a master's degree in business administration, which has supported him in running his own business.

As a high school senior, he gained access to his initial Division I College through a basketball scholarship. It was his only scholarship offer. After enduring remedial coursework and a culture shock in addition to redshirting there for one year, he transferred to a junior college in Arizona. He once again transferred to a Division I university in Texas. It was here that he decided that he would choose his own courses, despite what academic advisors suggested. Unhappy with the coaching relationship at this university, he transferred back to his former community college. After NCAA rules barred his attempt to gain another athletic scholarship to another university, he decided to abandon the college athlete route and pursue the remainder of his college career as a student. He has harbored a slight resentment toward the NCAA and their numerous rules because student-athletes like himself were not thoroughly informed of all NCAA rules and the potential consequences on their future.

A product of the inner city, Alamishus has considered himself and his classmates lucky because even though he gave some teachers a hard time growing up, he acknowledged that they cared. He was reminded of a time that his third-grade teacher, "had the—the NBA finals—everybody came to watch the NBA finals at her house," and he recalled out loud, "It's not the same anymore." From elementary school through high school, Alamishus kept an A average. He credited this primarily to his mother and grandfather. His mother, whom he described as pro-Black, made him study prominent Black figures to stress the importance of education. She wanted him "to see how folks like me were successful before," and currently. She not only

stressed this through her words and expectations of her children, but also through her actions. While Alamishus went to school, she concurrently enrolled in classes as a part-time college student while holding a full-time job, including her job as mother. He appreciated his, "mom being an example—her showing me what it means to stay dedicated and take care of kid . . . that was already a prime example right there. So, that motivated me." His grandfather, a former sharecropper from Arkansas, Alamishus remembered, "Didn't have an education—like an extensive education like we do, or like we're—or some of us are striving for." Nevertheless, he used his fifth-grade education to help Alamishus with his homework and to teach him how to utilize the dictionary as a resource and facilitate his mastery of concepts that he may not have mastered initially in the classroom. Alamishus thought back and acknowledged that while his grandfather was providing homework assistance, he was concurrently teaching himself some of the formal education that he never received.

Alamishus's formalized sports career did not begin until basketball tryouts in the ninth grade. He had played tee-ball at a younger age, but that was the extent of his organized sports. He often resided with his grandparents during the week in Los Angeles and then commuted to stay with his parents in the Antelope Valley on the weekends. This schedule made it difficult for him to join organized competitions at an early age. After trying out for his high school team, a top Los Angeles high school basketball program, he made the junior varsity team. The following year, he was a starter for the varsity team.

He remembered being a starting guard on the varsity basketball team during his senior year of high school, but still having the ability to balance his responsibilities. "Even though I've started—and I was pretty good at sports and stuff like that, I was still knocking it down in the

classroom, too. I mean, and this is really— what you want to focus on before going into college." His strong academics along with his athletic talents made him a recruiting interest. He also recalls being the first person in his family to be heavily recruited:

> Nobody knew what the hell was going on. Coaches would be calling the house, and I'm talking to this person, talking to that person. Nobody knew what to do. Nobody knew what tournaments to go to, what we should and shouldn't do, and a lot of that kind of—it hurt my recruitment in the end. It really did. (Alamishus, Interview)

The college recruiters sold him a dream that to him turned into heartbreak. His first traumatic experience was the culture shock of college and seeing his close-knit family leave him behind. He explains:

> I don't want to say I was depressed, but definitely homesick. So, I wasn't completely focused but I was still passing classes. But I'll say this: I remember going—and they'll put you in all these—these—they'll test you and stuff—test your writing. And they ended up putting me in remedial English and Math. And I'm like, "What the hell is this? I don't need remedial English." So, I'd go through the classes, and it was a waste of my time. (Alamishus, Interview)

This along with other events added to his decision to exit the university. He did not believe that the coaches really supported him in his time of need. They were interested in him being a basketball player, but not concerned with providing emotional support. "I think they knew I just wasn't happy. So, they pretty much—I feel like they threw in the towel." He transferred four times after his first Division I college athlete experience, and finally decided to finish school as a student, instead of as a student-athlete.

In his future, he has anticipated being heavily involved in the coaching of his kids. He has wanted to be as supportive as possible with his son's and daughter's education, interests, and future aspirations. Nevertheless, his challenging Division I student-athlete experience formed an interest within him not only to guide his biological children, but also to build a program that

would give student-athletes advice on how to navigate life and the world of college sports. A longtime friend will assist Alamishus in program operations and mentoring young athletes to attain entrepreneurial skills. “You’re selling yourself. So, it’s not just you’re building your basketball skill, but you’re also building like—your brand—who you are.” Alamishus is determined that any student-athlete he will advise will avoid the many pitfalls associated with undisclosed NCAA rules and regulations.

Allen

At 6’6” and 205 pounds, Allen’s legs could hardly fit underneath the desk in the study room where we met for our conversation. It seemed like a task to contort his knees and angle his waist to the table configured before us. Up to date on all of his assignments, he agreed to meet with me during study hall hours. Since student-athletes have limited personal time, I was happy to meet with him at any available timeslot, but disappointed that he appeared uncomfortable. Initial nerves caused him to nibble at his nails. This immediately reminded me of my son who also has struggled with nail-biting. He has met with me before to obtain consent forms and hear about the study, but he does not know me personally. Allen was referred to me by an acquaintance who serves as an academic advisor for student-athletes. After a brief review of the consent form, I began my introduction. I encouraged him to ask me questions as we talked about the Lakers and current NBA players. Allen leaned back in his seat, stopped the nail biting, and appeared ready for our conversation.

Allen, a 21-year-old current Division I basketball player, has attended a small religious university for the past two years. Originally from the Midwest United States, he attended predominantly Caucasian high schools: three years in his hometown and one in the Gulf of the

United States. A student-athlete since early childhood, he has consistently balanced playing sports with maintaining solid grades. As a senior pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Communications, Allen had hopes to one day be a regular student, possibly even a law student, but currently could not imagine his life without basketball.

As a high school senior, he gained access to his initial Division College through a basketball scholarship. He had several scholarship offers, but chose the largest most notable Division I program presented to him, "I had a goal to be on ESPN and play on ESPN and score and do this and have my name called and that happened." After a year of grueling multiple practices per day, intense coursework, and attempts to sleep at any opportunity afforded to him, he decided that this former major Division I program did not complement his personality and learning style. Although the large program matched his competitiveness and ESPN coverage expectation, he was miserably unhappy. He transferred the next year. Due to the NCAA transfer rules, he was required to sit out a year at his new university, meaning that he could practice with the team, but could not engage in basketball play for a full season. He has remained at his current university since his initial transfer and will graduate May 2018. Although the university has struggled with diversity issues and his time was overly consumed by basketball life, he enjoyed the small university atmosphere and felt supported in his academic pursuits.

In 2011, Allen's entire family packed up and moved from the Midwest United States to a big football state in the Gulf of the United States in support of his basketball dreams. After his high school graduation, the family moved back to their hometown. Nevertheless, his family's support catapulted him through intense training, game days, and the recruitment process. He described his mom as, "the mom when you're at the games that's just screaming the whole time

even though—she probably knows more than most of the moms what she's saying." He jokes about her feelings toward game officials, "She's definitely screaming at the refs, screaming at the—there's never been a good ref in any game and she's never seen a ref she wanted—no. Never." Allen's dad, has been his coach and best friend since he uttered his second word, basketball. His dad played basketball in college and professionally. Allen has considered his father as his best friend. Through strong personalities, disagreements and conflicts, ultimately, his dad has been someone he reveres.

> My dad and I, we would argue a lot just because I am definitely a know it all, he's a know it all. So, two know-it-alls—but I look at—he runs his own law firm and I definitely want to go work with him when I'm done and I know he'd be more than happy to retire early and I would definitely like to take his position when I—I'd love for him to be able to retire just 'cause he's done so much for us. (Allen, Interview)

The oldest of three siblings, he told me, "Older people tell me I'm still young, but I'm old now." I chuckled and he continued, "I feel way older now than I did four years ago when I came to this school." Instead of solely basketball aims, his goals have transformed, "I think as I've gotten older now my goals are a lot more focused on me doing things that will better me in my life and my future and my family now and my future family." Because he has not liked being bossed around and the only person he has taken orders from was his dad, Allen has wanted to put himself in a position of leadership.

His experience as a Black male student-athlete has been interesting due to his mixed heritage. His mother's father was Black and his mother's mother was White. Allen's father is White. He shares:

> I think I kind of come from an interesting perspective because a lot of people look at me and they wouldn't really look at me as a Black person. A lot of people don't have that initial thought so a lot of times I'll be in situations where either someone might talk to me as if they think I would not be offended by something you might say about a Black

> person or something. . . . So, I think a lot of the experiences that I've had have kind of been like almost like they look undercover almost where it's like I'll see a lot of good things that people say and I mean there's been a lot of negative things that people just almost say kind of like sly things that they might think I would think would be funny. (Allen, Interview)

He notices that his PWI encompasses many sheltered students who learned perceptions of Black people during their upbringing, "I think that we have a lot of guys on our team who[se] students probably look at [us] and either are initially intimidated of or have a certain stereotype they believe [about us]."

He cited his classmate and best friend, a Black tennis player, as an example of Black people on campus breaking stereotypes. He expanded by describing how his Black teammates' interactions with different ethnic groups on campus, have broken barriers and defied stereotypes:

> And I think that a lot of the athletes on our team definitely break or have definitely shown a lot of people in the school, a lot of—not just students but a lot of faculty that Black people are really are no different than what white people are. We're all people with different cultures that there are different things but this is a friendly group of people. Like you can come up and talk to us, you can shake our hands, you can have a conversation with us. You don't have to be afraid. You don't have to turn your head and walk the other way which I do see people do that. They'll see a big group of us walking by and they're like – they swing to the other side of campus and walk past. And we do notice that. (Allen, Interview)

At the time of this study, Allen was a team captain and a senior with a diversity plan to bring his student body together. He has set his sights on life as a regular law student at the conclusion of his athletic career. He has planned to follow in the footsteps of his father while braving his own path.

Carter

Carter only knew go! His energy and passion were displayed during phone and in person conversations. "I got to keep myself moving, because that's all I know. I don't know—I can't—I

don't know Stop. It's just green light. Everything is green. There's no yellow, there's no red light." After making the initial call to introduce myself and the study, while also familiarizing myself with Carter and scheduling our initial interview, I discovered this to be true. This conversation was the liveliest and most animated of all my phone calls. Carter was referred for this study by his former coach, and each time we speak, he acts as if he has known me for years, making several references to me as "sis." In November 2016, I used my lunch break to meet with Carter. He texted to inform me of his arrival in the parking lot. I went to meet him, but could not find him. I walked briefly to the parking spaces located to my right, and then quickly reversed to catch the back of a gold Nike backpack that had already beaten me to the front gate. As Carter and I exchanged in-person introductions, I am blinded by his matching gold Nikes. He was dressed in sporty dry-fit thermal workout gear. He has just left the gym and squeezed me into his busy schedule before taking off to direct his afterschool program.

Carter, a 26-year-old former football player and special education student turned networking business entrepreneur, changed the course of his juvenile delinquent life through his football ability and encounters with his high school football coach. He obtained a football scholarship to a Division I university from extreme determination. Before arriving at his Division I university, Carter simultaneously attended three Los Angeles community colleges. He missed the ACT score required to directly enter a 4-year university by one point; he believes if he had been properly identified as dyslexic with the College Board, he would have been assigned a proctor, and his score would have been waived allowing direct admission. Nevertheless, he did not allow this to stop his momentum. Even a rocky junior year, after he was admitted to his 4-year university, did not stop him from achieving his goal of completing college.

As a sophomore high school student, Carter had a life changing conversation with a coach that changed his perspective on life and made him want to do more for himself, his daughter, and his mother. At age 14, he served some time in juvenile hall, but meeting his high school football coach saved his life:

> So, he sat me down at the end of my sophomore year—and one of my friends came and got me from class, and he sat me down and said, "If you don't want to be shit, you can't be around me. You can't play on my football team. I'm not letting no losers—not even footballers—just losers, period, with a losing mentality around me." And I'm like, I ain't no loser. Who are you talking to? I sat down, and from that day forward, it's just been different. My mindset's been different. My thought process has been different—just everything has been different. I had a chip on my shoulder to prove him wrong and to prove everybody else wrong that I could do something and I could be something in my life. (Carter, Interview)

Carter has utilized his gifts and talents to motivate youth. He has had more interest in and pride about inspiring youth rather than financial gains.

This once teenage father of one daughter, has loved his daughter tremendously and has done the best that he can to support her. When his daughter has contemplated giving up, he has discouraged her from that mindset promptly. At the time of this study, Carter was expecting a new addition to his family. He anxiously awaited the arrival of his new son and has already made plans to raise his son with tough love, "I'm still going to be hard, because he's going to be an African-American man, period. So, I am going to have to be hard, period. But he's going to know the value of business, the spirit of it**.** And he's going to know how to treat people."

Carter also expressed a great deal of love towards his mother who helped raise his daughter while he pursued college and college sports. He winced when recollecting the abusive step father that had him up all night calling the police in attempts to protect his mother. She was a young mom and special education paraprofessional who was unable to attend many of his

games. “And from Fridays was her turn up. She’s been dealing with them kids—dealing with kids like me all day. And coming—trying to come to a game, that ain’t happening.” He understood, had forgiven, and honored the grandmother she became. On the other hand, when he recalled his truck driver father filling his apartment with groceries and mysteriously appearing on the field during home games, always with a word of prayer, he became teary eyed and deeply emotional. The different displays of support from both of his parents deeply impacted his ability to complete college. With this support and the grit, he attributed to growing up in the inner city, college did not intimidate Carter at all. He felt “like anybody in the inner city, we’re in a jungle. And we are surviving in a jungle. So, if you put us in any world, we’re going to survive.”

Carter has created a 100% STEM afterschool program for inner city youth. When I tried to clarify whether it also, incorporated sports and the arts. He responded that it was strictly science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. He shared with me how his program began:

> Then, after that, I was kind of depressed because it was like, “What am I going to do?” All I knew was football. There was nothing else that I—that I know. I didn’t get that degree to go to use it. I got that degree just to get it—for my mom to put on her wall. I was coaching the high school football, and my last $500, I was like, I want to do something for the kids. I am just going to take this money, and I’m going to invest it in myself, and I want to do something for kids. (Carter, Interview)

Participation in college sports provided Carter with networking, leadership skills, and a new outlook on life. He set several football goals throughout his time as a Black male student-athlete that would soon transfer to life. “I broke my own record. I took the record—got the record with 20 to 22 tackles in the game. Two games later, I broke my own record—in one year.” A coach told him, “Look, man, you have to look at life like football—and that was one of the best things he ever told me because now, I look at life like it’s football. I can break down football—look at life to where you can understand it.” And it has worked for him ever since.

Charles

In November 2016, Charles was in the midst of football season over 1500 of miles away from California and unable to meet me in person. We spoke for over an hour via telephone. The first time I spoke to Charles was through an impromptu phone conversation. I had been talking with an athletic director colleague of mine about the difficulty I was having securing current student-athletes for my study. Each time that I reached out directly to an athletic program, I hit a brick wall. The players and their programs were guarded tightly and I was viewed as an outsider, or more or less, the enemy who needed to be obstructed. My hopes were running low about securing even one current player to participate in the study. I had decided in my mind that I would amend my IRB document to state the use of only former Division I athletes. In past conversations, my colleague, like so many others, had ensured me that he would reach out to his contacts to provide me with a few participants.

One morning, around 9:15 a.m., my colleague quickly entered into my office with his cell phone in hand. He shook his phone emphatically and relayed that he has just gotten off of the phone with Charles, a former athlete of his. He stated hurriedly that Charles has agreed to participate in the study. "Take his number down and call him right now!" he instructed. "He's on a break between classes. When opportunities like this arise, you have to move fast! These players are difficult to catch up with." I jotted the number down, called immediately, and got Charles on the line. I introduced myself, how I obtained his contact information, and explained a bit about the study. I asked when would be a good time to talk. He replied that I should give him 30 minutes to grab a quick bite to eat, and then he would be ready to have a conversation. I told him that that was perfect and would give me enough time to email the consent forms, set up the

conference line, and send him the details for logging into the conference. I called into the conference line before 30 minutes time, but when 40 minutes passed, I got a bit nervous. I worried that Charles was going to no show. I texted him and he responded that he was having trouble calling in. I coached him through accessing the line. When I finally heard a raspy voice lined with a bit of a Southern twang say, "Hello," bliss consumed me. I began recording my first conversation with a current student-athlete, Charles. Despite the interviewing method, I learned a great deal about him.

Charles never got to know his dad since he died when he was two. Growing up, he remembered that he, his mom, brother, and sister "didn't really have a choice but to be close to one another because we all lived under the same roof. We all, like—when one of us moves we all move. So, I mean, we all just stuck together through everything." During the interview, he expressed that he considered his mother, a native of Panama, as his best friend.

As a teenager, Charles was the odd child. He stood 6'4" and 190 pounds, and he rode a skateboard through town. As he got older and more rebellious, he moved from school to school in Southern California's inland empire. The youngest of three siblings, he lived with his mother, then his brother, and then back with his mother because his grades continued to fall. He would soon settle in a Los Angeles county suburb, and trade his skateboard in for a football and some pads. He quickly developed a love for football, believing that football would bring him closer to "earning money, earning a degree, a college degree, and making my mom proud." He stayed the course which yielded him offers from nationally ranked college football programs. Nevertheless, he decided to sign with the team that showed him the most loyalty, instead of the largest football program. Family and loyalty are important factors in Charles's life. As an inner-city youth,

Charles did not have much money, but he had the love and loyalty of his small family and two childhood school friends. During his senior year of high school, Charles shared that there was a point where he was academically ineligible. Some of the teams that recruited him initially doubted that he would make the grades, so they pulled their scholarship offers. Regardless, he believed that he would make the grades. As his grades started to show growth, certain teams that Charles felt had abandoned him, attempted to reenter negotiations with him, but he was uninterested:

> Then I guess after the coaching change they didn't believe I was going to make the grades so they pulled my scholarship. And they tried to give it back when they figured out I was going to be eligible but I was like, if you they're going to give up on me and not have any faith that I was going to make the grades, then I don't want to come back to your university. So that's what lead me here. (Charles, Interview)

When he faced academic challenges during college years, his mom, coaches, and academic advisors rallied around him to support his exit from academic probation. Also, when he was injured during summer training camp, he was surrounded by the support of his entire football program:

> Oh, yeah, we support each other every day. Literally, when I got hurt and I was in the hospital we were in the middle of camp, it was the first week of camp. . . . The entire team, even the specialists and my coaches came up to the hospital to support us, to support me and one of my other teammates through our surgery. (Charles, Interview)

As a 21-year-old senior studying sociology, Charles has been focused heavily on his academics. Since his knee injury, including tearing his MCL, ACL, PTL (three out of four main ligaments in the knee: medial collateral ligament, anterior cruciate ligament, and posterior cruciate ligament), meniscus, and patella tendon, he was not anticipated to return to football play during the present season. While standing on the side line, Charles had been devoted to cheering his team on to victory and sharing observations with his coaches. Although not physically, he

still contributed to the team and as he believed, he reaped the rewards of the team, "Even though I can't play, I still have an important role to this team of being positive, being there for my brothers as they go to war. Because I mean, at the end of the day, even though I'm not playing, I still get the same rewards and the same benefits as them." Charles's time playing Division I sports has taught him coping strategies that transfer to life, "Either you take control of the situation around you or you just fold and you lose a lot of games; just have to stay important, have to stay humble." These mantras have allowed him to win games and also move closer toward completing his college degree.

Charles still enjoyed attending practices, watching the games, and spending time with teammates whom he considered as brothers. He has decided when his Division I college football career ends, "I mean at some point it will come and I'll have to put both my feet down on the floor like a man and just get a job and start my life." Charles planned someday to open a skateboard shop or restaurant. He was also interested in coaching or serving as a graduate assistant.

Clark

For our conversation, Clark and I decided to meet at a small mom and pop restaurant in between my job and his place of residence at 4 p.m. in the afternoon. The assumption was that this location would be quiet, quaint, and not heavily trafficked until after 5:30. This was the wrong assumption. I arrived at the location where Clark was already waiting for me. He has ordered a small gumbo and po' boy sandwich (both Louisiana specialties). I informed him that I would cover the cost of his meal as a token of my gratitude for participating in this study. As a working actor, Clark's schedule has been unpredictable, so I appreciated him making time to

support the research study. He waved his hands in my direction, and refused my offer. I insisted that I must buy him a drink to accompany his meal. After an initial refusal, he allowed me to purchase a can of Strawberry Fanta to have with his meal. By this time of the day, I was absolutely starved, and ordered a shrimp and chicken drummettes combination. I asked Clark if we would be eating before, during or after the interview. He responded, "Whatever works for you, but it looks like you have a pretty full plate!" I decided that it was best to eat first, and then have our conversation.

I was introduced to Clark via a mutual friend. My high school friend who also went to primary school with Clark suggested that he might be a great person to interview for this study. In August 2016, we spent over two hours eating and conversing about our children then talking extensively about Division I college sports. Clark shared pictures of his son and his enjoyment of fatherhood. Clark's eyes lit up and he could not resist smiling every time he mentioned his namesake. I could feel the anticipation and excitement each time he spoke of what the future held for him and his young one. During our conversation, he was extremely comfortable. After sharing some of the struggles he faced as a single father with unofficial shared custody, we transitioned into the interview.

Clark, a 33-year-old former football player, has experienced the highs and lows of Division I college sports. He obtained a full scholarship directly out of high school to a 4-year university. Initially, an unknown player in high school, his grandmother provided the inspiration for him to become the top player in his home state, earning a football scholarship to a prestigious university. He recounts:

> I was raised by my grandmother, and she went to the hospital—walked into the hospital and came out in a wheelchair—had a malfunction in her operation, and from that point

> on, I told myself that I was going to do better, and I was going to be the best player on the field, an important man. For the next 40 weeks in California, I was the best. And before that I wasn't. I wasn't—didn't nobody know nothing about me. But after that happened, I had a different motivation. (Clark, Interview)

Another motivation for Clark was knowing that "even if I did what my father did 10 times better than him, I still wasn't going to make the amount of money I wanted to make." So, he set his mind on scholarship aspirations. He wanted to expand his mind and meet new people to increase his future business network and options. For him, college would provide upward mobility out of the inner city, or else "all he could be was a trash man or a truck driver or something like that."

All of his life, Clark has played sports and focused everything on "being good at the sports, excelling, and receiving everything that comes with that." And despite the pressure he put on himself, "It wasn't serious. It was fun." Nevertheless, as he transitioned to college, the fun, friends and life he used to know also became consumed by the college sports world. At times, he felt overshadowed by sports:

> When you're at a big-time university and you're trying to win national championships, there's no time really to get to know the person. We're all treated by how well you play sports. They don't care how well you play an instrument. They don't care how well versed you are. They don't care how many languages you speak. When the lights come on, you do good for us, we'll care, we'll ask questions. Other than that, it's not our concern. It's like big team, little me. So, whatever concerns the team, that's a big priority. Whatever concerns you, then it's not really a priority. So being a person and being a part of a team is—keep them separate. (Clark, Interview)

He has played with and against some of the highest ranked college athletes in the history of college sports. Yet, he still knows the agony of what it feels like to earn below a 1.0 GPA at the university level. He found himself consistently reaffirming in his mind, "You're not stupid. You can learn. I didn't just want it to get to the point where I felt like I couldn't learn the stuff."

Both his triumphs and his disappointments revealed to him growth and transitions in the game of life:

> To say at 18 that I was a complete work of art, I felt like college was the fourth quarter, and in the fourth quarter I learned a lot of things that were important to me being in the rest of the game. I just felt like, no, I'm not the same person I was when I left the neighborhood, and I took with me some of those experiences that helped me—you know—in my hard times and in my good times. (Clark, Interview)

He graduated from his 4-year university with a degree in political science, and now is a thriving actor. He considers himself a storyteller. His medium-term goals include using acting as storytelling tool to reach millions of people. He realizes that "even though it's not my reality, I'm showing somebody's reality, and through all my life experiences, I feel like I can relate to anybody." He is giving this quarter of his life five to 10 years to take off.

He has never been satisfied with average achievements when it pertains to setting and reaching goals. Although his college grade point average may have been ordinary, he achieved his extraordinary goals of building a network of connected alumni and graduating from a prestigious university with his degree. He pushes himself to achieve his current goals because he represents "my brand, my city, my family, and people like me." He views his achievements as achievements of his community. One of his ultimate goals is to continue with his acting and motivational speaking, "because I speak to kids—you know—youths—stuff like that now, and I'll be acting and trying to make sure that people can recognize my face and maybe they'll listen for once. (laughs) You know? Make a little difference." Clark has dedicated his efforts to improving his community for at-risk youth and the world he will leave to his son.

George

Wearing stonewashed jeans and a loose fitting v-neck t-shirt, George entered the café that he had selected for our conversation. I observed the traces of a once bare face underneath the stubbles of a newly formed beard. Facial hair covered the entire bottom half of his face. Initially, he had not seen me seated at an unusually large work table in the rear left corner of the building. This table reminded me of a table that one would find in the study room of a library, not in a small cafe. Although we had physically never met before, I immediately sensed that he was my study participant. George was referred to the study by his former football coach, a relative to my brother in-law. He walked in looking directly toward the back-right corner. I watched as he scanned the room; slowly his head turned, the torso portion of his body followed. By the time his eyes reached my corner, I was already making a full waving motion. He smiled and walked over to the area where I was seated. He smiled as we exchanged in person introductions; pots crashed and blenders ground in the background. Even though the area we had to conduct our interview was quite spacious, it was also in close proximity to the kitchen and appeared to be the noisiest spot in the café. He apologized for running behind schedule and selecting such a noisy place for the interview, but I was beyond understanding and grateful for a sliver of his time. It was a November Saturday afternoon, and he had just left a lunch with buddies to meet for our conversation. Afterwards, he was to meet his current boss to work on their documentary project for which he was responsible for sound and editing. He was just as busy then as he was back in his undergraduate years, but the pursuit of his passion, has allowed work and pleasure to intertwine.

George, a 24-year-old former football player, originated from a small city less than 20 minutes from Los Angeles. At the time of the study, he was single with no children. His family moved from South Central Los Angeles to their then new and current home just after he was born. Even though his birth position made him the youngest of three children, he often felt like his family placed a great deal of pressures on his shoulders. When his family talked about him they would say, "George is the one who's going to make all the money." George's family has always been there to support him:

> Like when I scored my first touchdown my family cried in the stands. You know what I mean, it's like it was big for them, you know what I mean? Like that was big. Like they've been watching me since I was like—and this is like all of our dream, to like be on this big stage and like—that was crazy. (George, Interview)

When he went from walk-on football player to scholarship recipient that was a huge moment, not only for George, but also for his entire family. He remembered:

> So, when I found out I was going to get a scholarship and the coach surprised us in the meeting and stuff and offered me and somebody else a scholarship that was big. I called my mom, my mom cried. It was just—that was big for us, you know? (George, Interview)

And when that scholarship was taken without explanation during his senior year, his family stood by his side trying to keep him levelheaded and calm.

Once George left home for college, he often found himself supporting his family as well. He recalled several times that he found himself in the financial aid office taking loans out to help support his family, "The first year was pretty tough because I was a walk-on, you know, got all these loans. My family wasn't really able to help me out with anything pretty much, you know, like I'm taking out loans to help them out. But that's basically what I was doing." He did not care for money and had gotten to a point when he no longer wanted to be in school. George wanted to

drop out. While his family's expectations of him increased, they had no idea that George faced extreme challenges.

> And they have no idea, like I'm trying to—I don't want to be in school. I never cared about school and I don't know why. Like I just want to just—I don't know what I want to do actually; I just want to drop out and just like out, to be honest. (George, Interview)

His family's hopes of him making all the money, sometimes added more tension to his already stressful life during his time as a Division I Black male student-athlete. Not only did George work during his time as a Black student-athlete, he involved himself in a wealth of other activities:

> I'm a walk-on, I was doing good in school, I earned a scholarship. But not only that, like I'm a musician, I'm working on this film, I was studying religious studies. I started this group called SK, 'cause I wanted people from different religions and people that didn't have religions to come together and talk about life, because I was part of this Christian group and I didn't really feel—I was always curious like why don't we have a space where everybody can feel safe. (George, Interview)

Yet, it became increasingly difficult for George to handle all of his responsibilities seamlessly. At one point, he struggled so much that he was demoted from playing in games to only practicing as a part of the practice squad.

> The more taxing my work and everything got on me, like I even saw it in practice, it got to a point where people were like, "Hey, what's going with you? You're dropping every ball," literally like drop, drop, drop, drop. (George, Interview)

Questioning his religion during college was one huge crisis for him and a huge predicament coming from an uber-religious family. But enduring the struggle allowed him to enter deep discussions with GOD, find answers to questions, declare a meaningful major, and study abroad:

> So, I was just going through an identity crisis with all that stuff. But I think really starting to question, and for me personally, I had one night I was really going through that; I prayed to God, I was like, "God, I want to know the truth whether you're real or not. And

> to be honest, I'm praying to you that I want the truth from you and this is a sincere journey in my heart to seek you, and so even if that means you don't exist I want to know that." And that's why I feel-I feel like I've studied—that's why I feel like I stumbled on religious studies for a reason, 'cause when I thought there was nothing else I could major in ever, I just took a random religious studies class and fell in love with it. I took a Buddhism class and fell in love with that. (George, Interview)

George is interested in bringing the arts to low income communities, "I want to give back to my community. I want to give the arts back to my community. Not just my community, but communities that don't have access to provide them (youth) an education and stuff. And I really feel like the arts are an amazing educational tool given access to it." Through the ups and downs, George has emerged with his degree and a future focused on the arts.

Jake

Jake arrived for our meeting on a September Saturday afternoon wearing a thick beard, sweat suit, slippers with fresh white socks, and a bright smile. He arranged to have our conversation at a local coffee shop. One of the larger chain shops that I have patronized, it contained a little over 40 seating options. When I arrived 20 minutes before Jake, every window seat was filled, but the couch and large table located in the center of the room were still available. The world music played in the background somewhat louder than anticipated. Instead of a light hum, it was a few decibels below blaring. In hindsight, this could explain why the seating was so open upon my arrival. After Jake sat, we chatted informally before beginning the interview. He appeared to have just woken up from an extremely long night. Arena football season has concluded and he has tried to catch up on much needed rest while also training for National Football League and Canadian Football League tryouts. Throughout the conversation, he kept a smile. Even amidst difficult conversation topics, he continued to wear a bright countenance. I was appreciative of his time commitment to this study. I met Jake through a

former student who was a close friend of his. She was aware of my topic and suggested that I reach out to him as a potential study participant. After obtaining his cell phone number, I reached out to him through text message. We made the connection and Jake agreed to participate in the study.

Jake, age 27 and a Southern California native, graduated with a degree in business from a Division I university. At the time of the study, he was single with no children. Directly out of his inner city Southern California high school, he was offered an athletic scholarship to attend a Pioneer Football League university. After completing his undergraduate studies in business, he has pursued arena football simultaneously with a career as a real estate broker.

The child of two Nigerian immigrants, academics were always the priority in their home. He was not allowed to prioritize sports over academics. In high school, he recalls being one of only two students in his Advanced Placement Physics class to earn a passing grade, but because it was a C his dad ceased his sports activity:

> My dad was hot. He's steaming, like, "What? You got a C in Physics? Oh, no! Uh-huh! The sports—sports is done. Your sports are done." It was like that for pretty much all my childhood. Any little bump in the report card, sports on hold. (Jake, Interview)

Even still, Jake enjoyed and saw the value in organized sports. For him, organized sports instilled within him an overall confidence from a young age, built lifelong friendships, gave him the social skills to communicate with his peers and adults.

Jake faced challenges at his PWI. Coming from the inner city, he believed outsiders, especially many from the PWI that he attended, viewed him negatively. Despite the negative perceptions, he possessed a sense of pride about himself and his hometown:

> Like there's a lot of—there's some negative connotations from people outside, who have never been—like don't even know exactly what it looks like. They think it might be—it

> looks like the Middle East or something. But it's like I have pride in where I was from and how I wanted to represent myself. (Jake, Interview)

Without the support of a Black Studies professor, Latina cafeteria manager, and academic advisor, he may not have graduated on time. He recalls how the Black Studies professor was instrumental in increasing the percentage of Black students from .05% to 4% at the university. Even though the professor himself faced challenges associated with institutional racism, and often felt unsupported, he was a constant support for the Black student body. It made Jake feel good to look around the university and be able to connect with students who looked like him.

Jake also felt good when he could eat full meals. Because his university did not provide full athletic scholarships, his family was always left with a balance of tuition and expenses to pay. He often had to get a cheaper meal plan to save costs. When his meal plan would run out, there was a cafeteria manager, who was also a mother who would make sure that he could eat until his meal plan renewed.

> You're not really supposed to be able to eat in the caf. But there was a lot of Hispanic workers in our caf in like manager roles and they were moms too. So, they would like—they looked out—they would look out. So, man. I loved them, man. (Jake, Interview)

He also remembers that staying on top of assignments during football season was extremely difficult to manage. His academic advisor saved him from failure on many occasions. "He was huge to me, especially when I got thrown in and it's sink or swim, I started sinking at first. I was sinking at first. But he threw out some life vests, all that." Jake continues with a discussion of his various goals over the years. He was always certain that he would graduate from college. In his household, graduating from high school was the natural stepping stone to the goal of college graduation:

> There's always been the goal of graduating from college. My dad always put that in me, like from—I can't even remember when it started, but I always knew I was going to go to college. Like going to college was as natural as going to high school. It wasn't a thought about it. (Jake, Interview)

Jake also set football goals and learned the difference between a dream and a goal. He has set a goal of playing for an NFL team. Through experience, hard work and training, he believes that this goal is attainable,

> At first, I was just—just dreaming, like I wished to be in the pros or something like that, but I didn't know what it took. I didn't know even if I had the skills to do so. But through these years, putting in the work, getting the experience and all this kind of stuff, it's right there. It's in my grasp. (Jake, Interview)

Included in Jake's career goals were becoming a top producing agent in his brokerage, in addition to owning a few income properties, with at least one in his hometown. He has continued to grind toward his goals even after graduation.

Johnny

In December 2016, Johnny and I sat down to interview around 7:30 p.m. Basketball season was in full swing and at first, I felt the pressure to stay out of the way and complete the interview as quickly as possible. Johnny took a huge bite into his pizza. He agreed to meet with me during his study hall hours, and at this particular study hall the coaches happened to have gotten the team pizza and drinks. I was offered some pizza as well, so I obliged the offer, placed a couple of slices in a napkin, and sat down again on the ottoman located in the hallway. Johnny and I shared the ottoman, and despite not having a completely closed space, I found this location the best for his leg space. As we sat to talk, it tickled me to see his knees almost touch his chest. My pizza disappeared in less than 5 minutes, but his slices still remained in front of him. He gave me a nervous smile and even at 6'6" and 245 pounds, the smile and his words soon revealed that

he was looking for someone that he could trust with his story and who cared enough to listen. This day would be our first conversation. He was unaware that I was equally as nervous, and my thoughts were consumed heavily with how much I did not want him or the coaching staff to view me suspiciously.

Johnny and I met through a coaching colleague of my husband. His colleague was aware that I had been having difficulties securing current players, so he reached out to one of his senior players, Johnny, on my behalf. Initially, Johnny was interested in hearing about my background and more details about the study. I shared openly. I was extremely grateful and willing to answer any questions that Johnny may have had. He wanted to know about my profession. He probed further and asked if I have interviewed all Black males for my study and I informed him that this is the case. After this question, I sensed a guard was removed because the very next question was whether I wanted him to tell the truth. I assured him that our conversation was confidential and he could share as much with me as he was willing to disclose. My nerves dissipated as well, and I did not feel so much like the intruder. I was there to hear his story as he took me on a journey from his youth filled with pain, struggles, and triumph to his then current role as basketball team captain of a West Coast Division I university.

Johnny, a 21-year-old senior, who majored in Urban Studies transferred from an out of state community college to attend school on a basketball scholarship. Originally from the Southern region of the United States, he enjoyed the West Coast weather, lifestyle, and surprisingly, calm that basketball had brought to his life. With all the hustle and bustle of Division I college sports, it offered Johnny a peace that he had never experienced before earning

his scholarships to play basketball: first at a community college, and then two years later at a 4-year university.

Johnny moved around a lot during his childhood. He and his two brothers had been separated a large portion of his life due to his mother's substance abuse. Initially, the courts granted custody to his father who lived with Johnny's aunt and grandmother. Johnny's aunt was responsible for pushing him into academics and athletics:

> When I moved up there, it was more focus on school. So, it wasn't like, "Hey, when you get here you go play," or anything like that. My mom wasn't really like the type of woman to really – I wouldn't say care. Like I said, she just didn't have that time with me. So, going up there, it was a big difference just how to do my books and just how to be a young man. She [his aunt] really played a big part in my life more than my dad and my nana did. So, she actually got me into the game of basketball. (Johnny, Interview)

From a young age Johnny has to handle great adversity. His mother was unable to fully care for him and his siblings, while also battling substance abuse. Her employment status was unstable and inconsistent. He remembered the anguish of going hungry often and coming home to no lights. Johnny's early years living with his mother made it difficult for him to experience a sense of stability:

> My mom had a problem with drugs and stuff like that. So, it was just real hard for her really to just provide for me and her, for herself. Like I said, she would have a job and then she'd get fired and then she'd get down on herself and she was just going through a big depression then. She couldn't handle taking care of me and herself. (Johnny, Interview)

Despite the tribulations, Johnny never lost love for his mother. The custody battle waged on, and although he appreciated what his paternal aunt had done for him, he really missed his older brother.

> [The court officials] was asking me what I want, what I want to do, I told them that I just want to be with my brother. That's all I care about, because me and him don't really have

> that bond and I hadn't seen him in so many years. Let me go stay down there with them. (Johnny, Interview)

So, custody was granted to Johnny's maternal grandmother. He moved again. Living with his maternal grandmother was an adjustment and shift from his previous household. His grandmother had her plate full, serving as a church pastor and caring for a sick husband, so Johnny helped her to care for her spouse, but it was apparent to him that she had no time to supervise his studies or recreational activities.

> I just wanted to be out with my friends and in the streets and just doing like just dumb stuff. I didn't really have a sense back then to really—to get myself together because I had that freedom. I feel like that was the part that messed me up there. (Johnny, Interview)

When his mother was released from her rehabilitation program, he would eventually move again. Due to his grandmother's full plate, she sent him back to his mother even though that was not at all what he wanted:

> My mom moved down. But me knowing what was going on with my mom back then, knowing like sometimes lights wouldn't be on, food wouldn't—we wouldn't have food to eat. I just didn't want to go back to that. So, my grandma like, "Your mom is coming to move down here." I'm looking like I really don't care, but okay because I know everybody's going to move because of her [grandmother]. So, I'm okay. She like, "What you think about going to move with her?" I'm thinking in my head like when we was sitting in the courtroom and you was on the phone, you told the judge that you would take care of me and you would take me in and you going to be my legal guardian and stuff like that. But once my mom got here, you're ready to give me away. I mean that's something I held in for a long time. I felt like I shouldn't because my grandma was going through a lot then with my granddad because of his sickness and that was happening. So, she basically like just gave me away to my mom. So, I had to relive that all again, that struggle about lights, food. (Johnny, Interview)

Johnny and his brothers were reunited with their mother briefly until substance abuse contributed to his mother stealing money from two of them. He and his older brother had had enough, so they moved out. As developing teenagers, he and his brother now were forced to

provide a roof over their heads. Johnny viewed the struggle as a character builder and opportunity for growth, instead of a condemnation:

> So, me and my brother like, "Forget it. We're not trying to deal with this no more." We left. So, we end up moving into her [grandmother's] old house. It was just me and my brother. So, with that happening, now I had to get a job to help pay the bills and still going to school. I was still playing sports. So, my first job was at Wendy's. I worked there for about six months . . . So, going through that struggle really—I feel like it helped me more than just put me down. (Johnny, Interview)

His mother would eventually have to serve jail time, so Johnny and his brother ended up with custody of their younger brother. "So, I just took him under my wing." There were times when Johnny had to miss school to take his brother to doctor's appointment or work extra shifts that left him asking why this had to happen to him. His mother was released and moved in with the three brothers until she got herself situated. She would eventually move out and take her youngest son. Johnny felt like he was the only one in his immediate and extended family that was encouraging his mom to change her life. He shared:

> "You got to stop this. It's not—you know what I mean? You got to grow up. You've got responsibilities. You've got three kids. We're depending on you." We wasn't then because she was in jail and stuff but I used to talk to her like, have so many talks heart to heart. (Johnny, Interview)

His life events affected him academically, athletically, emotionally, and socially. He was behind in his reading and writing skills, but tried to cover it up by being the class clown. He did not want to reveal his pain and struggle to anyone. "I didn't want people to know what was really going on with me and my situation. I was really scared of what people would think of me. I don't know. It was just really tough."

He had trust and discipline issues. Raising himself made it difficult to take instructions from others, including his coaches: "It was really tough back then. I wasn't used to that, just

somebody yelling in my face and disciplining me and being the coach. So, I ran from it for a while. Then I just started to understand that he's only trying to help me. He wasn't trying to hurt me."

Although his grades would sometimes cause him to be ineligible for athletic play, sports saved his life. He played both basketball and football, but was more passionate about basketball. Playing sports would often give him the motivation to raise his grades. Sports also gave him the access to higher education. Initially, all his recruitment was from football, but he turned those offers down. People called him foolish, but he believed in himself. His basketball ability and perseverance would serve as his exit ticket from a pathway toward destruction:

> My biggest goal was to get out of here and just get as far away as I can. That was the biggest reason why I came out here. Like I said, me, back then, it just—like I said, that road I was going down wasn't pretty. I was going to either end up dead or in jail being around the people I was being around and doing what I was doing. So, like I said, when I got to the junior college—I really started seeing a light that I really can get out of here. I started seeing that I really can do something even though I feel like I was a mess-up. I seen the light at my junior college then I just started striving to this, to get better in basketball so I could get out of here because I knew that was the biggest key for me to leave, do basketball. (Johnny, Interview)

At his community college, he was able to develop a trusting relationship with his coach and obtain the academic support he needed to ensure that he was eligible for transfer to a 4-year university. Since arriving at his then current university, he found more academic, social, and emotional support. He got the necessary supports for his classes and believed that his university was molding him "into a lot better man than I was before I came here 'cause the road I was on." He got down on himself, but I recognized his transformation and persistence, and reminded him that he had a lot for which to be proud. Johnny graduated this past May 2017. He planned to give

back to the youth in his hometown through coaching and directing basketball programs after some time playing professional basketball.

Nathaniel

Nathaniel entered my office, pulled up a seat and initiated, "Let's do this!" His voice filled the room with confidence and cheerfulness. It had been no small feat securing this interview with him. Nathaniel has worked in the security field within Los Angeles County. I thought that he would be the easiest participant to schedule for a conversation, but this was not the reality. I physically had to locate him to reschedule our appointments. Nevertheless, he was the first participant interviewed for this study. As he sat to review the documents that were provided for him prior to the interview, Nathaniel displayed an excitement to share his story and experiences as a Division I Black male student-athlete. Throughout the interview, he entered nostalgic states from his youth and sports career.

At the time of the interview, I had known Nathaniel for over six years. I was introduced to him through a family member, a former football and basketball player on his high school teams. Nathaniel, 55 with a low salt and pepper haircut, clean-shaven face, and muscular build, was a former All-American athlete and professional football player. He was married for a second time and the father of three children. While in college, he majored in physical education, but did not complete his degree because he entered the professional football draft early.

As he began to tell his story, he wrung his hands together and rocked in his seat, as if transported back to his childhood. Nathaniel came from a large family. His mother had eight brothers and sisters, while his father had nine brothers and sisters. He smiled often as he

reminisced about his family, their migration westward, and all of his high school, college and professional accomplishments.

He recalled great times with his grandfather as a youth in Memphis, Tennessee. His grandfather owned many small businesses, including a chartered bus company that rode Black workers into the cotton fields. Here is where Nathaniel earned his first source of income selling soda, chips and candy to bus passengers. His grandfather also owned a convenience store that served as a jukebox, meat shop, and ice cream parlor.

After moving to Southern California, he remembered assisting his father with his business for pocket money. Since he could always work for family, he did not bother obtaining serious employment until after his professional football career. He spoke proudly of his family neighborhood nobility:

> We were one of the first black families to live on our block . . . were always around both cultures. At the time, we considered _____ the Beverly Hills of the west. Kind of like if you lived on the east side of town—we lived by the beach, west side. So, we got to be around more cultures and experience more—different things than the inner-city kids actually got to experience—which we were the same, but at the same time, we were open to more things than just being in _____, being so close to the beach and the surrounding cities that we are surrounded by, which were predominantly Caucasian. So, we didn't really see it as being the have-nots. We really thought that we were families in this community that had jobs from the aerospace companies and, like I said, education, and homes, lived at home, and things like that. So, we didn't really see ourselves as not—I wouldn't say equal because we were Black, but at the same time, we didn't see ourselves as not being able to have opportunities. (Nathaniel, Interview)

An avid sports lover, Nathaniel would have played football, basketball, or baseball for free. Not only was Nathaniel a former All-American high school athlete who lettered in basketball, football, and track, he also held office in Associated Student Body, participated in the yearbook committee, danced with a band that performed nationwide, and organized talent shows. He recalled, "I thought at one point I would be like the Jackson 5 and be a singer and dancer. I

thought at another time that I would be President of the United States of America, because I was a leader, and I was always in the government tree."

The popular campus leader had his choice of nine Division I university offers. He settled on an out of state university, but arrived on campus during a coaching transition to be informed that he was going to have to redshirt [allowed to attend classes and practice with the team, but he would not be able to travel or play games with the team] for one year. "I couldn't play or travel with the team my first year. And I had no idea of any of that. That was like saying stop breathing." So, he transferred to a junior college and, then to another 4-year Division I university.

Sports, along with his family line of educators, gave Nathaniel the motivation to remain on top of his academics. He often found that he struggled academically, but always had access to the proper resources to be successful:

> I always struggled academically. And the beautiful thing about when I grew up was that you'd have to maintain a level, educationally, to participate in the sport. So, it was easy for me to move to the next level because we always had a standard that we had to maintain, a 2.5 grade point average. And for me, that took studying. For some people, it doesn't really take studying to get Cs and Bs. The A students just get it. That's how they do their thing. But for me, I had to really study to get that B. I had to really study to get that C. And I knew that if I didn't get it, I wasn't going to be able to do the things that I love to do. (Nathaniel, Interview)

He would soon go on to play for an arena league, the National Football League, and Canadian Football League. After this 5-year period in his life, riddled by injury, he decided that it was time to transition into the next phase of his life. He now had an imminent responsibility to support not only himself, but the needs of a family. "So, it was different when I had a family and I had to actually go to work. I actually—first job I had was in sales. I was selling cemetery property. And I was doing really well. But in sales, as you know, it's a very hectic business, and

it goes up and down. I couldn't take the downs." He had to obtain a position that would pay for medical benefits to ensure that his wife and children had healthcare. "I didn't care how much money the job had offered me, because I had money, and I had investments, and I had a small business that I was into with my father and my uncle. But I just really wanted some medical benefits when I took the job."

Then life events occurred, "Divorce happens, where you are separated and then you end up having to share your proceeds and stuff. So, a lot of things come along in life." Today, Nathaniel has been remarried for the past 20 years and is father of his second daughter, a 3-year-old toddler. She keeps him extremely busy. During our conversation, he often shared pictures and boasted about his "ponytail game," meaning he has mastered how to put his daughter's hair into a ponytail. He was deeply appreciative of the life that playing Division I and professional sports has afforded to him and his family.

Sebastian

Agreeing to speak with me after work, Sebastian and I met at a local restaurant at 6:30 p.m. This interview had been rescheduled several times. As I gathered my belongings from the vehicle, he met me at my door and offered to help me carry some items inside. I usually attempted to carry my items alone, but it had been a long day, so I took the assistance. He survived the grueling Los Angeles area traffic, traveling from his paralegal position in Santa Monica to his place of residence in the South Bay. As we entered the restaurant, we made small talk. I asked about his two girls, while he asked about my two boys. I have known Sebastian for over 10 years. He grew up in the same neighborhood as a close friend of mine. At 47, Sebastian is 10 years my friend's senior, so he has served as a lifelong mentor. When my friend asked him

if he would be interested in taking part in this study, he said of course. I reached out to provide Sebastian with further information and I was pleased with the amount of enthusiasm he expressed toward the topic. After 25 years removed from college sports, he had a story to tell and was honored that I would take the time to listen. He deemed the topic relevant and an area in need of further research. His receptiveness was appreciated and he vowed to commit to the research study. Upon entry into the restaurant, he immediately started to think of the takeout order he would place for his significant other. He knew that once he returned home she would be exhausted from caring for their twin toddlers. While I set up the audio recording, he placed a call to the mother of his daughters to find out what she would like to eat. He completed his call and we were ready to begin our conversation.

Sebastian, a former Division I basketball player, earned a scholarship to a 4-year university directly out of high school. He is father to a 17-year-old son who had been living out of state and two 6-year-old girls who had been residing in the home with him and their mother. At 6'8" and 270 pounds, Sebastian lit up and melted during discussions of his twin girls. Since they got his height genes, at age 6, they stood at about 4' tall. He would like them to have all of the opportunities that he never had or was unable to take advantage of, "But now I see the reality and the reality is my kids and making sure they have, you know, a bright future for their dreams or whatnot. So, I can be there for them to help them make the right decisions that I didn't make or didn't have the knowledge or what have you."

Sebastian was raised by his mother and grandparents. His dad was not directly involved in his upbringing. Initially from New Jersey, he and a cousin moved out to Los Angeles, California with their grandparents. His mom soon followed. They were a tight knit, fairly large

family before the passing of his grandparents. Once he arrived in California, he made childhood friendships in the neighborhood and through sports participation.

> Friends were just, you know, guys from the neighborhood, from the streets. A lot of them are still friends of mine. But we all ran together, we all played the same sports. You know, we climbed trees and did stuff boys do. (Sebastian, Interview)

It was not until high school that he realized that his talent could potentially provide him with upward mobility.

> There was a guy named Mr. Mo, who took me around. He saw my talents and took me around and started meeting these other people. And I realized that I was just as good as or better than some of these guys. And that motivated me to work harder. (Sebastian, Interview)

Sebastian took his recruiting trip and was on top of the world. The recruiting coaches paid for his hotel stay, outings on yachts, fine dining and an amazing view of what he would not come to experience as his reality. Instead, he would face extreme challenges with balancing coursework and maintaining healthy player-coach relationships.

> You know, they never guaranteed me anything. No, I heard through coaches that things were taken away. You know, I've had questionnaires that come to the team or whatnot that was mailed that I never got. It's, you know, these guys they threaten you with this. I had one incident I remember. I had a traffic violation. Cop pulled me over, I was on my way to the game, to a home game. It was snowing outside, cop pulled me over. And when I got to the arena our coach approached me. He knew about the traffic stop. I wasn't going to tell him or anything but he knew about it. So, he came up to me and says all this stuff and that the cop had overlooked a warrant that I had for unpaid traffic tickets. So, for that, he suspended me from that game and told me to sit by the phone that evening because the cop might want to come back and arrest me. He told me that, you know, as if I was going to go home and really sit by my phone. (Sebastian, Interview)

Academically, he admits that his "struggles were like clockwork." Physical pain incurred from games interfered with his ability to focus on coursework that he already considered challenging. "I was—I'm not going to call myself smart—when I wanted to be an overachiever, but school, especially college work, was something—it was not what I wanted to do."

He learned to deal with the overwhelming academic and athletic schedule by dropping classes before earning a failing grade:

> And the struggles were—you know, I never dropped out of school due to academics but the struggles were just staying on top of the work. I always had decent grades in college. So, even one year I made the dean's list. So, you know, the struggle was just keeping up with the never-failing class load and stuff like that. But I mean, I would just drop it before I failed it. (Sebastian, Interview)

After his final season of athletic eligibility, he left college for international play, but without a degree. Upon return from his international basketball career, there was no opportunity for Sebastian to complete his degree. He hoped to complete his bachelor's degree in the near future and work with youth, even if it would not involve sports.

Tony

Tony and I had our conversation via telephone. He was in the midst of football season during the time of this phone call. He was in between classes and had taken his lunch break to speak with me. Eighteen units per semester kept him extremely busy, so I was grateful for the connection and the opportunity to hear his story. I met Tony through an associate of mine who served as the administrator over athletics at Tony's former high school. Despite having just met me, Tony was open and took me through his experiences as a young student-athlete to Division I student-athlete.

Tony was born and raised in San Bernardino, California. He lived with his father, mother, and one younger sister. His parents divorced once, but after his father was diagnosed with brain tumors, the couple reconciled and remarried again. At first Tony was too young to play football, so his father waited until he turned eight and signed him up for a football little league in the Inland Empire of California. He played for the same team as his cousin, and this was one of the

many friendships he developed throughout the years. From a young age, his life had to balance his sports life with academics. His mother, a 25-year preschool teacher, oversaw his academics while his father supervised his athletics. As long as he could remember, he always had good grades, but gave the credit to his mother.

Tony began playing sports by default because one of his cousins wanted to play football. Initially, he played all sports, including track, basketball and baseball. Nevertheless, his love for football prevailed over all other sports during his middle school transition. He thought about where football could potentially lead him. Also, with his father's medical bills adding up, he wanted to earn a full scholarship, so that his parents would not have to worry about the cost of his schooling. "After what happened to my dad, because that came up to like a lot of hospital bills and stuff like that. So, it was critical to me to go somewhere and go to a Division I school and get a whole ride somewhere." He began training for football even in the off season. His father obtained a trainer that would help him to increase his speed and strength. Surprisingly, his commitment to athletics was so strong that at one point he was even living with his athletic trainer. "I was raised pretty much to just do what I'd rather do, just do it 100%, and give it all my effort, and don't leave anything out on the table." His choice of high school was based primarily on football. At first, he attended an Inland Empire high school somewhat near his home and lived with the family of childhood friends, but in his second semester of junior year he eventually began a weekly commute to a Los Angeles area high school.

After an extremely strong athletic performance during his junior year of football, Tony approached his first high school coach about college options. Unfortunately, his coach did not focus heavily on getting all of his players recruited.

> So, I started talking to my coach about it, and he kind of wasn't into recruiting as much. He was just an arrogant guy who just didn't really care for talking to scouts or putting people out there like that. (Tony, Interview)

Tony began personally creating his highlight tapes for Division I football recruitment. Eventually, Tony convinced his father to purchase a car for him and also allow him to move in with family members in Los Angeles, so that he could commute to a school in the area. "I'm not trying to be here anymore. That's what led me to T.S. He was the head coach at that time." T.S. was also the director of a sports organization that promoted under-recruited talent in high school football. To Tony, his new coach was more supportive than his last coach. His move to a new city and connection with a new coach changed his life:

> So many people that you know that are just like so driven, because they want to get out. They live in harsher places and stuff like that—like I've experienced that first hand, and they wanted more than where they're at right now, and for the people that are in the IE, like just they're just comfortable with where they're being at and that's why still to this day there are people that are doing the same thing since they've been in high school. I think that was what pretty much got me ready. I got different perspectives of stuff and getting out of the IE was the best decision I've ever made, because it's what led me here today. I think it's just the right place, right time. If I didn't get that highlight tape, I wouldn't have ever known T.S. I probably would have never transferred, and I would have probably, like, if anything, went to like a D3 university out of my first high school, and probably would have been miserable. (Tony, Interview)

He was even given the opportunity to graduate early. His outstanding grades put him in a position to concurrently enroll in adult school classes for senior credits during his junior year. He completed his high school coursework a semester early and had five scholarship offers from which to select. He went with the program that would allow him to begin his college career the earliest. He matriculated to a college out of state on a football scholarship as a redshirt freshman. Upon arriving to the university, he immediately sought out his business school advisor to map out a plan for him to complete his coursework in three years, including the summers. Even

though Tony wanted to play immediately upon arrival to the university, he used this time period as an opportunity to get ahead in his coursework. Instead of taking the minimum required 12 units, he loaded his schedule with between 16 to 18 units per semester. Also, Tony was able to utilize time management and budgeting skills he learned in his middle school AVID program to successfully navigate college.

At the age of 21, Tony had already obtained his bachelor's degree in managerial leadership business. At the time of the interview, he was working toward an MBA with three semesters of eligibility remaining toward the completion of his second degree. If his plan remained on course, he would have employed his scholarship to complete two degrees during his time at the university. Afterwards, Tony was interested in pursuing several options, but his priority was sports marketing and management for an NFL organization. If the NFL were to be available as a post college option, he would use this as an opportunity to increase his network and access to future opportunities. "There's one thing that's stuck with me, and it's people with a millionaire mindset have about seven sources of income and with that it made me think like well, I'm not trying to limit myself to just one thing, like I want to do so many other things." Tony believed that there was no limit to his future opportunities.

Tyrone

Dressed in basketball shorts, a hoodie, black socks, and Nike slippers, Tyrone cradled a tan-colored Shih Tzu as he walked in for our interview. Also with him, was his significant other. The Shih Tzu actually belonged to his girlfriend, but he has grown quite fond of the dog and was the one who spent the majority of time with her during our visit. Tyrone arrived for our interview one day before his international flight departs for his new temporary home overseas. He was in

town on a weekend farewell tour visiting with family and friends. I had reached out to him several times without responses. I knew that he was leaving, and began to get a bit nervous about his nonresponsiveness to text messages or phone calls. On this August morning, he sent me an unexpected text, "On the way. Be there in 10 minutes." Quite shocked, but thankful, that he was able to squeeze this interview into the final visit, I adjusted to the last-minute interview, Tyrone's girlfriend and the dog. As our conversation began, we sat off to the side for some quiet and semi privacy. Although visibly distracted by a barrage of text messages, a host of well-wishers, and a needy dog, Tyrone has agreed to spend some of his last moments in the states with me. I was extremely grateful, and thus, unwilling to ask him to put away his phone. Consequently, this was the shortest interview of the 12. When he departed from the interview, he and his girlfriend were heading for the gas station and then the freeway traveling back home in preparation for his early morning departure.

Tyrone, a 21-year-old former Division I basketball player, has loved the game of basketball for as far back as his memories leave him. Originally from South Central Los Angeles, he had attended three Los Angeles area high schools. His final high school is where he made the deepest connection with a coach and thrived academically. In his senior year of high school, he had quite a few offers to Division I universities, but was ineligible for NCAA clearance due to low college entrance test scores. Before attending a Division I university, he first was required to attend a community college. He attended a Southern California community college for two years, graduated with his associate's degree, and transferred to a 4-year university. After graduating with his degree in communications, Tyrone attended various

basketball tryouts throughout the summer; he recently signed a contract to play basketball for an international team.

Tyrone was one of the most respectful young men, not to mention basketball players, I had ever met. I met him when he was 17 years old. 6'3" with skin the color of Hershey's chocolate, tattoos covered his arms like a sleeve from shoulder to wrist. Tyrone was an older friend and role model for my younger brother. The product of a single parent household in inner city Los Angeles, Tyrone was raised by a strong woman and ardent Christian. Even in her physical absence, much of her wisdom and life advice still gave Tyrone guidance. His dad leaving the home when he was just a young boy has inspired him "to be a better man than him." He recalled being skipped a grade level in the first or second grade, but by the time he reached high school, he was in danger of not obtaining a diploma. Tyrone had transferred to three different high schools all with different graduation requirements, yet in his final year of high school with the support of his coach, he was able to balance the responsibilities of family, school, and basketball, such as: (a) caring for his nephew when his mother and sister were hospitalized due to lupus, (b) enrolling in and passing coursework from summer school, adult school, and continuation school, and (c) practicing, playing all games, and traveling with the team. He persevered on to a community college, transferred to a Division I university, and graduated with his bachelor's in May 2016.

While in community college, Tyrone's sister would pass away from complications due to lupus. Less than two years later, Tyrone's mother, who also lived with Lupus, would pass away from heart complications before his graduation from the university. He was his mother's last born and only son, so Tyrone lived much of his life to make her proud. This heartbreaking life-

shattering event deeply impacted him, but the basketball program came to his aid by providing financial support to cover all of his mother's funeral expenses. Despite heavy depression amidst basketball challenges, he honored his mother's legacy by walking the stage and obtaining a diploma. Tyrone credited his ability to beat the odds to the matriarch of his family. "Well, the upbringing. The upbringing was definitely something because my mom raised me to be different. That always led me to strive for greatness." Although he has transitioned to his third international team, his love for the game of basketball has remained strong. Nevertheless, he has begun preparations for other ventures at the conclusion of his basketball career.

Themes Revealed in Interviews

Through the use of emergent (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and narrative (Fraser, 2004) analysis, field work with participants revealed six key themes. Analysis of these themes, including inductive coding, scanning across different domains of experience, and looking for commonalities and differences among participants informed the findings of this dissertation. These six themes capture the experiences and perceptions of NCAA and university supports as told by former and current Division I Black male student-athletes. The emergent themes were:

1. Academic Supports Help, but Perseverance Is Key to Overcome Challenges
2. Academics Overshadowed by Sports
3. Permanence of Racism
4. Privileges of Division I Sports Come With Costs
5. The Bittersweet Business of College Sports
6. Distinctions Between Former and Current Student-Athletes

Theme 1: Academic Supports Help, but Perseverance Is Key to Overcome Challenges

The experience of Black male Division I athletes with university and NCAA supports reveal some differences, but also a great deal of similarities when gauging their effectiveness. Despite challenges, Black males were able to persist due to perseverance, not necessarily due to supports provided by the university or the NCAA during the time of their Division I participation. When describing their persistence in Division I college sports, most participants credited it to a mixed combination of: family, friends, teammates, community, love of the game, academic support, learned strategies, adaptation to college culture, university staff and resources, and hopes for attaining future goals. When asked for a recollection of university supports, most participants believed that cultural, psychological, career, and postcollegiate networking supports were deficient, yet many recounted examples of at least a certain element, specifically academic tutoring or university personnel that effectively supported them during college careers. Alamishus was the exception, deeming university and NCAA supports ineffective. Reflecting on university supports resurfaced some deep emotions for him:

> Did I feel like I had support? Not necessarily. I kind of felt like they're just going to give you the easy classes. And when you do have something challenging—like I had—was it calculus—the second of the calculus class, and I was kind of lost. Not lost, but it was a little bit more challenging, and I don't remember there being any setups for—they made you do study halls, but it wasn't really effective as far as I was concerned. But support-wise, no. Did they reach out to me and make me feel like I was at home, or realize that this kid is going through something tough, I don't—I don't think they really did. (Alamishus, Interview)

The academic progress rate (APR), created by the NCAA in 2003, attempted to hold athletic programs accountable for the academic progress of their student-athletes through a team based metric system. Teams whose student-athletes make progress toward a degree are rewarded, while teams who fail to meet the minimum APR face a range of penalties with the most severe

being the preclusion from postseason competition. Beginning in the academic year 2015-2016, teams have been required to earn a 4-year APR of 930 to compete in championships. Out of the 12 study participants, four participated in Division I sports prior to the creation of the APR. Of those four, one graduated as a student-athlete, one as a general student, and two opted for professional play instead of completing graduation requirements. The remaining eight participants graduated or will graduate after the 2003 APR implementation.

George had a great deal of responsibilities to balance as a walk-on, student-athlete with multiple interests, and a job. He used outside resources in addition to football academic resources.

> I hardly used any of the academic support in the football. I was kind of forced to have to start using it, but everything I did was outside of football. I did football, but when I left, I left it. (George, Interview)

Carter received additional accommodations, such as note takers, due to his dyslexia and special education classification.

> I am going to take—yeah, I'm going to use what I need to use. And the stuff I don't need to use, I am going to put that to the side. So, the note takers, yeah—I need the note takers. (Carter, Interview)

After receiving his first low grade on a theology term paper and discovering that theology classes were the most difficult classes he would take, Allen and two fellow team mates decided to seek available supports:

> So, we asked if we could just get a tutor at least once a week to help us come up with—so we had a decent—I think like three or four ten-page papers we had to write . . . we'd meet for an hour and a half and she was awesome. She was so good. She helped us come up with research topics, research ideas. (Allen, Interview)

The research participants felt strongly supported by academic services, including advisors, tutors, athlete study rooms, study hall, and even coaching staff. Participants gave the following comments about academic supports:

> My coach would call me every night at 9:30, exactly at 9:30, and ask me how my day was, "Send me screenshots of the homework that you've done so I know that it's completed. Let me know every day so I can update everything." My assistant coach and my head coach. Even my academic advisor. (Charles, Interview)

> We had an academic support person and he was huge. He was huge to me, especially when I started sinking at first. But he threw out some life vests, all that— He threw out the rafts, everything, and kind of reeled me back in. (Jake, Interview)

> But they had, like, a study table they would bring out on the road. You would have mandatory two hours a day on the road. (Sebastian, Interview)

Participants believed that vital academic supports were in abundance via the athletic department and university. Nathaniel relayed:

> A lot of people think that's an advantage for them that regular students don't have, but it's really a disadvantage, because a regular student doesn't have to work as hard as we do athletically, to compete to be successful in sports. That's a whole different element of your time, your efforts, what you put forth. You have to concentrate and be able to do both things. So, you need that support. (Nathaniel, Interview).

Allen added, "Definitely being an athlete, you can never say there's not enough help academically." (Allen, Interview)

Although academic resources are readily available prior to academic crises, some athletes admitted to only taking advantage of additional resources in place for their academic success when forced or amidst academic probation. Jake recalls his academic advisor forcing him to get a tutor, "Even though I didn't feel like I needed it, he'd say, 'Just go, because it's going to get ridiculously hard, especially with practice,' blah, blah, blah."

Nathaniel believed that the abundance of resources could potentially counter its intended purpose, stating:

> Athletes, God love 'em, they really do get a lot of support. It's not easy not to take advantage of that. But then, in some cases, you kind of neglect—there's so much given and so much—sometimes you don't take advantage of all your resources. (Nathaniel, Interview)

The majority of Black male student-athletes agreed with several institutional challenges including: academics, NCAA financial rules, stereotyping, coaching staff or changes, and the omnipresence of sports. Personal problems also entered the discussion of challenges encountered during their college careers. Clark and George emphasized the challenge of identity crises, while Charles recalled poor decision making and injury as challenges. Nathaniel also cited injury as a challenge. Although the academic supports were lauded by the majority of participants, cultural supports, on the hand were viewed problematically. Many participants were able to reference the support of Black Student Unions, Black professors, and Black counselors, but no programs, initiatives or particular efforts by the university or athletic departments to support the cultural development of Black male student-athletes. With the exception of Nathaniel and Charles, respondents unanimously agreed that neither their athletic programs nor universities supported them culturally. Nathaniel joined a Historical Black Greek Letter Organization where he found overwhelming support during his college years and recollected that his high school and college years were, "The time where it was black power, a lot of movements going on, and a lot of black pride." Charles, when asked if he felt supported culturally as a Panamanian or Black male responded, "It would just have to do with being in this culture as a player. Our culture, it's how we win games' it's how we dominate the field. Our culture is, like' it's our heartbeat." He responded in terms of an athletic team culture, not nationality or ethnicity. He also believed that:

> Honestly, it doesn't really seem to be any different. You still get treated the same way; you still get coached the same way; there is no special treatment between black and white and Australian students. You—on this football team, you're all one person. It doesn't matter the color, it just matters the attitude. If you have a bad attitude, you're a bad guy, but honestly it doesn't really matter what skin color you are, at the end of the day, they're going to pick the best player. (Charles, Interview)

All other participants had adverse perceptions of university cultural supports for Black students in general, not only Black male student-athletes. Many participants faced a huge culture shock leaving their inner-city communities and then entering predominantly White spaces. Most were profiled on and off campus, marginalized or made to feel as if their heritage and background had no place at the university. Besides the other Black student-athletes, few Black student body members and professors, and the Black Student Union, most participants did not feel cultural support. Upon his initial arrival to college, Clark recollects being extremely pro-Black, but eventually he figured out:

> Nothing that I knew about blackness was going to help me where I was at this university. The more that I knew about blackness and the more I concerned myself with it, it was a distraction for me. I had to learn European culture to fit in, to assimilate. I had to learn how they talk. I had to learn what they ate. I had to learn about art and stuff. And me teaching them anything about my culture—they weren't interested. It wasn't going to get me an A in class. It wasn't going to get me closer to these people. But they were impressed when I knew about them. They weren't impressed when I knew about me. (Clark, Interview)

Alamishus was not prepared for the culture shock. Going from a predominantly Black school, then one weekend being dropped off by his family into a culturally different world created feelings of abandonment and isolation. Carter expressed that the football culture usurped every other culture. Football was the driving force, so there was no time to teach the team primarily consisting of Black males about Black history or culture. He recalls, "It was all about football. It wasn't about—you're a Black athlete American man. You need to do this. You need

know that, and life is going to get hard." Johnny also did not learn much about his culture at the university:

> There's a lot of African Americans that don't know what their problem is and stuff like that because back then, slavery, and what they did to us and we just can't connect to—everybody say, "We from Africa," but you can't connect with that. You can't say, "Oh I'm . . ." I can't say, "I'm Nigerian," or stuff like that. Even if I find out I am Nigerian, I still couldn't connect with it. (Johnny, Interview)

All of the Black males in this study were in agreement that they had to learn about Black culture from family or through life experiences. All participants agreed that despite supports provided or not provided by their institutions, their futures depended upon successfully navigating the system of college academics and college sports.

Theme 2: Academics Overshadowed by Sports

Each participant either directly or indirectly addressed the juxtaposition of academics and sports, with the exception of Johnny. The relationship was frequently viewed as highly stressful, damaging, and oftentimes most beneficial to the sports organization. Johnny believed that due to his small school environment, he was able to have personalized relationships with his professors and a lot of help with his school work. "So, when I got that one on one time, it really—it helped me in reading and math and just learning how to write papers and stuff like that." Nevertheless, the majority expressed directly or indirectly extreme tension between the two in Division I Black student-athletes' worlds. Discussions included maintaining eligibility, college curriculum, choice of majors, sports program expectations viewed as more demanding than coursework, and postcollegiate sports options. Each participant described the extreme demands on the Division I student-athlete life. For as long as Allen can remember he has always gone to school and worked out every night, including the weekends. He slightly regrets not spending more time with friends.

Each player described a similar experience of waking up before 6 a.m. and not completing their academic and athletic schedule until after nine in the evening. During the season, schedules intensified with travel, jet lag, and fatigue. Even after late night travels, players were expected to engage in early morning classes.

> Look, man. We get up at 5:30 in the morning, we eat breakfast, go to the same classes you've got. Go to practice and study—we've got to study for practice and games like we're studying for a mid-term. Leave practice at 6:00 at night, go to study hall from—go eat and go to study hall from 7:00 to 9:30. (Carter, Interview)

> When I got to college, more of my day was taken up, and—my time was accounted for . . . My first semester, I got a .3 GPA. I was more concerned with stuffing my pillow in my backpack than my books. The schedule—I got up 6 a.m. I got home 10 p.m. You know—6 a.m. We're working out, lifting weights. Between eight and one, you've got to schedule all your classes. Two-fifteen is the first meeting. You're out of practice at 7:15. You've got to shower up and eat, study hard from eight to 10. After that, you try to have a social life. It's just all hurting. (Clark, Interview)

> They call you a student-athlete and they have things in place to make you feel that that's what they want out of you, but everything is, you know, geared toward sports. (Sebastian, Interview)

As a walk-on player, George had an extremely stressful life. He was the only participant who worked an additional job his entire college career:

> But yeah, I was working a late-night job, and so the way my day would go would be like I'll have early morning football, like 5:30 in the morning, we have our meetings and then football practice and then we'll go to classes. So, I have like an 8:00 Spanish class and I would take my classes. I have an hour or an hour-and-a-half before I'd go back to the stadium for meetings and our actual legit football practice. And oh, I'll try to get some homework in, but most of the time I'll probably be knocking out, falling asleep, go to football, will eat, then after that probably have two hours before I have to go to my job, my late-night job. So, I go to my late-night job and I work there 'til 1:00 in the morning. Then I have to bus back home, sleep for about two to three hours, and then on again. (George, Interview)

Every participant stressed the importance of maintaining eligibility in a Division I program and consequences of becoming ineligible such as negative reflection of the ethnic

group, community, and other Black male student-athletes, loss of playing time, and loss of scholarship. Charles had to take a semester off and found himself on academic probation. It was a struggle becoming eligible again. Clark encountered a struggle comparable to Charles's, but discovered like Tony that time management was the answer to his problems:

> So, my first semester, I was worried about getting kicked out. I had played a little basketball. I got kicked off of that team because of my academics. And the next semester, I made the dean's list because I knew how important it was. It wasn't that the work was hard. It was about time management. (Clark, Interview)

Alamishus and Clark were both resentful of the several remedial classes Black student-athletes were assigned. Despite that challenge, Alamishus believes he was able to effectively balance academics and sports in college. "I had a cool balance of—even though I've started—and I was pretty good at sports and stuff like that, I was still knocking it down in the classroom, too." Emotional issues and culture shock are the challenges that disturbed him during his time at the Division I university. Clark took the remedial classes more personally:

> They stick you in the remedial classes because you come from certain schools—writing and stuff that I—you know—stuff that gets you caught up. So, I knew that I had a responsibility to show these people that we could at least do the work. Whether I showed them that we could play or not, they already know that. They came and got me because I could play. It wasn't no doubt of that. But I had to prove to people that I could do the work, and from doing that, they recruited other people from my area, because now they're like they can do the work. (Clark, Interview)

Allen has been chasing his hoop dreams since he was four, so the tension between academics and sports was familiar to him. Allen achieved his dream of playing Division I basketball on ESPN every night when he was recruited to play for a top basketball program in a large conference. But he found:

> It was hard. It was a lot. I mean as a freshman athlete, there's a lot of ups, a lot of downs. It was just like it was exhausting. I was sleeping like 10 hours a day. I was telling one of our freshman the other day like I remember back when I was a freshman I would take

> naps every chance I get. I was just so exhausted from like the ups and downs and I think being there opened my eyes to really what's important. (Allen, Interview)

After transferring to a smaller school in a competitive division, Allen found balance and was interested in possibly pursuing law in the footsteps of his best friend father. "One path I've looked at and thought about is like when I finally do go to law school would be just kind of taking those three years and just becoming like a regular student which I've never just been a regular student."

Clark and Jake expressed discontent that the athletic department interests trumped the interests of student-athletes. Clark pondered:

> How many opportunities am I limited because I got to practice at a certain time, meaning I couldn't take any other majors, any of the [majors] that my school was known for. I can't take none of them classes. They're in the evening. What I'm going to tell my coach? Look, man, I know we're playing a big game, but I need to go work on my… project. (Clark, Interview)

He despised that the system was set up to breed competition, limit opportunities, and focus primarily on athletic success, "When you do the numbers you be like, dang. I'm going to get a job making $50,000 for 20 years. After they take taxes—I'll never touch a million dollars. So, I'd rather go to the weight room instead of class, and it makes sense. That's it." Meanwhile Jake noticed:

> The coach is going to put more on your plate, because they feel like you can handle it. And at least how I felt was like, "Okay, I'm going to just shut my mouth and do it," because you want to be that guy. Then you have to figure out how to manage this little bit of the rest of your time to still try to make something of yourself and try to show the 50 people in your class—the 50 that are White—the one Black person in there. I'm dead tired, been up since 5:30 running sprints, lifting, and I feel like—I can't let myself go to sleep . . . be that Black dude. (Jake, Interview)

While Jake and Clark tried to uphold the reputation of Black male student-athletes in the classroom, George had given up on trying to sustain a particular image:

> I was always struggling because I was tired all the time. I didn't sleep. And honestly, to be completely honest, I never paid attention in my lectures because I was asleep. A lot of times I'd be in class, put my head down and go to sleep. I didn't care. And I know people are like, "Oh, that's rude" and stuff. No, go through my schedule and get three hours of sleep every night and come in here and try to do this, really try your best to do this and tell me how you feel. (George, Interview)

Theme 3: Permanence of Racism

During the interviews, participants discussed the meaning of being a Black male student-athlete at a Division I university. They were all aware that the numbers were extremely low and that they had beaten several negative statistics to persist within a PWI. Despite the years that had passed between the oldest 55-year-old participant and the youngest 21-year-old participants, almost all study participants experienced racial profiling and microaggressions, with the exception of Charles.

Tyrone noted that, "The percentage of African-Americans that go to college, let alone be a student-athlete, is very low." Nathaniel relished:

> It actually is a very prestigious position that—that you have to work hard. And it's something that doesn't happen for a lot of people. You're very lucky to get the opportunity to play at the highest level of the sport and also receive an education. Very blessed. (Nathaniel, Interview)

Many Black males dream of opportunities for upward mobility like George. He had played football since fourth grade, "Me and my boys that played football together, I was just like—that was our life pretty much, and that's what we always thought about was going to get us out, you know." Carter was so intent on getting out of his circumstances that he went to three different community colleges all in one semester. "I was so determined to get out and to go to college and to play Division I." His dream finally came to fruition.

Nevertheless, once these ambitious hopeful Black males arrived at Division I universities they battled through identity crises, stigma associated with Black male student-athletes, and other painful experiences during their college careers. Clark attributes his time at the university with almost losing a portion of his being.

> So, it put pressure on me, and it was an ego thing. They're not better than me. And then I started seeing myself different like you're just an athlete, and I never wanted to be that. I always wanted to be a person. (Clark, Interview)

George adds, "At one point I was like I just want to drop out and freaking live in the forest or something like that. I'm serious, it got to that kind of point." Alamishus remembers transferring to a new university, standing about 6'5", and sporting his newly grown afro that added about four more inches of height. He could feel the stares and thought, "There's that perception like, 'Look at this thug.'"

Jake and Sebastian both recall having to attend hearings during their college careers as a result of baseless accusations made by their Caucasian peers.

Jake is still in disbelief about accusations targeted at him and a teammate from what he thought was a friendly conversation among peers after a campus party.

> We—what—we become prime suspects, but him more so than me. Because in her story, he jumped on her car, went like—choked her from the sunroof to get at her—to get at her gold necklace or something. (Jake, Interview)

Sebastian reminisces:

> I remember going to—our freshman year, the athletic director called me in talking about I had threatened someone, or I had a friend on the phone that had threatened someone, something or another. It was just totally out of my character, you know, what I'm capable of. And I don't know where she got it from, to this day, I have no idea where she got it from. (Sebastian, Interview)

The two attributed the incidents to the larger student body's lack of interactions with Black people, specifically Black males, prior to college. Clark and Allen concur with the thoughts of their counterparts:

> Everybody don't have Black neighbors and Black friends and accept it. You might be the first one they met, and you represent for a lot of people. So being black at a university is more than just being Black amongst your people. Amongst my people, we can tell the difference between Jamaican, South African, and we can tell the difference between if he got money and she don't. Guess what. They can't tell the difference. We all the same to them. Once I learned that, I stopped caring about—I wasn't up there trying to work hard. (Clark, Interview)

> I also do think that at this school something I've noticed is that as a school that's almost all White, all White students, I think they probably grow up a lot of times with certain perceptions of how they look at Black people, especially athletes. (Allen, Interview)

He advises his White peers on campus:

> You can come up and talk to us. You can shake our hands. You can have a conversation with us. You don't have to be afraid. You don't have to turn your head and walk the other way when you see a big group of us walking by. We do notice when people stare or turn their heads every time we walk by. (Allen, Interview)

Carter recalls having to win over coaches and peers:

> You just can't be a dumb jock like, "Yeah, I'm this. I'm that." No, you've got to let people know you for you, not just for what you do on the football field, and that's kind of what I did. (Carter, Interview)

He remembers the words of a former football coach:

> But my senior year, one of my coaches, he didn't like me. He was racist. He was old, from Kentucky. . . . He was—and I'm like, "Check this out, man. I want you to know I respect you." He told everybody. He said, "I don't want to hear you all say nothing but Carter." "Carter, you call the whole defense, because you're the only smartest one we've got on this team." And from there—and you got to remember, I have dyslexia. (Carter, Interview)

Carter was proud that he was able to excel as a respected team leader despite his special education classification and the stereotypes that he and his Black teammates were subjected to

even by the coaches they interacted with every day. Yet, Carter and his teammates were not alone. Many of the Black male student-athletes in this study had to fight the objectification that often is connected to the Black student-athlete status.

Theme 4: Privileges of the Division I Sports Come With Costs

All of the participants believed that Division I sports provided several rewards. The majority of rewards mentioned included: (a) college degree; (b) debt-free, not a free education; (c) perks for athletic production; (d) select career opportunities; (e) celebrity lifestyle; (f) self-contained private environment; (g) physical conditioning, and (h) academic supports. Despite the financial scholarship and additional rewards of Division I college sports participation, Black male student-athletes held that they sacrificed abundantly more than what they received.

The world of Division I sports is extremely private and self-contained. Nathaniel describes it as a fraternity: "When you join a fraternity and you have a network of people, and you're in a fraternity in terms of being in big time sports." Allen and Johnny discussed the close-knit nature of their teams, while Alamishus, Charles, and George further emphasized the importance of team as a family.

> So, I mean, we have these things called—what is it—family Sundays. After a big win the team comes in, we go to Chapel, we watch the tape, we go practice for an hour and a half, correct our mistakes, and then we just have this big family dinner where the coaches bring in their families and they all come in and they cook for us. And we just spend family time together. (George, Interview)

Carter suggests that even after collegiate sports careers end former players should still continue to receive support from the university.

Another benefit of Division I sports that participants enjoyed was the lifestyle afforded to them that may not have been attained had they not participated in college sports. Although

Alamishus felt emotionally disconnected from the team and university, he admits that his basketball talents provided him with opportunities he otherwise would not have had:

> It was just like I ended up being good, so I just kept playing. Then scholarships and all, it was okay, so "I'm just going to go play and keep playing," but I never—if I look back, I wish I would have done some things differently, but yeah, I don't—I don't know. It was—it was a good experience but there are some—there are some shortcomings in it, too. (Alamishus, Interview)

Tyrone enjoyed the lifestyle, especially the fine dining that followed road games.

> I'm living in Los Angeles playing basketball. That's something that a lot of people don't get to do. And that's something I would have probably never had the ambition to do if it weren't for basketball. (Allen, Interview)

> I remember I was travelling and playing against [a current] running back for the Rams. And just that atmosphere of playing in front of a hundred plus thousand people. I get chills now thinking about it. All your life, you're like, "I'm going to be there." You see these teams on TV, you're like "I am going to play against them. I am going to play for them." And when you actually get a chance to play—when you actually get a chance to be in that—that arena, on national television—they're saying your name. Your parents—everybody's watching—everybody's watching. (Carter, Interview)

The physical conditioning, training, and rehabilitation provided for Division I student-athletes is premiere. Charles admits that they are champions because of their strong team culture: they practice hard, they lift hard, they run hard, and they work hard. The NCAA has set a maximum of 20 hours per week for athletically related activities, including weekly practices of no more than four hours a day. Additionally, there is to be no participation in athletically related activities on one day per week. Despite precautions, with the physicality of college sports, undeniably comes injury. The NCAA and Division I universities provide top of the line medical care for student-athletes. Although both Carter and George have suffered multiple injuries during their college careers, they, along with other participants, are conscious that athletic production is highly rewarded in the college sports world:

> We get a lot of things handed to us. I feel like it handicaps you too. Because I went from—when I first got there—from my first year to my last year, there was a big difference between how I got treated with everybody—from coaching staff to equipment management.
>
> When I first got there, I asked for extra pair of gloves. "You're not getting that." In my junior year, I had five pair of gloves in my locker—anything I wanted. I was on the billboard and everything. But now, in the real world, nobody cares about what you did. Nobody cares about what you did. It's about what you're doing now. (Carter, Interview)
>
> Seeing that our coaches—our head coach is very open. He lets us know everything that's going on in the program. We just got the new locker rooms with six flat screen TVs. Literally, I've never seen a locker room more beautiful than what we have. And it's all because, I mean, he works his butt off to get the players everything that they need. At the end of the day, I mean, like I said, it's a player-led program. It's basically you get what you earn. And basically, if you work hard then you earn cool things. And that locker room, since we had a great season last year, we earned it. So, I mean, the money the program has coming in, I mean, it's worked for us. (George, Interview)

Allen and Tony both understood the mixed opinions on revenue generating sports, attempting to understand both sides of the issue, but recognizing the financial aid afforded to student-athletes did not leave any room for financial mismanagement or extra pleasures like dates or fine restaurant dining. Even though Carter experienced some low financial times during his athletic career, "We don't got it easy. And we're broke. We don't got no money. We got apartments—that scholarship check was just paying—barely paying for stuff," but on the other hand he also recognized that, "People got different outlooks. First of all, your mom—if your mom and your daddy can't give you a hundred plus thousand dollars' scholarship or pay you a hundred plus thousand dollars for you to go to school, you should have nothing to say." These beliefs directly concur with other participants opinions:

> It's a blessing to be in that position where you can get your education paid for, room and board. It gives you independence. It makes you grow up faster. You don't have to stay home with your parents—ever become a grown-up or whatever you want to call it, adult. (Nathaniel, Interview)

> Looking back on it I was just blessed and fortunate to have the opportunity to travel across the world and see some of the things that you never really get to see in my hometown. (Tyrone, Interview)

Johnny belongs to the dissenting group, including Alamishus, Allen, Clark, George, Jake, and Sebastian, who strongly believes that the NCAA can and should do more to reward its players financially:

> They make so much money off us. I just don't really understand with—so many players in D1 colleges, D2 colleges, all the colleges, if we're putting that much into these programs and into these schools like we don't get much back. You know? Yeah, I mean we get the good schools. Yeah, we get our education is being paid for and all that. But like you don't see what's going on in our families back home. You know what I mean? They don't see that part. (Johnny, Interview)

With the exception of Sebastian, Nathaniel, and the current senior student-athletes, all participants have obtained a bachelor's degree. Alamishus also has an MBA. Nathaniel tried to pursue his degree after a career in professional sports, but believes "My course was set for me, I thought. So, when I decided to—at one point I did go back to school, and it was such a burden to go back to school that I stopped." Sebastian also tried completing his college degree after playing basketball internationally, but was not given clear answers about reenrollment. Nevertheless, his future goal is to complete his bachelor's degree. Meanwhile, current players, Allen, George and Johnny are excited about completing their bachelor's degrees and moving into the next phase of their lives:

> Now that's something I want to do is I want to play basketball and being a student-athlete right now, I'm graduating with no student loans, no debt. So, I can play basketball long enough to make enough money where I could save that money and go to law school again. (Allen, Interview)

> Seeing that it's my senior season and I kind of blew my knee out during camp, which means I can't play my senior season. So, I'm pretty much done with football. I've got to focus more on schooling and getting my degree. So, at this point, I want to—once I graduate I want to be able to say that I can open up my own business. (George, Interview)

Johnny wants to graduate and possibly pursue his master's degree, "I know getting my masters will help me in the long run."

In terms of the perks for Black male student-athlete career preparation, few career paths have been directly created for former student-athletes. The graduate assistant program is the most utilized pipeline. The participants who anxiously anticipated the end of their college sports careers, Alamishus, Clark, George, Tyrone, and Sebastian, did not mention the graduate assistant program at all. Tony has his plans mapped out in sports, but specifically sports management. The other participants mentioned the possibility of utilizing the graduate assistant program as an option in their futures:

> I've also thought about those three years, how fun it would be to go to law school and be a graduate assistant at a school like for basketball so I know that will be the same schedule I've been on for the past—I mean when I leave here it'll be five years of being a student-athlete and then three more years of being a student-athlete. Basically, you just—it's in the background just rebounding and helping the team. (Allen, Interview)

> And the same guy that didn't like me—the defense coordinator, he was actually about to give me a GA job. "You could be a GA. We're going to pay for everything. We'd get you food and stuff, but GA is like—they pay for school and grad school. They pay for school, but you're coaching. Basically, you're like the mailman. You have to do everything. You got to be there early in the morning all the way to—just everything. (Carter, Interview)

Finally, a great deal of discussion surrounded the topic of networking. All participants agreed directly or indirectly on the importance of college networks:

> I thought that going to college would help me meet people to network and become a better businessman . . . And I didn't know exactly what kind of business I wanted to own, but I know I wanted to make money. And the only way that I was going to be around people making money was to go to college and feed off of them and just learn some stuff, because I didn't know enough to make the amount of money that I wanted to make. (Clark, Interview)

Theme 5: The Bittersweet Business of College Sports

Black male student-athletes at Division I universities have a great deal of love for their sport and have committed a large portion of their lives to these endeavors. In doing so, they have attained scholarships and gained opportunities to further advance their goals and aspirations. They have encountered both positive and negative experiences which ultimately have affected perceptions of university and NCAA academic, career, financial, and leadership provisions. During interviews, they took time to reflect and express what they wish Division I student-athlete experiences would have provided. In general, the participants described some of their expectations: genuine clarity from the recruiting colleges (discussion of the rules and the academic journey), loyal player-coach relationships, player security, postcollegiate preparation and pathways, adequate financial support, emotional-psychological support, and lifelong connections to the university.

Disclosing the rules and business of collegiate sports. Many participants criticized that athletic programs did not provide clarity during recruiting on athletic program policies and all NCAA rules. This resulted in confusion and usually adverse actions toward the student-athlete. Participants believed that negative outcomes could be avoided by being genuine during recruiting and by regularly reviewing policies and rules with players or allowing for more leniency when student-athletes act their age and make mistakes.

Nathaniel recalls having nine scholarship offers and taking eight different recruiting trips to colleges, while Sebastian remembers:

> You know, I mean the crazy thing is your recruiting trip they put you—I mean I—they took me to the to…I'm at the _____eating fish I can't even pronounce at the time, you know. And we got there and, you know, from the back of the University is a lake. We jump on a yacht and they take you to the place in a yacht. They even go somewhere else

> in a yacht, it's one of the nicest things. In the hotel room there's a big old fruit basket, all this good stuff. But when you're there, it's like, they just throw you in the dungeon. (Sebastian, Interview)

Alamishus remembered, "One of the coaches—when they recruited me, they told me, 'You're going to come here, and you're going to start and do all these things." It's like selling you a dream.'" Both Alamishus and Nathaniel expressed discontent about being informed after signing with their team as freshmen and arriving to campus only to learn that their statuses had been switched to redshirt freshmen. According to the NCAA, academic redshirts may practice after being admitted as a full-time student into the university and receive athletic aid during this time, but they are not allowed to compete in athletic contests during this year. Had they both learned of their change of status, they were certain that this would have impacted their decision to leave home and attend the university.

> I couldn't play or travel with the team my first year. And I had no idea of any of that. That was like saying stop breathing. (Nathaniel, Interview)

> I do remember them saying after I was already there and signed in the program, then they said—not policy, but like our mode of operation is usually, we'll bring in our freshmen, and we redshirt them. . . . They did not tell me that when I—when they were recruiting me. And the guys. It would have changed a lot for me. I probably would have—I could have stayed home and gone to a junior college or something and not even wasted my time with them, and just gone somewhere else where I actually was like—. (Alamishus, Interview)

On the other hand, Tony took his redshirt year as an opportunity to advance in his academic plan and ability to earn two degrees paid for by the athletic scholarship:

> I knew I was going to be able to get my degree in three years. I just wanted to speed up that process, because I knew that once I realized I was going to be a redshirt freshman which is going to give us pretty much another year of school paid for, because eligibility wise, we get another year. So, I knew with that, I was able to get two years, and I knew that with the master's program, now it'd take two years. (Tony, Interview)

Transferring to four different schools destroyed Alamishus's ability to remain eligible for NCAA play. After a failed attempt to transfer to a third university, he learned of the 4-2-4 transfer rule:

> Nobody told me. It wasn't until I—they were getting ready—another school was getting ready to offer me a scholarship. So, I transferred to the JC. After my first year there, they are like—they come in and they see me work out. But then, they're like, "We like you, but there's this 4-2-4 thing," which basically meant I had to have a certain amount of units. And then, I think it even says you have to finish. I have to look at exactly what it says. But back then, it's what they told me. It was a certain amount of units, or finish the actual program and graduate. So, I couldn't accept that scholarship. So, it was like—I started learning more and more about it—like it's so much BS that goes on in this. (Alamishus, Interview)

Lack of psychological support services. Another concern that participants expressed was the lack of emotional psychological supports for players. There was an acknowledgement that academic counselors, professors, and other staff members were available to support them in times of crises, saving their lives at the right moment. Clark had two academic advisors who saved him, one during college, and the other as he was transitioning out of college. George had two supervisors that looked out for him, one helping him to solve his financial aid problems. Jake found refuge in a cafeteria manager mother on hungry days and in the Black Studies professor who helped him and a teammate fight unjust charges brought against them. Allen, Johnny, and Tony found that the academic support and coaching staff helped them in their times of need, which were usually school related problems. Nevertheless, access to a licensed credentialed professional to provide appropriate psychological advice was lacking at most universities. Carter did not have someone in particular to talk to, but he recollects:

> There's a hill that I used to go to on the side of football field and cry and pray, and just watch the sun set . . . flat mountains. It ain't even no mountains. It's like deserts, but you can—it's just beautiful. (Carter, Interview)

Alamishus recalls being redshirted by the coaching staff and wondering why the staff seemed unwilling to support him through a rough transition to college life:

> Talent was not an issue—my playing was not an issue. But when you bring in all of the other outside factors, it's like—I don't think they were really ready to help me cope with all of that. I remember vividly. "Talent-wise, I'm head and shoulders above the rest of the folks on the team." "Okay, so why don't you try to cultivate that and not just say, 'We're going to redshirt him,' and then wait until I come out of my funk or whatever you think it is? Why don't you try figure out how you can help me make this a well-rounded college experience?" (Alamishus, Interview)

> Sebastian also could not recollect any certified staff he turned to when problems arose, "but pretty much all the stuff that I had to deal with I dealt with on my own or with maybe some buddies to talk about it. Which wasn't a good thing because, you know we're young, energetic hot-headed kids—." (Sebastian, Interview)

After thanking me for taking the time to listen to his story, Johnny shared:

> The only person I really tell my story to is like my coaches and to this team right here. Not even my last team. But yeah, it feels so good when I can just talk to somebody and just let it go. I used to be really scared to even like, like I said, I told you earlier, because I was scared of what people would think about me. So, once I started talking to my coaches and they just told me like, "You don't have to—you don't owe nothing to nobody." (Johnny, Interview)

Longing for loyal player-coach relationships. Discontent concerning coaching style, coach's loyalty and player relationships also emerged during the study. The belief that coaches were more interested in keeping their jobs, winning, recruiting the best rookie of the incoming class, and moving on to the next better paying position than establishing genuine loyal relationships with their players was a consensus among most participants.

Nevertheless, Charles believed that his coach was transparent and worked tirelessly for the players. Carter cautioned that the coaches have families that they are responsible for, so those needs will always take priority over the players' needs.

> Everybody's kind of out for themselves. They're just there to use you at that period, because they've got a family. Don't ever get it twisted. They have a family. You are a pawn. That's it. (Carter, Interview)

Even still, he could still remember a former Caucasian coach that treated him better than some of his own family members. After graduating from the university, the coach would often remind Carter to call him brother instead of coach.

Sebastian entered college looking for a deep and meaningful relationship with the coaches, but after his arrival, the head coach and coach that recruited him were promoted to other schools within the conference. He was optimistic and viewed this as an opportunity to form new lasting relationships:

> During the summertime, you know, kids were encouraged to hang out and work out. And, you know, if you can, those who want to go home can. But if you can just stay and work out and get stronger and better. So, I remember going out to lunch with the coaching staff—and just hoping they would give me, like, "Hey, you're doing great, playing great. This year we want you to do this, this, that." It made me feel good. None of those things ever happened. (Sebastian, Interview)

His dreams of significant coach-player relationships dissolved, and he ended his college career thinking that the coaches put him through, "A lot of head games, you know, and BS."

Tyrone also experienced coaching changes during his time at the university and found that a mid-year coaching change was more shocking for him as a transfer student-athlete because the released coach recruited him to the university. It was extremely difficult for him to become acclimated to a new system. And although he had respect for his coaches, he felt it was definitely more of a business relationship.

Johnny who played basketball and football in high school, but attended college on a basketball scholarship, had always been leery of coaches, especially football coaches,

> They just think, "Oh okay, this guy here can make—he can run. He can make touchdowns. He can block. He can put the ball in the hole. He going to make us money." (Johnny, Interview)

He learned the following from a high school mentor:

> Some of these coaches don't care about you. They don't. He was really talking about football because if you think about football, it's 50 to 60 players. Can't care about every, single one of you all. Yeah, it's too many. He can't say—hey he going to have favorites. He going to have people he don't like. You know what I'm saying and stuff like that? But with basketball, you can narrow it to, at the most, one. I'm not saying you can care about each one but you can do something for each one. You know what I'm saying? You can talk to each one. You can sit down and talk to each—. (Johnny, Interview)

Jake empathized with the coaching struggle:

> I mean when it comes down to it, their job is to win games. And most coaches, especially at the level of school that I was at, their goal was to get up. Like all coaches are trying to do is get to their dream job. So, they just want to win games, win games. If they're a position coach, they want to have the best positions in their league or whatever—you know—so they can continue to get up, get up, and maybe one day get a head coaching job. (Jake, Interview)

Yet, Jake still recalls a time when his meal plan ran out, as it often did. He would:

> see coaches riding around in new, nice little—I'm not knocking their blessing. Like, "Hey, Coach, do your thing, man. That's what's up. But we hungry right here." (Jake, Interview)

He was reminded also of a time when he and a teammate were unfairly accused of a crime and the coaching staff did no support them. Instead, his teammate was suspended by the coaches, and "that was—my whole time there, that was the one time I did not like our coach—our coaching staff." Him and his teammate would later be acquitted of all charges and given a verbal apology from university staff.

George also had to deal with a challenging situation of losing his scholarship during his senior year with only three classes left to take. The Financial Aid Office assessed several charges, so he owed the university thousands of dollars and was not allowed to register for his

final semester of classes. He felt misunderstood by the coaches. At one point, he accepted that they could not care about him. During his time of extreme struggle imposed in part by the athletic program, the coaching staff prioritized the team's image over his ability to graduate with his degree.

Feeling disposable. Along with a lack of meaningful coach player relationships, participants also discussed feeling a lack of security. This insecurity was associated with thoughts of being disposable or easily replaced. George felt, "If you don't meet these expectations, you're dropped, you're just easily cut and you're not cared about. You're just like this number and that's it." Clark agreed. He's talks of witnessing talented Black males playing in Venice Beach, California and asking them what happened? "They made one mistake. University threw them away. Get out! Get out! Get out! Never let them back." And, he understood:

> One mistake and it's over. How many other people want your spot? You don't know who the coach is recruiting. His next season is coming up. You're graduating. It's a cycle. Once you know that you're part of the cycle and you're not special, oh, it hurts. Oh, it hurts, because you want to lash out, and you want to—that's what people do. (Clark, Interview)

Alamishus concurred:

> These are young kids, and it's like when they make a mistake, they're done. They can't play anymore. They're a disgrace to the university. Look at Reggie Bush. Come on, look at how much he did for USC. You know what I'm saying? I know they're like—I know USC is a fine institution or whatever—I'm just throwing this example out there. . . . Even some coaches can get away with stuff more so than the student-athlete can. (Alamishus, Interview)

The lack of student-athletes' financial wellbeing compared to the NCAA financial standing was widely discussed. Charles believed that the players were reaping the benefits of their programs' success, while Nathaniel believed that he was always taken care of. Carter viewed the business relationship as a marketing opportunity:

> It's strictly business. So, now, you're getting free publicity. And it's your name—you've got little kids know who you is behind your university, and you're not getting paid for it. Cool, guess what, you're getting free education. Your name ain't on the back of no jersey because you're sorry. You're actually pretty good. So therefore, the NFL, they look at that. Who's the main player? You are the main player. So now, you're the main attraction. Now, people want to see you. Now, your market value goes up. With yourself—now, you're marketing—they're marketing you. (Carter, Interview)

The remaining participants shared the opinion that the NCAA and universities are generating revenues that should be better shared with the players. Many players could not understand how at any point they should go hungry or ever have to worry about not having enough food, while coaches and athletic staff continued to receive pay increases. They were aware of tuition coverage, but after tuition and housing costs, most players found that the few hundred dollars remaining was not enough to cover meals or personal expenses. They believed that the NCAA and universities had more than enough revenue to distribute more evenly among revenue-generating athletes:

> College sports became billionaires. They're selling the jerseys and merchandise and stuff like that has made these kids become super stars. They've got millions of friends before they make millions of dollars, which I don't think is right. (Clark, Interview)

> And so, it really just made me rethink about how I think about all this stuff and think about how much money they're making off of us players' It's like just one seat, how much it costs just to pay for one seat- a ticket and how big the stadiums are. You know what I mean? (George, Interview)

> From my time, there at school and shortly after, I would think about it—you know—because it's kind of crazy to me how it's big business, really, for these schools. They're making a lot of money. I just saw about—they're coming out with a show on Showtime or HBO about Florida State's football program. The kids are getting zero dollars off of it. And that team is probably about 85% Black. And just to go to a bowl game, the whole department is going to get a million dollars at least. The coaches are going to get a raise. Athletic Director is going to get a raise. But the kids, still nothing. And it's—I struggle with it sometimes, because you can't really get a job and play and be a student-athlete. You can, but you're going to suffer somewhere, either with your grades or the field or somewhere, because there's only 24 hours in a day. And in season, you could be sure

> that—the coaches, they're demanding at least maybe 10 to 12 hours of that day. (Jake, Interview)

No investment in student-athletes' postcollegiate careers. Finally, the study participants articulated a disappointment with the lack of postcollegiate pathways and preparation available for student-athletes. The Student-Athlete Development Program, previously known as CHAMPS Life Skills Program, was launched in 1994 to assist student-athletes with the transition to post-athletic play. Of the 12 participants interviewed, Allen and Johnny, two current basketball players, and George and Tyrone, had inclinations that this program or its resources existed. The NCAA has established two career programs: Postgraduate Internship Program (PIP) for graduating seniors or graduate students, and Career in Sports Forum (CSF) for current students that provide information and opportunities for student-athletes to begin thinking about career options beyond athletic play. In the 2016-2017 school year, the NCAA welcomed 29 participants to PIP, while CSF has 200 spots allotted for its program. When asked about participation in these two programs during the second interview, all participants revealed that they had no knowledge of the programs. Clark and George responded that they would not have been interested in the program had they known. After graduation, Clark wanted nothing else to do with football or sports, especially not as a career path. Due to his interest in film and music, George believed that a sports career internship or sports forum would not have benefitted him. Nathaniel and Sebastian, who both pursued sports after college, would have been interested in these programs as options after their professional sports careers. Allen believed that the programs are something that he might be interested in after graduation. However, the most referenced and utilized career path was the graduate assistant program offered at many NCAA universities. The program pays for graduate students' (usually former athletes) master's

programs while they support athletic teams' students and operations. Alamishus, Clark, George, Tyrone, and Sebastian did not mention the graduate assistant program at all. Meanwhile, Allen, Carter, Charles, Johnny, Nathaniel, and Tyrone expressed interest or have participated in this program.

The presence of career pathway assistance outside of graduate assistantships was not prevalent. Current student-athletes could not effectively recall any pathway opportunities, but all were hopeful about upcoming graduations and all of the possibilities the future holds.

Besides George, the other study participants did not mention the presence of a career preparation or pathway program within their athletic departments. Clark was able to find career support through a former athlete academic advisor who saw:

> Toward the end of my career that the pros wasn't going to be for me, and I was ready to settle because I had been through all this stuff. I put so much effort, I was tired. Whatever job you could get me, sir, I want it. I'll take it. So, he hooked me up with his brother, and his brother is out of Compton—now he speaks two languages and makes over $5 million dollars a year owning property—managing hotels and this and that. So, I went and talked to him, and instead of taking a job, I went on to be more of an entrepreneur and learn how to be self-sufficient and work for myself. (Clark, Interview)

Clark also expressed concern about a former athlete that he saw at a game recently:

> I'm at the game. There's a dude with two national championships working security, watching the game with the yellow jacket on. And that's hurting recruiting. I'm like, "If these kids find out he was pretty good, went to the pros, and this is all that's after that"—like, man. My theory—myself is they got to keep it like that so they can make you work hard. They got to keep a big gap between making it and not. If they close that gap, then people are cool with just a little bit. (Clark, Interview)

The realization of the business aspect of college sports was a humbling and painful, yet emboldening experience for many participants. The bittersweet business atmosphere would serve as a precursor to the severed cord between former student-athletes and the self-contained world of college sports. Although comprehension of a different reality outside of the Division I routine

and spotlight was difficult for current participants to attain, after a period of time away from sports, former athletes grasped this concept.

Theme 6: Distinctions Between Former and Current Student-Athletes

Black male student-athletes' narratives were powerful and revealed variances between the shared experiences of current and former student-athletes. While most current student-athletes could not envision a world without college sports, former players either willingly or were forcibly removed from this bubble. The two sets of participants differed in their experience with the APR, completion of college degrees, perceptions of exploitation, and engagement with the Life Skills Program.

Academic progress rate. The academic progress rate (APR), since its 2003 inception, has attempted to hold athletic programs accountable for student-athletes' academic progress. Teams whose student-athletes make adequate progress toward a degree are rewarded, while teams who fail to meet the minimum APR are faced with a range of penalties, most severely exclusion from postseason competition. Former athletes who participated before 2003 viewed their academic degree progress as impacting their families and communities more seriously than the team or the university. Alamishus, Clark, Nathaniel, and Sebastian had academic advisors encouraging their success, but the impetus to progress toward graduation or not had predominantly personal impact. Clark persevered and earned his degree with just over a 2.0 GPA, while Alamishus abandoned sports and focused on graduating and gaining admission into graduate school. Nathaniel and Sebastian opted for professional play instead of completing graduation requirements. Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year, teams were required to earn a 4-year APR of 930 to compete in championships. Study participants who entered college sports

after 2003 made adequate academic progress and graduated on track. Charles recollects, "My coach would call me every night at 9:30, exactly at 9:30, and ask me how my day was, and to send screenshots of the homework that's completed." Coaches and athletic staff were visibly more invested in their progress and success, making phone calls and sending text messages to players as their livelihoods could reap potential impacts from student-athlete failures.

Perceptions of exploitation. The narratives also uncovered differences in the perceptions of exploitation between the two participant groups. This study revealed lower perceptions of exploitation from current student-athletes, two out of four, compared to higher perceptions of exploitation from the majority (six out of eight) of former student-athletes. A majority of study participants originated from the lowest socioeconomic percentile, so motivations for sports participation were upward mobility, career interests, aspirations of business ownership, and ambitions of positions of leadership after their athletic retirement. Celebrity status projected onto participants while participating in college sports created a false sense of escape from pre-collegiate conditions. All participants entered college hoping that they would exit with more access to opportunities than would have been afforded prior to college attendance. Current players believed their newly formed networks with athletic staff, teammates, peers, and alumni soon would afford them ample opportunities.

Charles had hopes of one day opening a restaurant. Even though he understood that there would be challenges, he anticipated that the connections he made during college would open doors of opportunity.

> And to this day I still have a lot of people from my freshman, sophomore, and junior year calling me asking how I'm doing on the daily. I definitely probably will have help sometime in the future just opening my own restaurant. (Charles, Interview)

On the contrary, most former student-athletes tended to correlate with the thoughts of researchers who have held the belief that Black male student-athletes increase the finances of universities; yet, many experience less success in athletic retirement. Twenty-five years removed from Division I athletics, Sebastian continued to ponder on the exploitation of Black males in college sports. “The bad experience around it was how they use you, literally. There’s no other way to put it really.” Memories of the two dollars on his meal card, and not knowing how he would eat for the remainder of the month still caused Jake concern when he contemplated why revenue generating athletes still do not obtain their fair shares of university and NCAA profits.

Recollection of the Life Skills Program. The majority of former student-athletes perceived life, career and business preparation at Division I institutions as deficient. Also, the connection between former student-athletes and the university appeared to separate after the conclusion of athletic participation.

Alamishus does not remember formally gaining any life skills or career development during his time at the university that currently support him with his business. Sebastian shared:

> There's so many kids that I know that they're pretty much lost now. I know one of my teammates who he kind of, like, I don't want to say lost his mind because of what he went through, but he's not well. And I think it's because he didn't know where to go. Once that final buzzer went off, he was homeless, he got in trouble because he was breaking into buildings on campus to sleep and ended up going to jail. It was just a bad thing, because he didn’t have anywhere to go. (Alamishus, Interview)

Alamishus recaps the story of so many Black male student-athletes, “College sports is full of, there’s like—there’s makes and heartbreaks.” Recruiters have been blamed for selling Black student-athletes a dream, and then if not rising to the top of the college rankings, then leaving them to fend for themselves. Clark describes:

> You got a college degree from a big university. You're supposed to have this and you're supposed to have that." Guess what. They say, "We'll save the good jobs for the people who were good at sports who worked out. They're not into saving lives. They're into making you win—helping the people that's already helping themselves. And the other people—you know. You make sure they got health insurance (laughs) so you don't catch nothing from them. But that's it. (Clark, Interview)

Carter remembered being told, "You guys need to put your resume together." He continued "But—in our exit meeting as seniors—pretty much. But you know what? Not all of it was bad because some of—some of my teammates that were seniors—some of them are coaching now." For the most part, college taught him valuable networking skills that he uses to run his own business:

> College don't teach you how to make money. College don't teach you how to own your own business . . . But they really don't teach us nothing as far as, "Here's some internship." "You want to be—you want to go into business. I know somebody—one of my fraternity brothers, you can go work for him. You might start up in the mail room, but"—they don't." (Carter, Interview)

All participants agreed that the life skills program should be revamped to better benefit Black student-athletes and increase the overall profits to a population who has contributed so much to the athletic programs during their time at the university.

Reflections and Recommendations to Black Male Student-Athletes

There were so many words of wisdom garnered during this study. Retired Black Division I student-athletes had so much advice to offer those willing to listen who follow behind them that it is difficult to choose just a few of their parting words to share.

> So, what I want these kids to do is—like I said, while you're building your skills, build your portfolio. (Alamishus, Interview)

> You've got to find out the formula of college, man. It's networking… I just started really going and giving effort—and networking—that was my biggest thing—networking, getting with the right people—getting with the smart people in class. Instead of trying to

be cool, going out with those guys that was getting good grades, and maybe you'll get some good grades, too. So, that was my thing. (Carter, Interview)

In order to break the cycle, teach other people. They get what they want out of you every single time, and it's such a low percentage of us that get what we want out of them. (Clark, Interview)

I'm like I want to do school over again and take advantage of all these resources and make all these connections and do all this networking and stuff. I didn't do none of that. It's like our goal was just to get out. Our goal wasn't to sustain and stay in, you know what I mean, like if anything. It didn't feel like that. You don't learn that kind of stuff until the last years of college, you're like, "Oh, now I get it. Now I know what I'm supposed to do." (George, Interview)

The toughest part about being a black student-athlete is being a black student-athlete. (Jake, Interview)

You have a network of people, and you're in a fraternity in terms of being big time sports, actually, your resources—you just need to reach out and touch your resources. A lot of people don't reach—(Nathaniel, Interview)

Know that it's business and treat it that way. I mean, you are getting an education. And with the education you can go on and make millions of dollars without sports. (Sebastian, Interview)

The importance of it being bigger than what I am, and there's like, at the end of the day, like not being a statistic and getting out of high school and finishing college, getting your bachelor's and being on that graduation stage. (Tony, Interview)

I always had, like, some sort of support from my friends and family. I mean, I would call it a village of people . . . if I knew then what I know now, I would be a whole lot better off. The experiences are worth it to me. I think experiences are worth more to me than anything. (Tyrone, Interview)

Conclusion

Chapter 4 detailed the experiences and perceptions of current and former Black male student-athletes who attended Division I universities. Emergent themes were identified through

multistep analysis. Participants detailed how motivations and challenges during their collegiate and life experiences were impacted by PWIs and collegiate sports. Black males were able to persist despite institutional challenges. They battled through stereotypes and painful experiences to live their lives and advise future student-athletes following in their footsteps.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter 5 is organized into five parts: summary of the study, discussion of findings, implications, recommendations, and conclusion. The summary of the study includes a review of the study's purpose and research questions. The discussion of the findings presents answers to the research questions and explores the theoretical aspects that emerged from the study. The implications section explains how this research study informs Black male student-athletes, educators, the NCAA, and Division I college sports communities. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future studies and a summary.

Summary of the Study

This study focused on Black players' Division I basketball and football experiences and their perceptions of NCAA and universities' supports designed for success during and beyond college athletic participation. The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of current and former Black student-athletes from several Division I university athletic programs. Past research has revealed that Black men, regardless of their Division I student-athlete status, were recognized often as dangerous, tough, and threatening. These perceptions often impacted how educators received Black males in academic settings and negatively impacted educational experiences and postcollegiate opportunities of many Black males. Study participants faced similar challenges outlined in previous literature, such as stereotypes, microaggressions, physical and mental health issues, lack of representation and cultural awareness, time monopolization, and exploitation, but despite facing these challenges, they were able to persist and counter the mainstream narrative of failure and perceived deviant

character qualities. This study shared the concerns of Black male student-athletes on the NCAA and university athletic departments, along with triumphs in spite of obstacles. This study's participants provided insight into NCAA and university supports currently in place and recommendations to address academic, cultural, social, leadership, and career issues impacting Black male student-athletes at Division I universities. The following research questions were the focus of this study:

1. How do Black male student-athletes perceive the effectiveness of supports implemented by the university and the NCAA to help them successfully complete their college degrees?
2. How do Black male athletes articulate the supports provided by the university and NCAA to help them attain postcollegiate opportunities and positions of leadership after athletic retirement?

Discussion of Findings

The NCAA consists of 1,121 colleges and universities. It prides itself on a dedication to the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes. Approximately 350 schools, 6,000 teams and over 170,000 student-athletes are NCAA Division I members. Division I classification most often is established by a large student body, large athletic budgets, and substantial scholarship funds. Division I schools aim for student-athletes to maintain high academic standards and offer a wide range of opportunities for athletic participation. Division I membership is also classified according to football subdivisions. Black male student-athletes who participate in Division I athletics continue to generate large amounts of funds for colleges and support the operation of several non-revenue generating sports. Furthermore, the majority of Black male student-athletes

attending Division I universities gained access through their participation in highly visible revenue generating sports.

This study focused on the Division I experiences of Black student-athletes and their perceptions of NCAA and universities supports designed for their postcollegiate social and career success. This research aimed to understand the experiences and perceptions of current and former Black student-athletes from Division I revenue-generating athletic programs. Following is a discussion of the findings in relation to the two research questions.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 sought to determine how Black male student-athletes perceive the supports implemented by Division I universities and the NCAA to assist them in successfully completing their college degrees. The NCAA proclaims a commitment to the values of an inclusive respectful culture that models the highest levels of integrity and sportsmanship and the pursuit of excellence in both academics and athletics. In 2014 and 2015, the NCAA self-reported its highest graduation success rates of 86% for all student-athletes. Although academic assistance was available, most study participants did not believe that academics emerged as a priority over sports during their college careers. Student-athletes in this study found limited time to develop personal, relationship, or career interests outside of sports.

According to the participants, academic supports ranged from ineffective to extremely useful in supporting their ability to pass their courses or obtain a degree. Initially, when asked to discuss academic supports, each participant referenced that their athletic programs expected attendance at daily academic tutoring and study hall. Participants shared that academic support was available during the season, off season, and even while playing games on the road. Although

the level of support on the road varied by institution, there was the minimum expectation that athletes would study while away for road games. It was discovered that even more academic support, including academic advisors' additional resources, were available upon further request.

When asked to describe a time when they struggled academically, each participant could recall struggling with either a particular course or balancing academics with the demands of their athletic schedule. Although academic resources, such as general tutors, one-to-one subject specific tutors, note-takers for special needs student-athletes, and study labs were available, most student-athletes expressed that the mandatory study period allotted during a 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. scheduled portion of the day did not provide enough study time during the day. This would coincide with Gayles and Hu's (2009) appeal for finding the proper balance between intercollegiate athletics participation and the goals of higher education. Many participants believed that more time was allotted for studying and practicing game plays than studying for actual coursework confirming Person and Le Noir's (1997) findings of inequity in the amount of time spent preparing for athletic events compared to the amount of time spent studying for classes. Some admitted that sleep deprivation instead of the demands of coursework often took precedence in their decision making. Some struggled with upper level math courses, while others struggled with writing in certain courses, but not to the extent that they believed warranted the remedial courses that they were subjected to. While past research has found athletes were given certain college majors to maintain eligibility for the scholarship, not necessarily as the best choice for careers beyond sports, this study found Black male student-athletes majored in a range of fields. These student-athletes frequently complained about having to take classes only during the early morning or early afternoon period because this did not prioritize individual learning

styles or allow for access to the most popular majors at their universities. Despite a lack of flexibility in course selection and study hours, student-athletes still felt supported before and after being placed on academic probation. Eight out of the 12 study participants actually entered probation at one point during their college careers. Bimper et al. (2012) found that a sense of community among Black athletes and an understanding of and ability to navigate social networks helped them succeed. Once entering academic probation, study participants who received that status were able to exit with the assistance of their academic counselors, team tutors, and sometimes coaches, but mostly these athletes lauded that academic support came from their peers, moral support of friends and family, and the use of self-taught strategies.

During the interviews participants expressed the value in a college education, although some did not see the value in the degree or diploma. In certain aspects, this aligned with Kunjufu's (2013) examination of Black males' isolation from the educational system. One participant stated that he only got his degree for his mother. Another stated that college did not really teach him anything about a career or making money, but instead it taught him a lot about networking. All participants valued the networking element much more than the academic aspect of the college experience. Allen (1992) revealed that despite academic, economic, and social disparities, Black students aspired to succeed in their collegiate endeavors. One out of the three former athletes who participated in Division I college sports prior to the implementation of the APR graduated with his degree in business, but he did not complete his college career as a student-athlete. Two of the three did not graduate. One of the two had an opportunity to complete his degree after his professional career, but chose not to because of family responsibilities. The other returned from international play, but could not locate the proper support that would enable

him to complete his degree. All other participants who came after the implementation of the APR graduated on schedule. Current seniors who attend college in the post-APR era are also on target to graduate this school year.

Research Question 2

The second research question explored university and NCAA support systems in place for postcollegiate success. It aimed to determine how Black male student-athletes perceive the supports implemented by Division I universities and the NCAA to assist them in obtaining postcollegiate opportunities and positions of leadership beyond athletic play. In 2016, Mark Emmert, NCAA President, acclaimed that college sports supports student-athletes, "especially those playing our highest-profile sport, earn a degree that will help them long after their athletics career is over" (NCAA, 2016, paragraph 5). Not only do some researchers question the accuracy of this fervent proclamation, but most study participants did not believe that their universities or the NCAA met their postcollegiate or career needs during their Division I participation.

Watt and Moore (2001) deemed student-athlete support programs successful that (a) educate faculty and coaches about the balance between the student-athlete's academic and athletic life, (b) design creative flexible programs to help student-athletes balance both academics and athletics and other needs, (c) maintain a network of former student-athletes by working in partnership with graduates who were student-athletes, and (d) arrange opportunities for faculty and coaches to talk about student-athletes.

The majority of study participants, with the exception of Alamishus, Jake, and Tony, who worked in their fields, saw no postcollegiate value in their degrees. While Alamishus ran his own insurance business, Tony currently worked toward sports administration, Jake excelled in real

estate, and other participants excelled in realms outside their areas of study, including business ownership, acting, musical arrangement, film production, and fatherhood. In the initial interviews, most participants did not discuss specific NCAA or university programs that provided support outside of academic tutoring and study hall. This allowed the researcher to probe more deeply into specific programs developed by the NCAA intended to provide postcollegiate supports. After looking through the NCAA website, the researcher was able to locate a website that spotlighted former athletes' successes, presented career advice, and provided job postings in the sports field. Additionally, information was also provided on the NCAA's career and leadership programs. When study participants were asked to recall which NCAA and university programs offered during their time at the university assisted them in obtaining graduate, career, business, or leadership opportunities, with the exception of George and Tyrone, most former athletes could not recall any such program that directly supported career interests. George remembers that his athletic program employed someone to support student-athletes with networking in their field of interests, locating relevant workshops, arranging networking opportunities, and providing general career advice. Tyrone recalls someone from the career center inviting him and his teammates to a job fair and reminding them to complete a resume. Carter recalled that his coursework allowed him to complete his major and graduate with a degree, but there was no specific program that he participated in that supported his direct preparation for a career after sports.

When asked about specific NCAA programs, including SAACs, the PIP, the Career in Sports Forum, the Student-Athlete Leadership Forum, and the Leadership Development Department-Kaplan partnership, none of the participants had ever heard of these programs

except for Allen. Allen served on the SAAC and attended one of the forums after receiving an invitation to attend during a SAAC meeting. He believed that the sports who had predominantly White membership were those that participated in SAAC and had access to information pertaining to the NCAA career and leadership programs. He believed that these programs were not heavily promoted to Black athletes who could potentially benefit from them. Besides George and Johnny, all other participants stated that they would have been interested in these programs had they known of their existence. George did not see any of the programs benefitting him in his current field, while Johnny stated that he had no time for extra programs because his schedule was already full enough as a student-athlete.

Another program created to benefit student-athletes is the Life Skills Symposium formerly known as CHAMPS/Life Skills program. Hawkins et al. (2007) found that the program was lacking in comprehensiveness; however, Wisdom (2006) found that it did enhance unique student-athlete needs. Weighing in on both sides of the program's effectiveness, Samuelson (2003) identified the value of the program, but also recognized areas for program improvement, specifically in academic supports (Powell, 2009). Former student-athletes, with the exception of Tyrone, could not recall the CHAMPS program at all. Tyrone, who graduated in 2016, recalled attending certain workshops on study habits, the importance of planning for the future, and reminders to complete resumes. Current student-athletes attended workshops on several topics, including date rape, digital citizenship, study skills, and other monthly programs.

Even though the majority of past research surrounding Black male athletes has pointed to high exploitation with low beneficial academic attainment as the most prevalent scenario, this study revealed low perceptions of exploitation from current student-athletes juxtaposed with the

high perceptions of exploitation from the majority—six out of eight—of former student-athletes. Among the major motivators for Black male student-athletes' participation in college sports were upward mobility, career interests, aspirations of business ownership, and ambitions of positions of leadership after their athletic retirement. Degand (2013) presented the disparities in household wealth and positions of leadership along racial lines. In 2009, the average annual wealth of a Black household was $5,677. Also, Black leaders accounted for less than 15% of corporate managers and less than 4% of Fortune 500 CEOs. Nevertheless, when the Black student-athletes who participated in this study were recruited for Division I play, they were shown the lifestyle of the rich and famous, allowing them to imagine lifelong access to a celebrity existence. Every player, including George, a walk on, became accustomed to a certain status on campus. All participants entered college hoping that they would exit with more access to opportunities than would have been afforded them prior to college attendance. Participants also hoped to have the ability to give back to their communities at the conclusion of sports participation. They believed that networking during college would provide them with the opportunities to support their goals and ability to help others.

Black student-athletes have been known to increase the finances of universities; yet, many experience less success in athletic retirement. Some former players have found themselves encompassed with feelings of confusion (Hawkins, 2010) and depression (Hawkins et al., 2007). Signs of potential depression were not identified in current seniors. While some confusion was recognized when discussing future plans, the researcher did not notice any experiences outside of the typical nerves and uncertainty about the future experienced by most college students embarking upon a major milestone in life. All four current athletes anticipated graduation, but

only Tony, who had been planning his future since high school, had mapped out all of his career options. Even he had some uncertainties about the number of alternative ventures he wished to pursue outside of sports marketing and management. The three remaining players would consider getting a graduate assistantship as an option to access college sports careers, although Allen had a thought-out plan to one day possibly pursue law. Charles and Johnny had a murkier sense of life disassociated from sports. Nevertheless, over the period of our conversation, Charles who discussed his season ending injury several times, began considering other career pursuits not associated with football, including culinary arts and skateboard shop ownership.

Many retired student-athletes who participated in this study spent their college years without a career decision in mind. During most of their college years, they possessed hopes of professional sports play. As that option became less viable, certain former players were initially confused, some depressed, and finally a few willing to settle for a position that at least would provide stability for their families. The two former players who left college for professional play, one in football and the other in basketball, found it difficult to obtain a high-level career position in mainstream society without a degree or specialized skillset. Nathaniel had several opportunities to serve as graduate assistant, but found the balance of coaching duties, coursework, and family life to be too strenuous. Initially, he resorted to selling graveyard plots to support his new and growing family, but could not take the low points that accompany sales. Finally, he accepted a security position that would provide health insurance and a tight income to supplement his savings and business investments from his time as a professional football player. Sebastian returned to the states ready to complete his degree, but was given the runaround by the university. Unable to gain clarity about completing his degree, he would soon obtain positions in

paralegal work. He has continued work in the same field and at the time of this study worked in the Santa Monica area.

Of the remaining six players, three are still active players. Jake plays at a semi-professional level in arena football. When arena football season is on hiatus, he serves as a real estate broker. He still has hopes of playing professionally. Carter played arena football last season. When his initial tryouts for NFL teams were unsuccessful, Carter battled depression. He was given graduate assistantship as an option, but opted to coach and support his former football coach at his alma mater instead. Then an idea to begin a nonprofit arose within him. He is devoted to his after-school program, but is still interested in possibly pursuing the NFL once again. Tyrone plays basketball internationally now, but has not given a different career path deep thought yet. His post international basketball career will include trying out for the NBA, and if that is not fruitful, he has expressed interest in being some form of a CEO. Clark and George are trying their hands in the art world, acting and film production, respectively. Alamishus left basketball behind in college, pursued his MBA, and then began his business as an insurance agent. His son's recent basketball interest may lead him down the coaching road.

Interviews with participants revealed an overwhelming consensus that Division I and NCAA supports did not effectively assist Black male student-athletes in obtaining a variety of postcollegiate career opportunities or positions of leadership beyond their participation in college athletics. Many participants were under the impression that the best postcollegiate opportunities were saved for the top athletic prospects who did not necessarily need those pathways from the university because their athletic success would already provide them with a multitude of opportunities not available to the average or below average Division I college athlete. Access to

career pathways and effective career guidance was lacking for all participants except George. Most former student-athletes believed that access to the university's most sought after majors might also have provided access to a larger network, deeper connection to faculty, alternative career choices, and more opportunities after college sports.

Analysis of the Data

Singer (2015) believed voices of color have been uniquely created through powerful varying histories and experiences with oppression. The researcher found that despite their distinctive personalities and backgrounds, the Black male student-athletes who participated in this study shared similar motivations, collegiate experiences, and the agreement that Division I college sports contained a combination of certain curses and gifts. Participants had a strong desire to attain success not only for personal benefit, but also for the benefit of others, including their families, communities, the youth, and future college athletes. Athletes agreed that academic success required self awareness and a certain skillset to navigate college. Networking was of high importance to all participants in this study. Although none of the participants identified exactly how networking would benefit their futures, they were all optimistic that the networks they built during college would increase their opportunities in the future.

Van Rheenen (2013) described sports as a realm of ideological struggle because of its ability to support and maintain cultural values, but on the other hand, provide opportunities for cultural resistance and confrontation of those same values. Brooks et al. (2007) contended with the notion of sport as the ideal model representing liberalist ideas about the absence of color, integration, fairness, and cultural assimilation. All study participants, with the exception of Charles, addressed elements related to race, sociology, and economics. Charles believed that his

football program did not recognize color and that all players with a good attitude were treated the same. Football culture was what he identified with. According to Delgado et al. (2012) although blatant racism has been on the decline, the concept of color-blindness and non-acknowledgement of racism perpetuates its permanence. Eleven study participants made reference to at least one or more racially charged incidents that occurred during their time at the university regardless of their celebrity status on campus. These incidents occurred in classroom discussions, casual conversations with peers, while walking through campus and after exiting campus and entering the neighborhoods around campus. This never allowed them to forget the color of their skin. Being the only or one of few Black students in their classes, and also not seeing very many Black professors in several departments did not allow them to partake in colorblindness. Critical theorists contended that Whiteness as property has had a payoff from which people of color could not benefit (S. M. Lawrence, 2013; Zamudio et al., 2011). When only one out of the 12 Black student-athletes are able to speak about NCAA career and leadership programs that are promoted as supporting all student-athletes, it raises questions about which student-athletes are privileged to participate and who actually benefits.

Hawkins (2010) found that 60% of Black basketball and football players at Division I schools originated from the lowest socioeconomic percentile. Nine of the 12 participants from this study came from low income inner city families. Part of their motivation for attending Division I universities was to improve the conditions for themselves, their families, and communities. Most participants and their families could not afford to finance a Division I university education, so any academic struggles that put them in jeopardy of losing the scholarship added additional stress and pressure.

Singer (2015) concluded that Black athletes who competed in PWI athletic programs served the best interest of the institution and did not negatively alter the benefits and power that Whites would continue to enjoy. All participants were extremely aware that the Division I sports of basketball and football generated heavy revenue. Although no one could state the exact amount of revenue that was generated, they were conscious of the sold-out stadiums and parking structures, merchandise sales, television contracts, and video games. Only two participants believed that players were sharing equally with the athletic staff and the NCAA in the proceeds. All other participants believed that the coaches and athletic directors received great compensation, but after student-athletes used their financial aid checks to pay for tuition and housing, they struggled to stretch a couple hundred dollars over three or four months towards food.

The NCAA recently reported the increase of Black male student-athletes' graduations rates. This increase came after also increasing the minimum grade point average for freshman eligible for scholarships, adjustments in the calculation of academic progress, and the minimum score that each team is expected to achieve before being allowed to play a championship game. There is now a bigger impact on the entire team and the possibility of negative penalties, including reduction of practice time and scholarships, and in extreme cases, firing of the coach for failure to make adequate academic progress. No longer does the progress of Black male student-athletes only impact the outcomes of their individual futures, but instead the reputations and future of entire athletic programs.

Basic academic supports were effective in supporting most student-athletes in completing a degree. All participants considered their college education as the sole means for exiting their

current situations or as something that had to be accomplished to do what they really wanted to do, which was play sports. Tony valued his educational opportunities, but even he played college sports, yes for the love of it, but additionally to alleviate financial burdens from his family. While George expressed having a meaningful learning experience after directing some self-teaching and discovering the religious studies major, before that point, he found his educational experiences to be unengaging, hands-off, and full of heavy professor led lectures. He considered these courses a waste of his time. Out of the six participants who graduated from a Division I university, only Alamishus and Jake were working in fields directly aligned with their major. From the current seniors who participated, only one participant was majoring in the career field he anticipated pursuing after college.

All participants agreed that athletics often overshadowed academics immediately before the season, during the season, and especially when games were played on the road. Student-athletes in revenue-generating sports are exposed to extreme pressures (Harris, 1993; Person et al., 2001) during their collegiate careers, and at times their interests and needs are overshadowed by prescribed schedules, high level athletic training, team travel, and missed classes (Daniels, 1987; Horton, 2011).

Although they received scholarships, all players agreed that they sacrificed a great deal, including their health and academics, to participate on Division I teams. Most Division I student-athletes receive premiere medical care. The sacrifices that they discussed at length were time, money, and academics. All participants with the exception of Tony had a desire to better balance their academic and athletic responsibilities. Tony was proud that he had mastered the art of time

management during a middle school AVID class and was able to apply those skills to his college experience.

The NCAA and university athletic departments provide support systems for student-athletes (NCAA, 2016); yet, access to lucrative opportunities after retirement from sports is limited for many former Black male athletes (Hawkins et al., 2007; Singer, 2013; Smith, 2014). Career and leadership supports were perceived negatively or with indifference by the participants. Even George, who was the only participant to have athletic department personnel on staff to support student-athletes' career interests, recalled that he did not necessarily partake in the services as expected or now, in retrospect, as he should have. All other former student-athletes wished that they had current access to some of the resources that the NCAA provided during their time as active student-athletes. Contrary to Fletcher et al. (2003), eight out of 12 study participants were placed in team leadership roles. Although agility was required, participants were expected to utilize reasoning and leadership skills as team or position captains.

While the study focused heavily on academic and career supports, the conversations led to the revelation that Black male student-athletes were in need of more supports than were readily available. In Cargill's (2009) study of 26 Division I Black male student-athletes, areas of need identified by participants consisted of academic advisement, psychological support—including balancing student identity with athletic identity—and cultural support. All participants in this research study, except Charles, were in consensus that their universities' athletic programs lacked psychological, emotional, and cultural supports.

Black male student-athletes have been described as highly valued (Cooper, 2009; Hawkins, 2010) and athletically superior (Boyd, 2003; Comeaux, 2008; Cooper, 2009; Smith,

2014) to exploited (Daniels, 1987; Edwards, 1970; Hodge et al., 2013; Singer, 2002) and marginalized (Smith, 2014). Most participants, with the exception of Charles, addressed the battle to remain human in a world where many were not accustomed to regular interactions with Black males. While other participants wanted to engage in the world outside of their sport and wanted to be seen as more than a sports player, Charles defined himself by the culture of the football team. During the interview, every discussion point, related or not, circled back to his football team's strong sense of culture. Other participants expressed their struggle to be more than a dumb jock or Black ball player through human interactions with non-teammates, family members, childhood friends, Black peers, or Black faculty. Some connected on a human level by shedding tears. Others connected by engaging with nature. Finally, most participants viewed the sharing of their stories in this study as an empowering tool that pushed them out of the corners of marginalization (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) and allowed them to be heard.

Limitations

Since Division I basketball and football programs contain the majority of Black male student-athletes enrolled in Division I universities, the researcher's interest in Black male student-athletes led her to limit the scope of this study to only those two sports. This study limited itself to student-athletes who currently participate in Division I football and basketball and Division I student-athlete retirees who reside on the West Coast so the researcher could conduct as many personal interviews with participants in their chosen spaces as possible. Purposive sampling and referrals were utilized to identify Black males for this study. Due to limited time and resources, the participant sample of 12 also contributed as a limitation of this study. One researcher personally conducted all interviews.

The large amount of time spent with current and former Black student-athletes to hear their stories and learn their experiences impacted the presentation of the data and influenced the researcher's perception of these athletes. The researcher's background as a mother of two Black sons, wife of a Black basketball coach and former Division I athlete, educator to thousands of Black boys who aspire and have aspired to be Black male athletes all presented some researcher bias. Questions about rigor, generalizability, and truthfulness (Trinchero, 2011) arise in critical race methodology and narrative research, but the need to provide a necessary platform for Black student-athlete voices and counter narratives outweighed the voices of the skeptics. The researcher was sensitive in the language choice used to describe the participants' families and personal challenges within the narratives to limit any unintentional illicit condescension from potential readers.

Implications

This investigation meant to provide a critical examination of the current approach to Black student-athletes and the future direction of intercollegiate sports to prompt dialogue, more questions, and action toward social justice. The participants in this study wanted their stories to be heard by coaches, administrators, peers, and the world. Each participant shared a counter narrative that pushed back against racial stereotypes (Bimper, 2015; Comeaux, 2008). They are brothers, sons, uncles, fathers, and grandfathers. They are human beings. The multidimensionality of their narratives added to their humanity. Each student-athlete, former or current, viewed college sports as an avenue to reach success. That success did not necessarily equate to a career path outside of sports. Even though many Black collegiate athletes have aimed to play professional sports after university, each year the NFL and the NBA have drafted fewer

than 2% of student-athletes. Nevertheless, a great deal of attention is not given to athletes in preparation that they may not play professional sports after their time in college. Student-athletes' schedules are often planned for NCAA compliance, but limited attention has been given to the quality of education these Black males receive (Lang, 1988; Levin et al., 2007). Accordingly, critical race theorists have deemed that the majority of students of color in the United States have always received lower quality education in a system claiming to offer equal educational opportunities. University student-athletes are not exempt.

Broad Implications

It is important to provide solid educational opportunities and pathways to careers or internships to more directly support student-athletes' postcollegiate success and personal wealth from areas that they assist in generating. If education is the anecdote for intellectual numbness and misconceptions about race (Zamudio et al., 2011) then educational institutions must live up to their calling. Professional sports dreams are often dashed, so when Black male college athletes are faced with making alternative plans, their college experience should have prepared them for alternative options to avoid states of confusion (Hawkins, 2010) or dejection (Hawkins et al., 2007). Questions surrounding the preparation of Black male student-athletes for life beyond college athletics (Clubb, 2012; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993) contribute to implications for social justice.

Implications for Black Student-Athletes

The participants in this study longed to share their stories. They desperately wanted to advise current and future athletes on Division I university and sports expectations. Future college athletes should research colleges and ask several questions before making a final decision to

attend a 4-year university. The one area where every study participant agreed without dissention was that Division I universities lacked in cultural supports and did not educate them about or value their culture. Black males at HBCUs have demonstrated advantages over Black students at PWIs in the areas of psychological adjustments, academic gains, and cultural awareness and involvement (Allen, 1992). Each participant shared powerful narratives that added meaningful insight into the Division I sports world. Having a strong sense of self and culture regardless of any devaluation during college years added to study participants' ability to persist. Goal-driven Black males have persisted and succeeded in nurturing settings containing support systems, strong guidance, and positive role models (Ross, 1998). Each participant referenced a community of supporters that furthered their persistence.

Black male student-athletes have been known to possess weak identity as students (Jolly, 2008). The one study participant who used his athletic scholarship to obtain a bachelor's and soon his master's entered college with a plan in mind. He entered college a semester early and enrolled in 18 units per semester during his redshirt year. He was able to focus on achieving this goal with the support of his academic advisor who helped him map out a course at the beginning of his first semester. Keeping multiple end goals in mind will provide more career options.

Implications for Secondary School Educators and Coaches

It is imperative that high school student-athletes are prepared with the time management, study, critical thinking, writing, reading, and math skills necessary to be successful at the collegiate level. This can be supported tremendously at the secondary school level. Study participants who participated in other activities during high school made a much smoother transition into college. Educators and coaches should promote a balance of academics, sports,

and other activities from the beginning of secondary school. Student-athletes should be encouraged to engage in a larger part of the student body outside of sports.

Implications for University Coaches and Athletic Staff

College coaches' salaries in Division I athletics at times have reached the multimillion dollar level (Fizel & Fort, 2004), yet several athletes in the study referenced not having enough financial aid to cover sufficient food during their time at the university. Another student-athlete shared the pain of having his scholarship award taken away, while many others were aware that they could be easily replaced with the newest recruit. The disparities between the financial stability of the coaches compared to the meager finances of Black male student-athletes in Division I college sports is deeply frustrating. Adding to the narrative is that while the majority of Division I university football and basketball players are Black, the majority of the athletic leadership and staff at these universities have tended to be White males. The need exists to hire more Black staff and sports administrators. Hawkins et al. (2007) discussed significance of the player coach relationship in shaping players' college experience and the responsibility of coaches and athletic staff to be fair, open, and honest with student-athletes. Each study participant addressed the importance of the coaching relationship and the desire to play for coaches who cared. During the recruitment period participants recall being a priority to the staff, but once committing and beginning attendance at the university, the responsiveness eventually dissipated. Many expressed a need to have more than a business relationship with the coaching and athletic staff.

It is important that coaches become more mindful of facilitating a balance between academic and athletic life and talking to faculty and administrators about student-athletes (Watt

& Moore, 2001). Coaches have the ability to motivate athletes to be just as excited about education as they are about sports. Many study participants complained about not having access to popular majors or classes due to the athletic schedule. They also criticized studying more rigorously for athletic competitions than a majority of university coursework. Coaches' support of goal setting and frequent check-ins can also promote a better balance. In a study of 21 Black former college athletes conducted by Ogilvie and Taylor (1993), only 25% of participants received any information on athletic retirement obtained from coaches or counseling staff. This concurs with the results of this study where less than 25% of participants obtained this information from their coaching staff. Most do not recall hearing it at all. Coaches and athletic staff must do a much better job of promoting NCAA programs, such as SAAC, careers services, leadership development, and postgraduate internships. The only participant in the study who had heard of the NCAA programs was the one participant who participated in SAAC. This participant stated that he discovered NCAA seminars and workshops at these meetings. He also noticed that the same student-athletes from sports other than basketball and football tended to participate in and benefit from NCAA programs. He and the remainder of the participants strongly suggested in the follow-up interviews that the NCAA and universities better promote and share beneficial programs with future Black male student-athletes. Two participants discussed university athletic departments that hired a permanent staff member to support student-athletes with career options and transitions.

The structure of study hall as it pertains to male student-athletes needs revamping (Dilley-Knoles et al., 2010). After years of implementation, a system for measuring the effectiveness of the required daily study hall should exist. Study participants recalled having

tutors, academic advisors, and study hall time, even on the road, but it did not prevent the majority from entering academic probation at some point during their university careers.

While the postcollegiate participation transition for some former student-athletes is successful (Coakley, 1983), others adhere to sport identities that adversely affect their development (Hawkins et al., 2007). University athletic programs are in need of focused transition programs into and beyond collegiate athletic participation that tend to the needs of Black student-athletes. Many participants expressed experiencing a huge culture shock upon entering their Division I universities. During the recruitment, participants shared that they were shown the best parts of the college experience; yet, none discussed stepping foot into a classroom for observation. Many mentioned that they would have loved to partake in a Summer Bridge that might have included academic tips and strategies from upperclassmen, study skills, time management, and career mapping. Although the NCAA website documents several programs that university staff have been trained in to support student-athlete transition into postcollegiate sports life, the fidelity with which these athletic departments are implementing these programs is unclear.

Implications for NCAA Officials

Faced with appeals of court rulings and still more pending litigation from former student-athletes, the NCAA has been presented with an outstanding opportunity to engage in a critical examination of its policies and practices. The study participants revealed several areas in need of reconsideration. One such area would be a deep reflection of whether organizational leadership and structure reflects, respects, connects, and serves the needs of its membership. Althouse and Tucker (2007) discussed the limited mobility opportunities for Blacks into non-entry-level

coaching positions and higher administrative positions in college sports Recently, Black coaches and athletic administrators have been more visible, yet still scarce. Hiring and termination practices have appeared unequal and associated with isolation, networks, stereotyping, racism, tokenism, and nepotism (Polite, 2007b). Hiring more Black staff and sports administrators in several positions besides diversity administrators is a great starting place.

In a review of leadership and career supports, a few NCAA programs were discovered. Nevertheless, the reach and effectiveness of those programs were limited because the timing only allowed for certain athletes to participate, while the number of participants allowed to partake in the programming opportunity was too few. The annual Career in Sports Forum held in early June selects only 200 from student-athlete nominations to learn and explore potential careers in sports, specifically college sports. The NCAA Student-Athlete Leadership Forum offers a maximum of two student-athlete representatives per school an opportunity to participate on a first come, first served basis. The NCAA Postgraduate Internship Program which focuses on providing year-long on-the-job learning experiences at the national office in Indianapolis specifically for people of color, women, and student-athletes has provided approximately 30 openings per year. With hundreds of thousands of student-athletes, these programs are a start, but not nearly enough. It would be wise to increase the capacity of the leadership program, internships, and forums, while also considering the seasons when certain programs are available to see if it conflicts with the availability of Black student-athletes. In many inner city high schools, the NCAA is seen as a menacing force. Taking time to build relationships with more high school educators, coaches, parents and student-athletes would develop a more trusting, and less adverse relationship.

Finally, remaining connected and invested in student-athletes after athletic retirement is a huge responsibility, but one that the NCAA should endorse. When explained by study participants, the current model cuts ties between former student-athletes and the NCAA and university athletic departments once the student-athlete no longer serves the organizations' interests. Developing strong networks for Black student-athletes will allow the dedication invested by this group to be reciprocated by the NCAA and university.

Implications for Social Justice

This research provides great implications for social justice based on the potential opportunities for K-12 school systems, university, and NCAA administrators, staff, and policies to support the holistic development of Black male student-athletes. Several openings exist for these institutions to model the balance in educational programs vital for these student-athletes' successful navigation of the collegiate experience, goal setting, and life after college. Student-athlete exposure to the world outside of the self-contained sports world should also be deliberated. The study findings present several openings for the NCAA to deeply reconsider the academic, career, and financial benefits that Black student-athletes participating in revenue generating sports obtain during their collegiate careers. Heavy attention should be given toward supporting this group in utilizing Division I university access to reap the postcollegiate benefits that they anticipated prior to entering college sports. Access to lucrative careers and leadership opportunities outside of entering professional sports careers must be promoted and mandated as strongly as the winning sports culture. The NCAA has a responsibility to actualize its mission of dedication to the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes in regard to Black student-athletes. Given the professional sports leagues' matriculation rates and an overall human

concern, this historically marginalized group must be driven to succeed at additional life goals as strongly as they are driven to succeed in sports goals. The recommendations that follow provide a more socially just manner in which to serve the needs and interests of Division I Black male student-athletes during their university experiences and beyond collegiate sports participation.

Recommendations

Black student-athletes attending PWIs must enter the university with or find ways to garner a strong sense of self and culture. Each participant shared powerful narratives that added meaningful insight into the Division I sports world. Having a strong sense of self and culture regardless of any devaluing during college years increased study participants' persistence. Taking history, sociology, and cultural studies classes during their time at the university may further develop and deepen Black student-athlete's knowledge of self-identity and culture. Goal-driven Black males have persisted and succeeded in supportive settings providing strong guidance and positive role models (Ross, 1998). Each participant referenced a community of supporters that furthered their persistence. Creating a solid village of support including role models, mentors, and other motivators from within and outside of the university would be in Black male student-athletes' best interest. Personal and cultural identity, as well as critical education pieces, should be strengthened within the secondary school curriculum to increase self-efficacy and equip Black students with the skillset to navigate the unavoidable and permanent structure of racism (Zamudio et al., 2011), so that when Black student-athletes matriculate to college they are less prone to engage in feelings of isolation and marginalization.

Football and basketball players' time is so structured and directed by other individuals that they should be mindful and strategic in how they utilize the brief amount of time that is

available to them. It is recommended that Black student-athletes stay informed about and have a voice in NCAA policy and student body. Participation in SAAC is highly recommended for Black student-athletes. If participation is not possible, familiarizing themselves with representatives and receiving updates on conferences, workshops and other programs is a viable alternative. The universities and NCAA should ensure that Black male student-athletes are aware of these opportunities.

Actively engaging in courses or seminars provided by the athletic department or university to assist with balancing academics and athletics is a strong suggestion. Determining the proper balance between intercollegiate athletics participation and the goals of higher education is vital for student-athlete success (Gayles & Hu, 2009). Included in this balance are joining university organizations, mingling outside the sport, and goal setting beyond sports goals, such as career goals. Secondary school educators, university staff, and the athletic department all share the responsibility in supporting Black male student-athletes to practice this balance.

Future student-athletes should keep end goals in mind besides just sports. Mapping out college courses and academic plans before beginning college is strongly suggested. Identifying as both a student and an athlete will encourage collegiate sports retirees to remain connected to their universities after athletic retirement via alumni associations and other networks.

Black male student-athletes should have more choice in the way that they engage during study hall. Several participants preferred to study with peers outside of the athletic program or individually and perceived these techniques to be more effective than study hall. Teaching and practicing certain study skills could also be implemented and monitored during this time.

Coaches should strive for deeper more meaningful relationships with players in one-on-one and small group settings. These opportunities make them more aware of student-athlete needs and better able to refer university resources such as counseling, cultural, career, mentorships, and life supports. By forming deeper relationships with their student-athletes, coaches are better able to serve and advocate on behalf of athlete needs.

Division I universities need better postcollegiate transitions for Black male student-athletes besides the graduate assistantship. It is also important that universities remain connected and invested in student-athletes after athletic retirement. Every participant addressed the topic of networking. Having a strong network that allows former students athletes to enter sports administration and athletic leadership at former universities is a beginning to career support and investment in Black male student-athletes who have generated millions of dollars in revenue for the NCAA and Division I university sports programs.

The NCAA has a responsibility to ensure that student-athletes are financially secure if they are unable to realistically balance work, school and athletics. The recent increase in grant-in aid is a start, but being proactive rather than reactive to ongoing student-athlete concerns would be viewed in a more positive light by student-athletes. Critical conversations, forums, and research related to this study would allow the NCAA to engage more positively with Black male student-athletes.

Further assessment of the effectiveness of the Life Skill Programs and academic supports required by the NCAA, but implemented by the university athletic programs, should be pursued. These programs are pillars of the NCAA support system, but clarity and consistency on how they support Black male student-athletes, or any student-athlete, are vague. The APRs are forcing

universities to review how they academically support Black student-athletes. Future studies would reveal effectiveness; however, the NCAA must build more accountability into the Life Skills Program.

Recommendations for Further Study

Future research in the area of Black male student-athletes could be taken in several directions. This study could be extended to include incoming freshmen to better glean Black male student-athletes' experiences from recruitment to athletic retirement. Second, this study revealed several themes. Any one of the themes that surfaced could stand alone as its own study. Possibly a future researcher would be interested in developing one of the key themes into a research study. Additionally, coaches, advisors, other athletic department staff, and NCAA officials could offer a different perspective or response to the findings of this study. A future study could also include a follow-up study with current seniors to explore how their future point of views remain the same or differ from their point of views today. Possibly gaining access into one university to study the effectiveness of their supports and to build stronger supports could be another area of study. Another study investigating the soundness and effectiveness of NCAA supports in general beyond the information provided on their website and past dissertation work would be a challenging, yet a worthwhile research endeavor.

Reflection on the Research

It was my extreme honor to share this journey with the 12 amazing Black males who trusted me with their stories. We laughed together, ate food together, and at times, even encouraged one another. An air of freedom and open opportunity existed each time we engaged in conversation for this study. Burdens were lifted, and by the end of each conversation, both I

and the participants shared a sense of slight exhilaration that their buried, often undisclosed accounts, would finally find the platform they deserved. I was granted permission to present these counter narratives in hopes of bettering the future for young Black males following behind them. Therein lies the beauty and strength of critical race methodology. My participants were respected for their contributions to the world, their communities, families, college athletics, and Division I sports, and then provided a safe open space to share their triumphs, motivations, mistakes, heartbreaks, challenges, lessons learned, and future goals.

The struggle I encountered with critical race methodology was the lack of guidance and structure. Deliberation about the amount of narrative writing to balance with traditional data analysis and findings consumed my thoughts. I would have preferred to write my entire study in a narrative manner, but wanted to leave no room for uncertainty on the rigor and thoroughness of this study by mainstream researchers and professors at my university. Subsequently, my belief that the topic of Black male student-athletes alone was extremely controversial evoked an intense internal conflict related to the presentation of race in this study. I sought to reach the ears and hearts of those in power within the field of college athletics, oftentimes White males who tend to ignore or reject issues surrounding race and point toward liberalist ideals, but was overwhelmingly haunted by thoughts that this research would be dismissed as the rant of another angry Black woman. Yet, after recurrent deep thoughts and identical advisement from my committee, I resolved that I must directly and unapologetically address race. I owed that to my study participants, the thousands of Black male student-athletes, the millions of Black boys just like my sons, and countless Black lives past and present. This study, historical research, and ongoing current events deeply tied to sports and race relations continue to take me through an

emotional roller coaster of deep reflection and point to the relevance and need for more research in this area. For this tumultuous doctoral journey, my eternal growth, enlightening revelations, and the blessing to live my life in alignment with my GOD given purpose, I remain eternally grateful**.**

Conclusion

There has been no disputing that Division I basketball and football programs dominated by Black male student-athletes have generated large amounts of revenue for the NCAA, yet it has remained unclear exactly how much Black athletes have benefitted academically, socially, and financially during and after their participation in Division I sports programs. With policies being revisited once each year, the NCAA should deliberate ways to revamp the supports it currently provides to student-athletes, specifically career and leadership supports. Also, the organization requires a more effective means to hold teams accountable for the overall development of the whole student-athlete. Athletic departments must listen more and restrict student-athlete's choice and voice less.

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Initial Individual Interview

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Investigator will collect consent forms.

Investigator:

"Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. The purpose of this conversation is to co-create a narrative about your lived experiences and your thoughts about how we can better serve Black male student-athletes, such as yourself. Specifically, I want to continue to learn more about you, and understand your experiences as a Black male student-athlete attending a Division I PWI, as well as what supports you currently use to successfully persist (and make progress) at your institution. I want to understand what challenges you have encountered, and what you have and need in the future to successfully overcome those challenges. Please feel free at any point during our discussion to ask me questions that you may have.

The underlying assumption that I am working with is that Black males and student-athletes experience unique challenges as they make their way toward graduation and athletic retirement. Black student-athletes, like you, have a better understanding of what those challenges are. That is why I am talking with you. I also believe that student-athletes who have access to supports toward graduation have specific knowledge and are better able to confront certain challenges. You have an understanding of what supports have been both effective and ineffective in your academic and life journey. I want to hear from you what you believe to be common challenges that Black male student-athletes experience at your university. Some of these challenges may have to do with the college, specifically. Other challenges may be connected to life circumstances. More than that, I want to know what Black male student-athletes, like you, know and do to overcome these challenges.

I would like to remind you that to protect the privacy of participants, all transcripts will be coded with pseudonyms.

This conversation will last about 90 minutes and we will audiotape the discussion to make sure that it is recorded accurately.

Do you have any questions before we begin?"

Stem Starters

Life Experiences

1. Tell me about some life experiences prior to college. Family? Academics? Friends? Athletics? Interests?
2. Describe a time you were motivated to achieve your dreams and life goals? Success? Challenge?

Goals

3. Imagine yourself five (or 10) years from now doing anything in the world besides playing a sport. What are you doing?

Division I Experiences

4. Besides participation in this study, have you ever thought of what it means (meant) to be a Division I Black male student-athlete? What experience stands out most? Why not?
5. Have you ever thought about the amount of money the university and NCAA makes from basketball and football programs? How does that make you feel? Why not?

Supports

6. Describe a time you felt supported (or not) academically, socially and/or culturally? Professors? University staff? Athletic Department staff? Family? Teammates? Friends? Non-athletes?
7. What are your thoughts about the student-athlete development program, previously known as CHAMPS/Life Skills program?
8. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

NCAA Supports Follow-Up Interview Protocol

How do Black male athletes articulate the supports provided by the university and NCAA to help them attain postcollegiate opportunities and positions of leadership after athletic retirement?

1. Which NCAA and university programs offered during your time as a college athlete (will) assisted you in obtaining postcollegiate graduate, career, business, or leadership opportunities?

2. NCAA Student-Athlete Advisory Committees generate a student-athlete voice, allow student-athletes the opportunity to respond to proposed legislation, and promote a positive student-athlete image both at the national and campus levels. How did you participate or benefit from the NCAA Student-Athlete Advisory Committee?
3. For over 25 years, the NCAA Postgraduate Internship Program has provided year-long on-the-job learning experiences at the national office in Indianapolis to passionate college graduates interested in pursuing careers in college sports administration. Is this something that you were interested in? Why did you (not) pursue the NCAA Postgraduate Internship or university graduate assistant programs?
4. The Career in Sports Forum, an annual NCAA educational forum held in early June, brings together 200 selected student-athlete nominees to learn and explore potential careers in sports, specifically college sports. Did student-athletes from your university participate in this program? Why did you (not) participate in the forum?
5. In early November of each year, the NCAA Student-Athlete Leadership Forum offers student-athlete representatives the opportunity to obtain leadership skills, explore personal core values, more deeply understand the NCAA, and evaluate the value of Student-Athlete Advisory Committees. Why did you (not) participate in the Student-Athlete Leadership Forum?
6. In 2011, the NCAA Leadership Development Department partnered with Kaplan to offer test preparation and discounted testing for student-athletes. Over 253 student-athletes representing more than 50 schools and 23 sports gained preparation for graduate school exams in various subject matters, including law, medicine, pharmacy, and business. Due to the overwhelming demand and the NCAA's inability to provide for every student-athlete's request, the NCAA negotiated an institutional, discounted rate for the membership, which allows athletics departments and conferences (if approved) to run high-quality classes at school facilities during times that best benefit the needs of each academic and sports. Why do you believe they implemented this program? Why would you (not) have participated in this program?
7. What are your thoughts on the aforementioned NCAA programs?

8. Do you have any other suggestions for the NCAA and universities who are preparing Black male student-athletes to attain postcollegiate opportunities and positions of leadership after athletic retirement?

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Date of Preparation: April 27, 2016

I hereby authorize Eno Attah, M.A. to include me (my child/ward) in the following research study: Ball is Life: Black Male Student-Athletes Narrate Their Division I Experiences.

1. I have been asked to participate in a research project that is designed to co-create a narrative about the lived experiences of Black males in Division I college athletics as well as suggestions about how to better serve Black male student-athletes and which will last for approximately three months.
2. It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that I am a Black, male student-athlete.
3. I understand that if I am a subject, I will spend approximately 30 minutes a week communicating with the researcher (including telephone, text, and email).
4. I understand that if I am a subject, I will participate in two audio-recorded open-ended interviews on the dates of my choice.
5. I understand that if I am a subject, I will allow the researcher to shadow me for one day for a 4-hour period of my choice.
6. I understand that if I am a subject, I will submit one piece of autobiographical writing previously written for a class or from a journal entry.
7. I understand that if I am a subject, I have the choice to submit copies of my academic transcripts to the researcher for the development of this study.
8. I understand that all information collected will be confidential.
9. The investigator(s) will explain the purpose of my participation before beginning the study, share interview transcripts, debrief me at the conclusion of the study period and share the narrative that results from my contribution to this study.

These procedures have been explained to me by Eno Attah, M.A.

1. I understand that I will be videotaped, audiotaped and/or photographed in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that these tapes will be used for teaching and/or research purposes only and that my identity will not be disclosed. I have been assured that the tapes will be destroyed after their use in this research project is completed. I understand that I have the right to review the tapes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

2. I understand that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: some of the questions that I may be asked to answer might cause a variety of

emotions to surface, including anger, sadness or confusion, but at any point I have the right to stop an interview, take a break from an interview, or decline to answer any question that I choose. I may also become fatigued or overwhelmed during the course of the study, but again at any point I have the right to stop an interview, take a break from an interview or can ask the researcher to contact me at a later time.

3. I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are that I may learn more about myself and how I persist, help athletic department and university staff understand the experiences of Black male student-athletes and possibly inform NCAA practices and policy.
4. I understand that Eno Attah who can be reached at _____ will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.
5. If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.
6. I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice to (e.g., my future medical care at LMU).
7. I understand that circumstances may arise that might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.
8. I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.
9. I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.
10. I understand that in the event of research related injury, compensation and medical treatment are not provided by Loyola Marymount University.
11. I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact David Hardy, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659, (310) 258-5465, david.hardy@lmu.edu.

In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights."

Subject's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

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