EXPERIENCES OF DIVISION I FOOTBALL BLACK MALE STUDENT-ATHLETES

AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A Dissertation

by

DAN R. CHILDS JR.

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Chair of Committee,	Christine A. Stanley
Committee Members,	John Singer
	Vicente Lechuga
	Chayla Haynes Davison
Head of Department,	Mario Torres

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine the challenges that Black male football student-athletes face as they matriculate through predominantly White institutions of higher learning. I explored the experiences of these student-athletes who, because of their minority status on these historically White campuses, must adjust and adapt to their surroundings in order to survive. The college athletic system, particularly for sports like football and men's basketball, focuses on winning and generating revenue. Because the current paradigm is centered on generating revenue and not on the overall well-being of the student-athlete, Black male athletes in football and basketball programs often suffer the most in their academic, career, and personal development. Black male athletes in these sports are often socialized into sports at an early age. Parents, family members, coaches, and friends help perpetuate the belief that a career in sports will lead to riches and wealth. More than half the players playing the NFL are Black. Sixty-five percent (1,102) of the (1.696) professional football players in the NFL are Black. In the National Football League (NFL), professional football players have a mean career length of 6 years, and in 2011, the median annual salary was $770,000. Within 2 years of retirement, 78% of NFL players either file for bankruptcy or report financial stress because of joblessness or divorce. Thus, in this qualitative study I explored in depth how Black male football student-athletes define success when football is no longer the main priority. The study is based on the experiences of former Black male football student-athletes at the Division I Power 5 level. I examined the influence that racism and the challenges of being a Division I football student-athlete can have on Black males. The results suggest that

college football is a complex institution comprised of numerous variables that make it difficult for a Black male football student-athlete to separate the importance of football participation from academic, career, and personal development.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

College athletics is a multi-billion-dollar business in which winning and generating revenue is paramount. Universities from the five major conferences—the Southeastern Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference, Pacific 12, Big Ten, and Big 12 (SEC, ACC, Pac-12, Big Ten, and Big 12; collectively known as the Power 5 conferences)—generate and spend millions of dollars annually in order to build and sustain successful athletic programs. Prior to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, attendance at college football games was at an all-time high. At the Division I-A level of football, the average attendance for football games at the highest levels ranges from 50,000 to 100,000 fans (Baade, Baumann, & Matheson, 2008). Collegiate athletics has seen tremendous growth in football and men's basketball over the past 30 years. However, studies have shown that academic and social development casualties have occurred among a subgroup of those player populations. Research has shown that student-athletes in high-profile sports, specifically Black males (who are significantly overrepresented on football and men's basketball teams), do not perform as well academically as their counterparts in the general student body (Eitzen, 2009). The win-at-all-cost dynamic that exists in big-time college athletics has created a system that values winning and revenue over the academic, career, and social development of the athletes. Moreover, Black male athletes in football and basketball are the subgroup most likely to be exploited by the current system because the athletes from those sports often come from low socioeconomic backgrounds where athletics is viewed as the vehicle for obtaining a higher standard of living (Van Rheenen, 2011).

The popularity of professional sports, particularly the National Football League (NFL) and National Basketball Association (NBA), has grown significantly over recent years. Both sports have become more lucrative and have turned a small portion of Black male athletes into multimillionaires. The travesty, however, is that far fewer Black male athletes are chosen and drafted into the NBA and NFL than are selected. Less than 2% of college athletes in Division I football are projected to make it to the NFL, and on average, 45% of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) football players do not receive a college degree (Madsen, 2014; New, 2015).

This study is not an indictment on sports or of those who participate in that arena. Sports can provide a means for building camaraderie, discipline, and teamwork. However, while many people view sports as an extracurricular activity, there is a subset of the Black community that views sports as a vehicle for obtaining a higher standard of living. Research reveals that Black families and communities place more emphasis on the drive for high-paying professional sports contracts than on academic achievement and career maturity (Beamon, 2008, 2010; Beamon & Bell, 2006; Edwards, 1984, 2000; Harris, 1994; Oliver, 1980). Although there are hundreds, if not thousands, of Black professional athletes in America, there are millions who aspire to those heights but fall short of playing professionally. Statistics show that less than 1% of college football players become professional athletes (NCAA, 2016). Even though many individuals aspire to a career in professional sports, there are not enough leagues, teams, or roster spots to meet the actual demands. However, despite the tremendous odds, young males in the Black community continue to aspire to a career in professional sports. A career in professional sports represents success, and many in the Black community covet the notoriety, fame, and

wealth that such careers offer. Unfortunately, for many Black males, the quest to achieve a career in professional sports will go unfulfilled, and many are left damaged psychologically by failing to become professional athletes.

The challenge for many Black males, particularly in football and men's basketball, is that career success is often defined by "making it" in professional athletics. For many student-athletes, "going pro" outside of the arena marks a significant change in identity. According to an NCAA (2016) report, 52% of Division I football athletes believe they will move on to a career in professional athletics. Scholars have studied the overrepresentation of Black male student-athletes in certain sports and posit that Black males are socialized to athletics participation as a means to social mobility (Adler & Adler, 1987; Beamon, 2010; Kennedy & Dimick, 1987). This perceived all or nothing mentality can have a detrimental effect on Black male athletes should they fall short of achieving a career in professional athletics. Because many athletes will take on the athletic identity in the effort to achieve a career in professional sports, the role abandonment that follows can often lead to a difficult transition away from sports. The educating of Black males as to the different levels of career success appears to be either lacking or unexplored. Researchers have suggested that the NCAA, universities and athletic departments have an obligation to not exploit athletes for their athletic prowess, but rather provide them with the necessary academic and career development support to help them transition to life beyond sport. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) as well as Jolly (2008) support the importance of offering specific career preparation programs for student-athletes and suggest separate development programs allow student-athletes to more fully engage as they are surrounded by individuals who share common schedules and challenges.

Studies have shown that the socialization of African American males in sport is more deliberate and intensive (see, e.g., Edwards, 1984; Leonard, 1980; Oliver, 1980), which leads to different consequences from sport involvement for them than other social groups. Researchers Curry and Jiobu (1984) asserted that the "black subculture, permeated with passion for sport, encourages, attracts and pushes youth into athletics much more than white culture does with white youth" (p. 105). Those athletes showing the most promise are often pushed even harder toward sports, with the expectation of making it to the NFL or NBA or, at minimum, receiving an athletic scholarship to college. Although there is nothing wrong in striving toward these goals, participation in sports should not stunt the Black male academically, psychologically or socially. Research has shown that student-athletes in high-profile sports, more specifically Black males who are significantly overrepresented on the football and men's basketball teams, do not perform as well academically as their counterparts in the general student body (Eitzen, 2009). Beamon (2010) echoes the consequences of athletic participation by citing lower levels of academic achievement, higher expectations for professional sports careers as a means to upward mobility and economic viability, and highly noticeable athletic identities.

How do Black male football student-athletes overcome the obstacles that exist in collegiate athletics? Since there are a number of internal and external factors that Black male athletes must overcome, the process is not simple. Many factors influence why Black male athletes struggle academically in college, including athletic exploitation, hostile campus communities, racial discrimination, inadequate personal guidance, and social isolation, among other factors (Beamon, 2008; Cooper, 2012; Donnor, 2005; Hawkins, 2010; Singer, 2005). College athletes usually have additional commitments that impose on

their time, including workouts, practices, games, travel, and team meetings. Activities related to career development such as visits to the career center, sessions with a career counselor, resume development, and internships may be perceived as requiring time that the college athlete feels s/he does not have (Cooper, 2012). This lends itself to identity foreclosure. Identity foreclosure is defined as a commitment to an identity before one has meaningfully explored other options or engaged in exploratory behavior, such as career exploration, talent development, or joining social clubs or interest groups (Danish et al. 1993; Marcia 1966).

Despite these obstacles, solutions exist for addressing these issues. First, Black male athletes must free themselves from the problematic athletic identity. Overcoming both early socialization in sports as well as an overreliance on sports as a means for upward mobility is challenging (Beamon, 2008; Hodge, Harrison, Burden, & Dixson, 2008). Second, Black male athletes, particularly in football must be receptive to personal and career development programming. A willingness to embrace student-athlete development must also be adopted even though the benefits are not instantaneous. This type of change requires a willingness to shift one's identity. "Identity is defined as a multidimensional view of oneself that is both enduring and dynamic" (Lally, 2007, p. 86). Finch (2009) found that identities of college student-athletes were predictors for career decision-making self-efficacy.

In recent years, several concerned scholars have created culturally relevant mentoring support programs to meet the unique needs of Black college athletes who attend PWIs (Bimper, 2016, 2017; Carter-Francique, 2013; Carter-Francique et al., 2017; Comeaux, 2010; Cooper, 2016). Benefits of these mentoring programs include the

strengthening of positive academic identities, a heightened racial and sociocultural awareness, an enhanced sense of belonging, increased social capital, effective career transition preparation, and the utilization of constellation mentoring approaches (Kelly & Dixon, 2014). Cooper (2016), in a study on personal and career development, examined holistic development among Black male former college athletes. He explained that the Excellence Beyond Athletics (EBA) approach encompasses student-athlete academic success (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; C. K. Harrison et al., 2010) and African American cultures, values, experiences, and identity development (Boykins, 1986; L. Harrison, & Moore, 2002). The EBA approach consists of the following six holistic development principles (HDPs): 1) self-identity awareness, 2) positive social engagement, 3) active mentorship, 4) academic achievement, 5) career aspirations, and 6) effective time management skills (Cooper, 2016). The research from Cooper's study revealed that when the Black male student-athlete builds relationships with key academic and social role-set members, athletic role engulfment can be prevented (Adler & Adler, 1991; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Cooper (2015) indicated that when Black males establish quality relationships and are in a culture that has high expectations for athlete academic performance and provides engagement in educationally purposeful activities (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011), they begin to understand self-identity awareness, positive social engagement, and career aspirations beyond sports.

Statement of the Problem

Far too many Black male student-athletes define success based on whether or not they become professional athletes. Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) recognized the tension that exists between athletic and academic interests among boys. They suggested that

involvement in sports increases the likelihood that young men will be welcomed into male peer groups. On the contrary, boys who choose to pursue academic interests and are not engaged in sports find it difficult to gain respect and acceptance from their male peers. An overwhelming number of Black males would rather dedicate a majority of their time and effort to chasing the dream of playing professional sports than pursuing a college degree. Black male student-athletes in college are not seizing the opportunities associated with college graduation (Lapchick, 1995). Too many of them place an overemphasis on athletic excellence (Benson, 2000), which creates a negative peer and faculty attitude toward athletes in general (Comeaux & Harrison, 2007). The stigma often attached to Black male student-athletes in college is that they are indifferent to school and are only in college to participate in their sport. Black male athletes from football and basketball often draw the most criticism since those sports are generally more revenue producing and heavily marketed, and the rosters are Black male dominant (Edwards, 2000). At the highest level of Division I athletics, sports like football and men's basketball generate millions of dollars annually (Luchs & Dale, 2012). Today the NCAA and its institutions have been accused of various forms of exploitation including but not limited to: academic (Gatmen, E.J. (2011), athletic (Beamon, 2008), and economic (Overly, K.B. (2005). Several scholars argue that the athletic career of Black athletes is fixed to be more important than their academic career and their role should be athlete student (Krylowicz, 1999; Hakim, 2000; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005; McCormick & McCormick, 2006). Black male college athletes, along with many of their college athlete peers, are often denied the freedom of pursuing a major of their choice without facing athletic consequences, which further contributes to their feelings of frustration and lack of autonomy (Beamon, 2008, 2010; Benson, 2000). In

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addition, the lack of racial diversity among faculty, athletic administrators, coaches, and staff, along with the overrepresentation of Black males on athletic teams compared to their representation in the general student body, creates a context by which Black male college athletes are susceptible to experiencing marginalization and alienation (Cooper, 2012). Graduation rates for Black male student-athletes are consistently and substantially lower than those of their White male student-athlete counterparts (NCAA, 2009). A large number of Black male student-athletes from football will leave college without receiving their diplomas, and those athletes who do graduate often leave feeling dissatisfied with the degree they receive because they may have been steered toward acquiring a less marketable degree in order to maintain eligibility. In addition, the campus climates at many Division I PWIs have been identified as unwelcoming and even hostile toward Black male student-athletes (Beamon, 2008; Melendez, 2008; Singer, 2005). Within these environments, Black male student-athletes encounter a preponderance of negative stereotypes associated with their race, gender, and athletic identities (Comeaux, 2010; C. K. Harrison & Lawrence, 2003; Sailes, 2010).

Despite the numerous challenges that Black males athletes student-athletes deal with a Predominantly White Institutions, athletic departments and coaches must do more to support the holistic development of their student-athletes. Black male football student-athletes, in particular often only view career success through the lens of professional sports. In order to change that narrative, these young men must be exposed to career development programming, mentorships, and training that prepare them for a life beyond sports. The goal of universities and athletic departments should be to demand that all

student-athletes, particularly Black males, attend career programming both on campus and within the athletic department.

Because Black males student-athletes are often marginalized at PWIs as athletes only, very little emphasis is placed on their development as individuals. This study examined Black male football student-athletes at a Division I institution, how those students dealt with racism and the effects those experiences had on their career and professional development while they were students at the institution. Perhaps if a greater emphasis were placed on nurturing the aforementioned population, the current system would be less exploitative than it currently appears to be. The study chronicled the positive and negative experiences of Black males in the sport of college football as they balance academic achievement with participation in athletics. The study also detailed micro- and macroaggressions that Black males are faced with on campus and revealed how those experiences shape their psyche in regard to academic and career development. Pierce and colleagues (1978) state that micro aggressions are considered those brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities. While macroaggressions are large scale or overt aggressions acted out towards a certain race. This study draws upon the experiences of former collegiate Black football student-athletes and their level of career preparation as they transitioned beyond sports. Based on the study's results, in my conclusion, I offer suggestions for assisting school administrators as they develop methods for improving student-athlete involvement in career and personal development programming. It is incumbent on students, faculty, staff, administrators, academic advisors, student-athlete engagement personnel, and athletic department administrators as well as coaches to do more to develop the student-athlete holistically. As Black male

student-athletes matriculate through college, mandatory educational activities should be in place to help them transition to a life beyond sports.

Background for the Study

Far too many Black male athletes are exploited by a system that is more predicated on generating revenue and satisfying alumni fandom than cultivating academic and career development opportunities for athletes. Participation in college football becomes a full-time job as athletes balance athletic participation with academic achievement. Athletic demands include over 40 hours a week devoted to practice, travel, team meetings, study hall, and classwork. The demands of these athletic "jobs" (Southhall & Weiler, 2014) result in mental fatigue, physical exhaustion, and nagging injuries. In addition to having less time to devote to academic pursuits, either by choice or because of the heavy influence of the athletic structure, college athletes also live, eat, study, and socialize together and are guided towards similar majors (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Southall & Weiler, 2014). As a result, isolation, along with the challenges of academic success, can in many instances affect the quality of the college experience. Harper, Williams, and Blackman (2013) highlighted the fact that "97.4% of institutions graduated Black male student-athletes at rates lower than undergraduate students overall. On no campus were rates exactly comparable for these two comparison groups" (p. 1).

Researchers indicate that neoliberal practices place greater emphasis on athletic skills and generating revenue rather than developing academic talent. Thus, neoliberalism devalues education due to the significant time demands of big-time college athletics and the ideological view that athletes are sources of revenue rather than students (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). Over time, the number of Black males who leave these PWIs without

their degree has increased. Consequently, Black male football athletes merely maintain eligibility rather than become high achievers and active learners; they are expected to devote excessive time and energy toward their sport to deliver winning seasons and secure corporate sponsorships for the college or university (Comeaux, 2015). Dohrmann (2007) suggest that in effort to compete at the highest level, schools may attempt to place students in majors that help the student meet NCAA academic requirements. Lederman (2003) suggests that Black males, particularly in revenue sports like football and basketball, are often clustered together and steered toward less rigorous and more student-athlete friendly degrees. Fountain and Finley (2009) examined the media guides of a Division I football program over a period of 10 years and tracked the academic progress of the players from freshman to senior (graduating) year. The results showed there was a mass matriculation into a handful of majors, such as general/university studies, sport/recreation management, and/or social sciences by the end of the students' matriculation.

Person and LeNoir (1997) hypothesized that the prevailing culture of the college would benefit from having Black male sport participants, who are often among the most visible students on campus, model for their peers (other student-athletes and nonathletes alike) as serious students majoring in rigorous degree programs and achieving academic success in the classroom. However, interest convergence suggests that a dominant force is willing to promote racial advances for Blacks only when they also promote White self-interest (Delgado, 1995). Proponents of the current college athletic model argue that an athletic scholarship to a prestigious White institution benefits the Black athlete who would otherwise not be admitted into the university. They further assert that a college degree could potentially elevate a person's socioeconomic status as well as improve social

mobility. The Black athlete is granted access to prestigious universities with the understanding that an athletic scholarship is the path to a better life. The student is offered an athletic scholarship that covers tuition, room, books, and board. The athletic-academic tradeoff, however, is not as simple as it appears. Open access or a less lenient admissions policy will allow greater access, but it may also come at a cost.

Although universities may relax their standards to allow a subset of students to gain access, once admitted, those students must attempt to meet the high academic demands set forth by the university. Many Black male athletes, particularly in football and basketball, struggle with the NCAA progress toward degree requirements. The NCAA requires that all student-athletes satisfy minimum academic requirements on an annual basis (Christianson, 2004). Students who have been granted access based only or solely on athletic ability often have the most difficult time adjusting to the rigors of college. These students often lack basic reading, writing, and math skills. They are typically required to take remedial courses or less rigorous elective courses during their first year. While a student may have been told that he can choose a particular major during the recruiting process, once he arrives on campus, the narrative may change to appease the coach's desires and to ensure that the student remains eligible.

Often, the most athletically talented students require the most academic assistance. Because those students could ultimately affect wins and losses, often pressure to prepare them to play immediately occurs. The challenge in allowing those students to participate in their sport is that there is a short time period to aid them properly as they transition into the university. Fatigue (Edwards, 1984b) and restricted time for studying have caused many athletes to give up and cease caring about their academic work. Time is the greatest asset

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to an academically underprepared student-athlete. The lack of time, assistance with time management, and study skills prevents the student from fulfilling his or her academic potential. If the student has a documented learning disability, the challenges of meeting the minimum progress toward degree requirements are even greater. Black males with the greatest academic challenges or who are indifferent to school will often allow their course and degree choices to be influenced by those individuals who may not have their best interest in mind. Coaches and athletic administrators are hired to ensure that students remain eligible and are able to compete, which is why a belief exists among athletes that athletic performance is reinforced over academic performance (Adler & Adler, 1985). As long as the Black male meets the eligibility and able to compete criteria, then White coaches and minority coaches are happy with the arrangement. However, when the athlete has exhausted his eligibility or is unable to compete, he is often disregarded, regardless of whether he has a degree or not. When this tragedy occurs, the student may struggle with adjusting to life after sports due to a sense of abandonment; consequently, the Black male athlete can feel as if he has been exploited by college athletics.

It is common today to refer to college athletes as student-athletes, yet in recent years, that label has come under much scrutiny by individuals critical of college athletics. Researchers believe an imbalance exists concerning the amount of time a college athlete must dedicate to his or her sport. Because of the time commitment and pressures involved with college athletics at the highest level, athletes are encouraged to be athletes first and students second (Singer 2008). This imbalance heavily impacts the decision-making process for many Black male student-athletes. The impact is so great that student-athletes believe that they must give up their occupational interests and ambitions in order to focus

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on their athletic goals (Valentine & Taub, 1999). Given the magnitude of college sports and pressure to be successful, college athletes unquestionably will spend more time preoccupied with their sport than they do with their academics. Although it sounds good to promote academic achievement in the classroom, the actions of many athletes and coaches have been to dedicate every available minute, hour, and day toward the success of the team. Students who have been reared to value education are often able to find balance between what takes place in the classroom and what occurs on the field of play. However, student-athletes with prior experiences in settings where academic achievement was not stressed or promoted will often become indifferent to education and grow up without any real appreciation for learning or academic achievement. Frequent academic failures, or at best mediocre grades, lead to embarrassment and despair; thus, athletes begin to engage in role distancing (Adler & Adler, 1985).

Student-athletes need academic support that is sensitive to their athletic schedule; psychological support for their intense athletic commitments; and career development support. They have limited time for educational or social activities and are largely isolated from the general student body, particularly in season (Comeaux, 2015). Since the early 1900s, university officials and the NCAA have established policies and programs intended to improve the lives and experiences of student-athletes; however, athletic advising and counseling programs historically concentrated on academic eligibility and graduation success with less emphasis on personal development (Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Lottes, 1991; Watt & Moore, 2001). Cultivating holistic development and empowering the Black male collegiate athlete should the university and athletic departments primary focus. By heightening the student-athletes level of consciousness through career and personal

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development programming, the expectation for the athlete will be a greater sense of urgency as it pertains to career preparation.

Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative study I explored the experiences of Black male football student-athletes at a Division I predominantly white institution. The research consisted of data collected from interviews done with Black former football student-athletes. Those interviewed, recounted their on-campus experiences with race, racism, recruiting, sport participation, and career and personal development. The study explores the level to which those experiences can effect a Black males mindset when it applies to career development and life beyond football. Black male athletes, particularly at PWIs, occupy a unique space. In many instances, if not for their athletic prowess, the Black male athlete would not gain access into these institutions (Harper 2018). Academic admissions standards are often relaxed to accommodate the athletic department's desire to admit a less than qualified applicant. Once admitted, the Black male athlete is exposed to a less than accommodating social and academic culture. Black student-athletes face isolation, integration, and commitment barriers to positive college adjustment (Hyatt, 2003). Isolation can paradoxically exist despite the high level of public visibility afforded to student-athletes through attention to their athletic performance. The campus perception is that student-athletes are admitted under special circumstances, and as a result, both their student peers and faculty marginalize their academic potential (Hyatt, 2003). Socially, the Black student-athletes at Division I schools experience some of the most detrimental and deep-rooted racial stereotypes by other members of the campus community (Comeaux, 2010; Edwards,

1984; C. K. Harrison, 1998; Johnson, Hallinan, & Westerfield, 1999; Sailes, 1993; Simons,

Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007; Singer, 2005).

Often Black male student-athletes define success according to whether they make it

in professional sports. Within the Black community, a career in professional sports

signifies that a person has made it (Edwards 1988). In professional sports, athletes are

compensated extremely well. While a career in professional sports may only last 5 to 10

years, a professional athlete can make a significant amount of money in a short window of

time. For a select few professional athletes able to compete at the highest level, the

opportunity to achieve generational wealth exists. Within the Black urban community,

where youth sports are promoted, pressures exist both internally and socially for Black

males to make it in professional sports. Sports marketing and media images of wealthy

professional athletes inundate the American psyche. Young Black males grow up with an

unrealistic understanding of what it means to be successful. For example, although

becoming a doctor or a lawyer are more realistic careers for Black males to aspire to, many

of them fall into the trap of pursuing a career in professional sports, even though the

chances of attaining that goal are less than 0.01% (Sellers, 1991). Far too many young

Black males neglect academic and social development in the hope of becoming a

professional athlete. Given that only 2% of college athletes in Division I football are

projected to make it to the NFL, it is concerning that on average 45% of football

subdivision school football players do not receive college degrees (Madsen, 2014; New,

2015). When they fall short of achieving a career in professional sports, there is often a

question of "What do I do now?" Many Black males in football and basketball go through

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college, leave without attaining a degree, or struggle to find a meaningful career after their athletic eligibility has expired.

While in college, many Black male football student-athletes do not seek out or participate in career or student-athlete development programming. Researchers believe that many of these students are not invested in career development programming at the collegiate level as they are more focused on pursuing a career in the NFL. Other believe the time commitment that exists within these major football programs does not allow students the opportunity to take advantage of career development programming. There does not appear to be a great urgency among coaches and athletic administration to invest in the holistic development of the athlete beyond the playing field. The Black male athlete who is unprepared academically for the rigors of college may have been awarded a scholarship to a PWI for the sole purpose of playing a sport. Black males are often shuffled into classes and degree programs that are student-athlete friendly. Very little is done for them in the area of degree exploration or social and cognitive development. They are expected to remain eligible and compete at a high level until their eligibility has expired. The NCAA has legislated minimum requirements that athletes must meet on a semester and annual basis, but those standards do not necessarily lead to graduation. Furthermore, the pressure to win has led many coaches to implement team-related structures that dominate the athlete's time. Even team-related functions that are deemed voluntary are highly encouraged by coaches. The student, therefore, has little time for additional studying or socialization outside the athletic community.

Because of these structures, the athlete is confined to socializing with individuals on their respective teams and other athletes in the athletic department. Because of the

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elevated obligation to their sport, the whole idea of the athlete venturing outside their athletic existence is stunted and never truly developed. Moreover, the agendas of the athletic department and coach are often in direct conflict with the student-athletes' welfare. Coaches will recruit top prospective student-athletes for the sole purpose of getting them to commit to the program and the university. During the recruiting process, promises are made to the athlete that imply a 4-year commitment beyond just being able to compete in their sport. Coaches often promise the student that he can major in whatever major his heart desires, regardless of academic ability. However, when the student commits and arrives on campus, the narrative often changes. Students may be encouraged by coaches and/or academic staff to change their majors to less rigorous degree programs in order to remain eligible and to dedicate more time to athletics. Benson (2000) found that coaches were complicit in the academic underperformance of the Black male student athletes.

There is a belief that academic clustering frequently exists within revenue-generating sports such as football and men's basketball (Otto, 2012). By enrolling students in easier programs, either in rigor or flexibility, coaches can ensure their student-athletes are meeting the academic requirements while not sacrificing attention and efforts with their sport (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2006).

In this study, I explored the significance of the problem from several vantage points. First, the problem is systemic and encompasses the overarching problem of racism, which is unlikely to change but still requires examination. I examined the system of racism and career success beyond collegiate athletics through the theoretical lens of critical race theory (CRT) and career development theory, which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Significance of the Study

Collegiate and professional sports are celebrated in American culture. Perceptions of professional athletes—their salaries and elevated status—have warped a generation of Black men into thinking that athletic attainment is more important than academic achievement or social development. The popularity of sports in America has created a narrative that many in the Black community see as a viable option toward attaining social and cultural capital.

This study is significant because I explored career success for Black male football student-athletes and examined why some feel unprepared for the transition for life beyond their sport. My research builds upon the research that has been done on CRT and sports, athlete and racial identity, and career development (Cooper, 2016). Moreover, previous research done on student-athlete development, I believe requires further examination. The need to examine the role that race plays in the lives of Black student-athletes, as well as the development, specifically social capital development (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Bimper 2016), is further accentuated due to the influential sociocultural climate of historically White settings across many NCAA member institutions. This study's research looks further at previous work done on student-athlete development, particularly about Black male football student-athletes at the Division I level. A qualitative study was chosen to illustrate the challenges that Black male student-athletes in football must overcome both internally and externally in order to grow holistically.

Although research has been done on the effectiveness of advising and counseling with student-athletes, this study examined the experiences of Black male football student-athletes and how they perceive career development at a predominantly white institution.

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This study's findings will help higher education institutions and other sport entities establish more policies, processes, and practices for an often-exploited population that in some cases are ill-prepared for life beyond sports. Part of that process should be to have the Black male football student-athletes complete a career assessment during the freshman and sophomore years in college. During the freshman year, practitioners can ascertain what students' career goals are beyond their sport. Included in that survey will be questions regarding majors, long-term career goals, and definitions of success. As the student enters their second year in school, a reassessment to determine if those career decisions have changed and the reasons why should be done. Once those questions have been answered, practitioners will be able to create a profile for each student-athletes needs and determine the types of programming that the athletic department should offer. The primary goal is to offer career development programming that is beneficial and worthwhile to student-athletes' development. Furthermore, for athletic administrators, coaches, and staff, an obligation exists to prevent the exploitation of young Black males in football, if for no other reason than to improve the student-athlete's quality of life long-term. There has to be a willingness on the part of coaches and departmental staff to encourage and embrace student-athlete development. When everyone else around the student is telling him that he will make it to the NFL, there also should be a trusted voice telling him to focus on social and cognitive development and find career success beyond his sport.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research study:

1. How do race and ethnicity affect the experiences of Black male football student-athletes while in college?

2. What effects do the institutional norms and practices of a predominantly White institution have on Black male football student-athletes' perceptions of their experiences?

3. What role does college athletics play in the holistic development of Black male football student-athletes at a predominantly White institution?

Definition of Terms

Following is a list of defined terms used in this study.

Student-Athlete—A person who participates in an organized competitive sport sponsored by the educational institution in which he or she is enrolled.

Division I— The highest level of intercollegiate athletics at which a student-athlete can compete. Division I athletes are governed by NCAA.

Power 5 Conference—Five athletic conferences that are also members of the FBS. The power-five conferences are made up of schools in the following conferences: ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12, and SEC.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)—A theoretical framework for examining how society and culture interpret race, racism, law, and power. Sport scholars have embraced CRT approaches in research to explore how race impacts persons of color in sport and relationships to the structural management and operations of the institution of sport (e.g. Agyemang & DeLorme, 2010; Bimper et al., 2013; Singer, 2005).

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Career Development Theory—A framework for understanding the process by which a person's career identity evolves and changes over a lifetime based on his or her experiences.

Career Success – Positive material and psychological outcomes resulting from one's work-related activities and experiences.

Goal Discrepancy - Occurs when an individual's expectations are inconsistent with his or her current status with respect to the criteria associated with successful attainment of the individual's goals

Interest Convergence Theory – Groups (as opposed to individuals) act only on their interest, and not on the recognition of moral duties. Delgado (1995) suggest that interest convergence compels white people to advocate for the advancement of people of color only if their own self-interest is better served. Theorist suggest that those in the majority who enact social, political, and economic change on behalf of minorities rarely do so without first identifying the personal costs and gains associated with such social actions.

Micro Aggression – Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities.

Macro Aggression – Large-scale or overt aggression toward those of a certain race, culture, gender, etc.

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)—A nonprofit organization that regulates athletes of 1,268 North American institutions and conferences.

Assumptions

In this study, I focused on the experiences of Black male football student-athletes at the collegiate Division I college level, and therefore an assumption could be inferred that this study might apply to other Black collegiate athletes in other sports or student-athletes at the Division II or III levels. However, for the purposes of this study, all data collected are focused on Black male college football student-athletes at the Division I level, particularly those students in one of the Power 5 conferences.

Researcher Positionality and Assumptions

My position and racial identity influenced every stage of this study. Because I identify as a Black male academic advisor at the collegiate level who works with football student-athletes and I am also a former college football player, I write and operate based on my lived experience. I also occupy a position of power in the university as an academic advisor. Therefore, I am deeply connected to football athletes, for I too have experienced much of what has been documented in the literature. It has been through my own personal experiences, and a research of the literature that I have sought to do a deeper dive into this topic which has been a passion of mine for many years, and so the research was both validating and familiar.

Milner (2007) discusses the importance of the researcher embracing their positionality as they conduct their research. He writes that some researchers and people of color are kidnapped into believing that they are inferior and thus concentrate on negative attributes of people and communities of color (Milner, 2007). The belief is that researchers of color should be actively engaged, thoughtful, and forthright when conducting research where issues of race and culture are concerned (Milner, 2007). A White person conducting

this study may misrepresent the historic challenges that Blacks have faced and continue to deal with because of their White privilege. Education researchers have given privileged status to dominant, White voices, beliefs, ideologies in the process and outcomes of education research (Chapman, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Stanley, 2007). I believe my status as a Black man, and former student-athlete, as well as my current role in academic advising help provide me with a greater understanding of the challenges that Black male student-athletes face at predominantly white intuitions. Researchers' with multiple and varied positions, roles and identities are intricately and inextricably embedded in the process and outcomes of education research (Chapman, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Stanley, 2007).

In addition, the sample size of participants is exclusively made up of former Black male football collegiate athletes at the Division I level. Black male athletes from other sports and Black female student-athletes were excluded from the study. In addition, the sample size consisted of former Black male college football student-athletes that resided in the state of Texas when they were undergraduate students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter contains a review of literature related to intercollegiate athletics and

Black male football student-athletes. The emphasis of this study focused on Black male

football student-athlete, and how they define career success beyond participation in their

sport. This study was conducted to determine if Black male student-athletes at PWIs are

adequately prepared both socially and cognitively to transition out of their sport once their

careers in sports are over. Factors such as race, athletic identity, career, and personal

development were examined to determine their influence on the collegiate Black male

football student-athlete. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of influence

that collegiate athletics and the university as an institution has on Black male football

student-athletes as they matriculate through PWIs of higher learning. The results of this

study may assist in providing data for assisting athletic academic personnel in their role as

advisors, coaches, faculty, senior administration.

Early literature in the sociology of sport suggests that athletic role aspirations and

behavior are reinforced not only through media images but also through role models and

parents (Harris, 1994; McPherson, 1976). The desire for many is to reach a level of

stardom that will allow them to elevate their families' financial and socioeconomic status.

The young Black male is inundated with depictions of professional athletes performing at

the highest level in the NFL and NBA. These professional athletes from football and men's

basketball have become heroes in the Black community. Edwards (1984) argues that the

broader society has capitalized on the past successes of African Americans in professional

sports and has overpromoted athletic achievement as being a respectable career path for

young Black males. No longer are careers in education, medicine, or law celebrated as the pinnacle and/or desired career choice for young Black males. Edwards (1988) stated that the single-minded pursuit of a sports career drains talent toward sports and away from other critically vital areas of occupational and career emphasis (medicine, law, economics, politics, education, the technical fields, etc.). The professional athlete has replaced the previously mentioned professions in the hierarchy of desired viable careers for young Black males. For many of these young men, success can only be obtained if they are able to achieve a career in professional sports. Because American culture often over celebrates athletic achievement at the amateur and professional levels, young Black males are often attracted to the notoriety and wealth that accompanies a career in professional sports. Despite the long odds of becoming a professional athlete, many young Black males view sports as a means to a better quality of life. Harris & Hunt (1982) suggest that Black athletes overinvest themselves in athletics and neglect other skills (such as academics) that are likely to lead to upward social mobility. Research suggest that there appears to be a discrepancy between the number of African American athletes with expectations for a career in professional sports and those who actually make it suggests that a large proportion of the student-athlete are goal discrepant. Goal discrepancy occurs when an individual's expectations are inconsistent with his or her current status with respect to the criteria associated with successful attainment of the individual's goals (Parker & Kleiner, 1966).

This chapter is a chronological breakdown of supporting literature that provides an in-depth look at the history of collegiate football in the United States. Despite early health and safety related hurdles, the popularity of college football grew in popularity. As with

any team sport, the objective is to win. As the popularity of football began to grow, the added pressure for individual schools to be successful on the field also began to increase. It was out of this desire to establish a winning advantage that the White establishment began to recognize the athletic prowess of the Black athlete. The history of the Black athlete and their journey to relevancy is also discussed in this chapter. During the latter half of the twentieth century the popularity and profitability of collegiate athletics began to flourish. This chapter examines how the financial growth of American football can be attributed, at least in part, to the influence of the Black male athlete. A review of the literature also includes a description on how professional sports elevated Black athletes in the three major sports to cultural and social icons within the Black the community. Because of their athletic prowess, and celebrity status, the influence a Black man could have on a nation would create a ripple effect in the Black community, particularly among young Black males. In this chapter the topic of how young Black males are socialized into sports is discussed. A review of the literature examines the idea that an over socialization in sports can create an identity conflict for Black male athletes. This chapter also explores the role that racism plays in collegiate athletics. It is suggested that racism in collegiate athletics is systematic, as it is governed and managed by the dominant White establishment. In the effort to understand the role race has played in collegiate athletics the topic of race is examined through the lens of critical race theory. Researchers have utilized CRT and its tenets as a tool for understanding racism in college athletics. This chapter examines CRT and how it is used to negate the existing narratives that exist regarding the Black athlete. Finally, career development theory is examined as it pertains to Black male student-athletes and their preparation for life beyond the sport of football.

The History of the National Collegiate Athletic Association

To understand the origins of collegiate athletics in America, it is important to understand the circumstances by which the NCAA was founded. In the mid-1800s, the popularity of student-organized athletic activities became more prevalent on college campuses (Hums & MacLean, 2004). Interest grew to a level where universities and colleges began to organize structured competition with other institutions. As early as 1852, institutions such as Yale and Harvard organized rowing competitions (Hums & MacLean, 2004; Weight & Zullo, 2015). Throughout the late 1800s, the popularity in intercollegiate athletics continued to grow, and other sports began to emerge. Eventually, the popularity of rowing was supplanted by the growth and popularity of baseball and football (Hums & MacLean, 2004).

During this time, several themes and events emerged that eventually led to the formation of a collegiate governing body. The first theme to emerge was that sports competitions could potentially be very profitable to companies and the institution. Utilizing sports as a vehicle that could potentially sell a program became a clever way for companies to increase their revenue. Companies, such as Boston, Concord & Montreal Railroad Company, acquired exclusive sponsorship rights to a sports competition (Hums & MacLean, 2004). However, growing concern arose from faculty and staff about the influence that college football was having on the university as an academic institution (Hums & McLean, 2004; Weight & Zullo, 2015). The belief from campus personnel was that while athletics did have a role in personal and social development, the main focus should remain on academic achievement. However, early administrators acknowledged the power of collegiate athletics and noted how sports could galvanize the student body and

alumni. As the popularity of sports continued to rise, a number of institutions began to

push for greater control over athletic competitions (Hums & MacLean, 2004).

The need for greater oversight became more prevalent during the latter half of the

1800s due to the inordinate number of football-related injuries that occurred (Duderstadt,

2003 Hums & MacLean, 2004: Wiggins, 1995). In 1905, football-related injuries

accounted for 18 deaths, and over 140 student-athletes were seriously injured (Hums &

MacLean, 2004). To counteract this trend, President Theodore Roosevelt summoned

university administrators from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton to the White House to discuss

safety issues related to college football. Through that meeting and subsequent meetings, a

comprehensive plan was created to establish parameters for the game, which included

safety, structure, and integrity (Duderstadt, 2003; Wiggins, 1995).

In March of 1906, 62 universities came together to establish what was then named

the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS; Duderstadt, 2003;

Weight & Zullo, 2015; Wiggins, 1995). The IAAUS was later renamed the NCAA in 1910

(Hums & MacLean, 2004). The early NCAA was founded on *amateurism*, which by

definition meant that any college athlete who engages in a sport for the physical, mental, or

social benefits therefrom must not be paid to do so (Duderstadt, 2003).

While the NCAA was being formed, growing concern among university presidents

was expressed regarding the growing influence of sports at the university. Harvard

President Charles Eliot questioned the role that sports had on the university as a whole. It

was his belief that the entertainment value and profitability of athletics should not

circumvent the importance of academia (Clotfeler, 2011, p. 10). Nevertheless,

intercollegiate athletics continued to grow in popularity during the early 1900s. In

particular, college football became the most popular and most visible sport in the country among students, alumni, and general fans (Duderstad, 2003).

As the popularity of sports continued to grow, coaches and athletic departments began to wield more power on college campuses. Coaches began to recognize the power of sports and the influence it could have on decisions made at the university. After the inception of the NCAA, the University of Michigan joined the Big Ten conference. However, after years of being independent, then Michigan football coach, Field Yost, was opposed to rejoining the Big Ten conference in 1917, because it had restrictions on the number of external business interests that a full-time coach could have. Coach Yost's desire to leave the Big Ten conference was in direct conflict with university President James Burrill Angell's desire to remain in the conference. Because of the popularity of the coach and football in the state of Michigan, the board of regents sided with the coach (Byers & Hammer, 1995).

During the early 1900s, collegiate sports, particularly football, became more commercialized. As the popularity of collegiate sports continued to grow and more sports were added within athletic departments, schools began to recognize the financial impact that sports could have on the university. Both fans and alumni began to demand a greater emphasis be placed on athletics at the university (Wiggins, 1995). During that time, the Carnegie Foundation conducted a report on the emphasis that universities were placing on athletics (Savage et al., 1929). The report found concern among university officials in regard to the level of commercialization and professionalization that sports were having on athletic departments (Duderstadt, 2003; Wiggins 1995). Moreover, although the NCAA had been created as a means to bring uniformity to collegiate athletics, very little was done

to curb any negative financial implications that came along with college athletics (Wiggins, 1995). As sports became more profitable for the university, more revenue was invested into athletic departments for recruiting, financial aid, salaries, and facilities (Hums & MacLean, 2004). These changes, along with the end of World War II, led to an increase in college enrollment, which provided additional institutional revenue to spend on athletic departments (Byers & Hammer, 1995; Hums & MacLean, 2004).

The commercialization of collegiate sports continued to grow exponentially throughout the mid-1900s. As schools competed for talent, a greater emphasis was placed on recruiting budgets. Coaches were able to fly commercially to recruit players. As school's jockeyed for athletes, guidelines were proposed to establish parameters on allowable financial aid. The proposed financial aid guidelines called for more aid to be given to students who were either in the top 25% of their high school graduating class or had an overall B average (Savage, 1929). This new legislation allowed schools to begin offering full athletic scholarships to high school graduates based on academic merit (Byers & Hammer, 1995). The NCAA proposed legislation called the Sanity Code, which greatly favored more established northern schools that had the financial resources to offer more financial aid to recruits. While schools in the north favored this proposed legislation, southern schools pushed and advocated to use the land-grant concept, which relied less on the academic merits of the student-athlete. In 1948, the Sanity Code was passed, which permitted the awarding of scholarships and jobs, but with the important caveat that the recipients had to demonstrate financial neediness. Later in 1956, the NCAA sanctioned the awarding of scholarships without regard to an athlete's academic promise or economic

hardships. This true grant-in-aid concept was adopted, which allowed for more competition in the recruiting of athletes (Byers & Hammer, 1995).

The Emergence of the Black Male Athlete

Although the Southeastern Conference was established in 1932, it was the last intercollegiate conference in the United States to integrate its sports teams (Paul, McGhee, & Fant, 1984). The SEC has established itself as one of the most dominant conferences within the power-5. As is pertains television revenue, ticket sales, recruiting and athletic facilities, the conference is second to none amongst the other power-5 schools. In recruiting, the SEC has been dominated in recruiting by Florida, LSU, Georgia, Alabama, and Auburn, and one of those schools has won the conference championship (determined through a conference championship game) each year since 1999 (Caro, 2012). Based on these reasons and the perceived elevated stature of college football in the south, this study focused exclusively on Black male student-athletes in the Southeastern Conference. In 1961, William Rollins was the first Black athlete to attempt to join a team in the Southeastern Conference. Rollins failed to make the team, and it would be another 5 years before another Black student attempted to join a team in the conference. In the segregated south, racial integration was nearly non-existent in the public-school system, particularly in higher education. Despite the results of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), schools were very much segregated. States like Mississippi went so far as to enact legislation whose sole purpose was to maintain segregation (Paul et al., 1984). Schools in the Southeastern Conference self-imposed tournament bans to prohibit their schools from playing against Black athletes. Mississippi State University missed the 1959 and 1961 NCAA basketball tournaments because of racial segregation (Paul et al., 1984). Prior to 1970, the number of

Blacks attending SEC schools was minimal. In 1968, there were a total of 11 Black

athletes on scholarship in the SEC. In 1970, the number of Black student-athletes on

scholarship at SEC schools had risen to 41, but all those students were at one of three

schools—Kentucky, Tennessee, and Florida (Paul et al., 1984).

Change began to occur in the fall of 1970, when the University of Southern

California (USC) traveled to Birmingham, Alabama, to take on the University of Alabama

in a football game. The contest pitted a fully integrated USC team versus the all-White

Alabama Crimson Tide. The all-Black backfield of Sam Cunningham, Jimmy Jones, and

Clarence Davis defeated the Crimson Tide 42 to 21. Then coach Paul "Bear" Bryant

conceded that the USC team was the far superior team, and if Alabama were to contend in

the future, it would have to fully integrate its football team. Jerry Claiborne, assistant

coach for Alabama, noted, "Sam Cunningham did more to integrate Alabama in 60

minutes that night than Martin Luther King had accomplished in 20 years." (Yaeger, D.,

Cunningham, S., & Papadakis, J., 2006)

Over the past 50 years, the view on sports in America has evolved and has been

seen as a catalyst for racial change. Sports in general are viewed as a racial equalizer

because they provide heroes and winners (Hartmann, 2000). For Black males, sports

provide legitimacy, a validation that many in the Black community covet. In addition,

sports can provide educational opportunities for those individuals who might otherwise not

be able to pursue higher education. For the fortunate few, it can also offer a means to

upward social mobility. Furthermore, sports have provided young Black males with role

models and heroes in their communities. The belief also exists that sports can operate as a

vehicle for social interaction and community building within the Black community (Hartmann, 2000).

The review of literature in this section focuses primarily on the Southeastern Conference as it is one of the most profitable athletic conferences among the five major power-five conferences (Ozanian, 2013). And as mentioned above, the SEC conference was also the last major intercollegiate conference in the United States to integrate its sports teams. Despite the ruling in Brown vs. Board of Education there remained an unwillingness for a number of years to integrate universities within the conference. Furthermore, schools within the conference were often prohibited from competing against schools outside the conference that had Black athletes on their roster. This unwillingness to embrace the Black athlete would eventually lead to some teams within the conference missing out on tournaments and championships. State legislative bodies in southern states threatened to withdraw funds from schools that violated the unwritten rule of competing against schools with Black athletes (Paul, Magee and Fant 1984). It was only when perennial college football programs in the south began to lose their relevancy on the national stage that universities, athletic departments, and coaches began to acknowledge the necessity of having Black athletes at their institution. It was at that point there began a gradual ascension for Black male athletes, particularly in the football (Paul, Magee and Fant (1984). Timothy Davis (1995) applied Bell's (1992b) interest-convergence principle to explain the integration of African-Americans into major college sports. According to Davis (1995) during the early 1900s, prior to World War II, '[B]lack athletes who played for white institutions were channeled into sports such as track and field', because they did not involve the type of 'intimate physical contact' football and basketball required (p. 8).

However, by the end of World War II, the practice of racial exclusion changed as a result of economic factors both inside and outside of college athletics and higher education that led to the integration of football and men's basketball.

College Sports Becomes a Big Business

Although faculty and staff still holding racial prejudices at PWIs may have been reluctant to admit Black students into the university, their overwhelming desire to win on the playing field eventually led to change (Smith, Obeng, & Sales, 2015). As the resistance to Black athletes attending majority White institutions began to give way to integration, a mentality also emerged within the Black community that sports could provide a pathway to a better quality of life. When collegiate and professional sports became more commercialized, an influx of Black male athletes emerged as heroes within the Black community because of their athletic prowess. Black athletes like Jackie Robinson, Jim Brown, and Bill Russell became mammoth figures in the world of sports, and young Black boys began to aspire to their heights. In conjunction with the prominence of the Black athlete, the commercialization and overemphasis of sports increased the visibility and viability of college athletics. At the heart of the current manifestation of intercollegiate athletics is the revenue-generating ability of college football and basketball (Dosh, 2011). This revenue comes from several primary sources: television networks, advertisements, ticket and merchandise sales, and private donations (ESPN, 2008) For instance, in the SEC, the television networks ESPN and CBS pay a whopping $205 million to televise their football games annually (Ozanian, 2013). In addition, ESPN and the SEC launched the SEC Network in 2014 to provide coverage of SEC sports 24 hours a day (Suarez, 2013).

The world of collegiate athletics presents a contradiction. On the one hand, athletes are identified as amateurs and have to comply with NCAA rules and regulations. On the other hand, schools and athletic departments adhere to rules of the market that allow them to reap the profit from multimillion-dollar television contracts (Meggyesy, 2000). College athletes are not permitted to be paid in the traditional sense because they are considered amateurs; however, major programs, particularly football and men's basketball, reap large financial benefits off the unpaid labor of the student-athlete (Meggyesy, 2000). Black athletes make up a majority of participants in revenue-producing sports like football and men's basketball. The current collegiate model is often perceived as exploitive of Black athletes based on the millions of dollars that are generated annually, none of which the athlete sees (Brown K. & Williams A., 2018). In addition, the number of Black head coaches at the highest level is relatively low. Athletic scholarships for athletes have gone from 4-year scholarships to 1-year renewable scholarships. Consequently, if a student-athlete fails to perform athletically, the coach can cut the student's scholarship. In addition, legislation that has made it more difficult for Black students to meet minimum NCAA academic requirements has been proposed (Meggyesy, 2000).

The Black Athlete and the Socialization of Sport

Cooper (2019) analyzed the heterogeneous experiences of Black males utilizing multiple theoretical lenses to understand their holistic development across their lifespan. Whereas most researchers focus on the experiences of athletes during their athletic career, he maps out five socialization models that highlight the multiple systems at play that influence how Black males athletes identify themselves. The first model he discusses is the illusion of singular success which details the belief among Black male athletes that sport is

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the only route to success, leading to identity foreclosure after their careers are over. The second model revolves around the idea that elite athletes are all financially stable once they have reached the professional level, which is a fallacy, because while professional athletes do make millions, their careers are short-lived, and they often face bankruptcy after their professional career. The third model describes the transition recovery experience that athletes go through after they have been engulfed in an athletic identity during their athletic careers. The fourth model incorporates the idea that Black males must utilize sports as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. He titles this model as purposeful participation for expansive personal growth. Finally, Cooper illustrates the importance of holistic empowerment. This model stresses the importance of Black male athlete developing a social consciousness about the exploitative systems at play (Cooper, 2019).

The socialization process of African American males has been shown to be intentionally geared toward athletics and other forms of entertainment (Winbush, 1987). The process for integrating individuals in sports often begins during childhood and goes on through adulthood. This process integrates new members into society by teaching norms, values, and appropriate behaviors and allowing for the development of a sense of self (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1978; Thompson & Hickey, 1999).

Dr. Harry Edwards, a recognized sports sociologist, researched the connection between race and sports for decades. In "Educating Black Athletes," Edwards (1983a) discussed the plight of the Black athlete and how racism plays a prevalent role in a sports-driven society. His scholarly work also includes research on how sports can inhibit academic achievement and career development. Today, young Black males are inundated with depictions of Black professional athletes who have achieved mass notoriety and

financial success. The mass media inundates society with images of African American men who garner success and fame through sports, lending support to the stereotype of African American males as exclusively athletically talented (Coakley, 1998; Gaston, 1986; Hall, 2001; Sailes, 1984). Edwards illustrated how racial discrimination, limited access to high-prestige occupational opportunities, and limited Black visibility in areas such as medicine and law have led to a devaluation of their worth in the Black community (as cited in Anderson, 1990, p. 508).

Early literature in the sociology of sports suggests that athletic role aspirations and behavior are reinforced not only through media images but also through role models and parents (Harris, 1994; McPherson, 1976). In addition, scholars have noted that because of a lack of Black role models outside of sport and entertainment, athletics has become an easily distinguishable form of possible achievement for African American males (Drummond et al., 1999; Harris, 1994; Sailes, 1998). The elevated stature of professional athletes in the media and their depiction as a symbol of masculinity has created a dynamic whereby the professional Black athlete has replaced historic role models such as business entrepreneurs, lawyers, and doctors. Because of the heavy emphasis on sports from the Black family and community, which has culminated in the lack of successful Black role models outside of sports, a young Black male is susceptible to an identity shift toward sports (Edwards, 1988).

In "The Single-Minded Pursuit of Sports Fame," Edwards (1988) discussed the idea of the triple tragedy for Black athletes as they try to attain sports, fame, and fortune. The first tragedy is that thousands of Black males will obsess overachieving a goal that a majority will never obtain. The second tragedy is that far too many Black athletes will

focus primarily on their sport at the expense of personal and cultural development. The final tragedy is the drain on occupational talent within the Black community that is pulled away from viable careers in medicine, law, politics, and education for the sake of athletics (Edwards, 1983, 1988, 2000). Unlike White children, African American children see very few lawyers, doctors, teachers, or scientists of their own race portrayed in the media and in their own life, which may cause them to cling to athletes as their role models because that is the most successful image that they are presented with regularly (Edwards, 1983).

The consequences of overemphasizing athletic participation that have been identified in the literature are lower levels of academic achievement, higher expectations for professional sports careers as a means to upward mobility and economic viability, highly salient athletic identities, and lower levels of career maturity (Adler & Adler, 1991; Baillie & Danish, 1992; Beamon & Bell, 2002, 2006; Clow, 2001; Edwards, 2000; Eitzen, 2003; C. Harrison & Lawrence, 2003; S. Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Lomax, 2000; Winbush, 1987). In addition, it has been suggested that the push toward athletics as seen within African American families hinders the social and cognitive growth of African American youth, particularly African American males (Edwards, 1998, 2000).

The differential in graduation rates of Black student-athletes and other student-athletes is a significant concern. Black male football student-athletes graduate at a rate that is 21% lower than their White teammates (Siegel, 1996). In basketball, White male basketball players graduate at a rate of 52%, while their Black counterparts graduate at a rate of 38% (Lapchick, 2009). In a study conducted by the NCAA and the American Institute for Research, African American athletes were found to have a higher expectation of a professional sports career than all other student-athletes (Lapchick, 1996).

Zimbalist (1999) discussed the difficult balance that exists in sports as athletes attempt to weigh the benefits of participating in sports versus the psychosocial determinants that sports can have on an athlete. In a study done on the impact of college football, a number of Black males indicated that football had taught them about life and overcoming obstacles (Singer, 2008). The athletes shared stories of how participation in college football paralleled their own life experience (Singer, 2008). The Black students in the study indicated that through football they were able to develop survival skills, and those skills ultimately prepared them for the game of life (Singer, 2008). Other benefits mentioned in the study included the opportunities that athletes believed were made available because of their participation in sports. But there are also detriments that Black male athletes struggled with, which included trying to find a balance between being a student and an athlete. Because sports participation often consume so much of the athletes time, the athlete often feels they are an athlete first and a student second (Zimbalist, 1999). In addition, the athletes also indicated that it was difficult to assimilate into the academic culture because coaches and other stakeholders were more concerned with their role as a athletes as oppose to their role as a student. Financial implications are often a contributing factor to why Black males pursue a career in sports. Black males in particular often believe that sports participation is a means to a free education and better quality of life. Because of these aforementioned reasons, many Black males believe that the financial implications far outweigh the amount of social and academic sacrifices that a Black male athlete must endure.

However, many researchers feel sports can create psychosocial detriments. Zimbalist (1999) explained that although sports can provide positive benefits, there are

also negative implications when the athlete becomes too focused on athletics. Whether through internal or external pressure, many athletes develop an unbalanced identity that leans heavily toward athletic participation. Thus, instead of Black males identifying themselves as student-athletes, they often categorize themselves as an athlete-student or scholarship athlete. Zimbalist (1999) indicated that most Black males did not see themselves as a student first but rather viewed themselves as athletes first. Despite the moniker of student-athlete, many Black male football college athletes believe their sole reason for being at primarily White institutions is to participate in football. Those students are under no illusion about their perceived role on campus. Moreover, because this athletic mentality becomes the accepted practice, athletes give in to athletic preconceptions and take on more of an athletic identity (Singer, 2019).

The NCAA has enacted legislation that restricts the number of hours that athletes can participate in their sport per week. The rule mandates that coaches are limited to 20 hours per week for practice. Striking a healthy balance between, academic, social, and athletic life can be difficult, and many college athletes find that the demands of one role make it difficult to meet the demands of the other (C. K. Harrison et al., 2009; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). The business of college football has become a 12-month endeavor. Student-athletes at institutions with more competitive athletic programs report feeling more pressure to emphasize athletics over academics (Sack & Thiel, 1985). Adler and Adler (1991) found that male-revenue college athletes enter college with feelings of optimism and pragmatism about their academic roles, but many devalue their academic role as early as their second semester, largely because their sport's demands structurally inhibit athletes' academic presence on campus. Furthermore, restrictions on time and the

demand to win often limit the student's ability to participate in student-athlete engagement activities (Singer, 2008).

Athletic Identity and Student-Athlete Role Conflict

For many African American male student athletes, the development of a racial identity and an athletic identity may evolve along parallel pathways (Brown et. al. 2003; Harrison, Harrison, and Moore 2002.).The genesis of the identity problem begins during the Black male's adolescent years. Black males from urban areas who show a high aptitude for athletic achievement are often pushed toward involvement in organized sports. The overinvesting in athletic participation at the expense of social and cognitive development can have long-term negative effects. Several authors have suggested that the physical and psychological demands of intercollegiate athletics, coupled with the restrictiveness of the athletic system, may isolate athletes from mainstream college activities, restrict their opportunities for exploratory behavior, and promote identity foreclosure (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Nelson, 1983; Petitpas & Champagne, 1988). In addition to identity foreclosure, another aspect of self-identity, athletic identity, may also be relevant to the career decision-making process in college student-athletes, part of multidimensional self-concept, athletic identity consists of the cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social concomitants and identifying with the athlete role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). Thus, in order to examine the mindset and attitude of the Black male athlete, it is important to look at self-identity and the role it plays in choosing a career. Finally, as a means of showing that professional and career success are not limited to athletic participation, I sought to learn if Black male athletes can redefine their career narrative and success.

Given the social structure involved with competing in athletics, student-athletes often live, work, dine, and travel with one another. Student-athletes often engage in conversations with one another concerning sports, and often their interactions with non-athletes are also sports centered (Clow, 2001; Danish et al., 1993). The amount of time that student-athletes devote to sports requires that the athletic role of student-athletes take precedence over all other roles and identities. The level of commitment and exclusive devotion that is necessary for athletic achievement may restrict the exploratory behavior essential to identity development (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Person & Petitpas, 1990). It is natural, that if individuals dedicate the greatest amount of their time to their sport, then the development of personal identities outside the sport are stagnated (Petitpas & Champagne, 1988). Further, African American males' cultural identity and masculinity are often tied to athletic participation and performance (Smith, 2007). Using the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale, L. Harrison, Sailes, Rotich, and Bimper (2011) found that African American males were more likely than their White counterparts to see themselves as only athletes and were also more likely to believe that others view them as simply athletes.

This identity shift can often create an academic and social imbalance within the individual's own identity. As individuals become more engulfed in their sport, less emphasis is placed on academic, professional, and personal development. Thus, while the athlete may have the athletic ability to attend college on an athletic scholarship, significant academic challenges may prevent this from occurring. According to Edwards (2000), an overemphasis placed upon athletic development can inhibit a child's academic progress and lessen the opportunity to be able to accept an athletic scholarship. It is estimated that 25–35% of Black male high school athletes who qualify for an athletic scholarship cannot

accept those scholarships because of academic challenges. Edwards revealed that over 50%

of Black college athletes will not finish college, and of the ones who do, 25–35% will

graduate with a degree in physical education or in majors specifically tailored for student-

athletes. According to Edwards, these athlete majors, or *jock degrees*, have little value in

the job market. He pointed out that a majority of Black athletes fail to prepare for life

outside of athletics; this finding is applicable for both collegiate and professional athletes.

An overwhelming number of Black athletes are not invested in plans for their future after

their sports career is over. Edwards stated,

> These blacks are unemployed more often, and earn less when they do have jobs,
>
> than their nonathletic college peers; they are also likely to switch jobs more often,
>
> to hold a wider variety of jobs, and to be less satisfied with the jobs they hold—
>
> primarily because the jobs tend to be dull, dead-end, or minimally rewarding. (p.
>
> 32)

Numerous articles have been written detailing the idea of *academic clustering* as

well as the idea of steering Black student-athletes toward less rigorous degrees. These

practices revolve around the idea that there are too many crucial variables at hand to allow

talented student-athletes to choose their own major. Instead of allowing the student-athlete

the freedom to choose his or her own major, many athletic and academic staff steer their

students to athlete-friendly majors (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2006;

Crepeau, 2006). In addition, members of a team will often flock to a less rigorous degree

program because it allows for greater flexibility and less risk for ineligibility. This process

of having multiple student-athletes from one particular team in one-degree area is referred

to as clustering (Lederman, 2003). The idea of whether clustering is a benefit or a detriment to the student-athlete has long been debated.

One theory regarding clustering is that some students will gravitate to majors that are within their own comfort zone. For example, a student-athlete that enters the university ill-prepared for the academic demands of college may choose a major that is less academically rigorous, that will allow them to focus on their sport and remain eligible. It reflects the belief that choosing a major that is familiar to them will somehow make the academic journey easier (McGinn & O'Brian, 2004). In addition, a belief exists that peer influence has a role in the majors that student-athletes choose. Commonality often enters into the equation, particularly for freshmen student-athletes who may be indifferent to academics (McGinn & O'Brian, 2004). The belief also exists that coaches and academic personnel play a role in academic clustering. Academic advisors are under immense pressure to ensure that all student-athletes are academically eligible to compete. The theory suggests that student-athletes can be nudged into degree programs that are more geared toward maintaining eligibility as opposed to providing career and personal satisfaction. Another theory as to why clustering has become more prevalent is that the athletic schedules for student-athletes have become so restrictive that students will select degree programs that are less time consuming.

Adler and Adler (1987), Bell (2009), Comeaux and Harrison (2011), C. Harrison and Lawrence (2003), Miller and Kerr (2003), Linnemeyer and Brown (2010), and Snyder (1985) addressed how Division I student-athletes often struggle to balance athletic and academic roles during the college experience. Their evidence suggested that student-athletes often associate more with their athletic-centered roles than with their academic-

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centered roles, which negatively influenced campus integration and student engagement (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009). This struggle to balance the roles of student and athlete can also lead to *identity foreclosure*, which is defined in this context as a scenario in which a student-athlete commits to an undergraduate major without adequate exploration of available opportunities (Burns, Jasinski, Dunn, & Fletcher, 2013; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Wittmer, Bostic, Phillips, & Water, 1981).

Because of existing circumstances surrounding participation in their sport, Black student-athletes can miss the opportunity to educate themselves on the importance of academic, personal, and career development while enrolled in institutions of higher learning. In "The Mis-Education of the African American Student-Athlete," the authors drew from the previous works of noted author and historian Carter G. Woodson, who wrote about the real psychological tragedies that take place in the Black community when Blacks fail to educate themselves or allow themselves to be miseducated by those who seek to keep them uneducated and unaware (Harrison, L., Bimper, A. Y., Smith, M.P., & Logan, A. D. 2017). The article touched on a number of points that illustrate the mindset of the modern-day Black male student-athlete. The authors centered the discussion on CRT, first describing CRT and then demonstrating how the theory can help bring understanding to the institution of racism in this country. The authors explained the process of sport socialization and athletic identity. According to the authors, Black males are socialized into sport at a higher rate than their White counterparts. Studies show that student-athletes are academically underprepared for the rigors of college, and a gap exists in the graduation rates of Black students compared to the White students (Benson, 2000; Edwards, 1983; Lapchick, 1996; Washington & Karen, 2001). A study conducted in 2006 revealed that

Black student-athletes graduate at a 12% lower rate than their White counterparts (NCAA, 2006). The graduation success rate differentials by race are far more staggering. In football, the rate is 77% for Whites and 55% for Blacks.

The over socialization of sports creates higher expectations for a Black male to become a professional athlete, which leads to the child embracing the athletic identity (Beamon & Bell, 2002). This overemphasis in athletics has created a role identity concern for Black males. Beamon & Bell (2002) discussed how the Black male is socialized into sport and how socialization—along with influences from home, the community, and the media—creates unrealistic pressures that force individuals to choose how to dedicate their time and energy. More often than not, the Black male will choose the path that is most visually pleasing to the eye. The allurement of professional sports and the lifestyle that comes with it often entices young Black males to focus all their resources and effort into pursuing that dream. Ultimately, their entire identity becomes wrapped up in sport, and other areas within their life begin to suffer. Beamon (2008) demonstrated how overt and covert pressures exist in the Black community to be athletically successful in collegiate athletics. Black males begin to take on an athletic identity that involves more time being spent on athletic participation and less on other aspects of their life. Beamon (2008) described how the development of athletic identities manifests itself in the education of African American student-athletes in that it narrows their focus for learning almost exclusively on their sport. Ultimately, the student's identity becomes so ingrained in sport that they create an athletic identity. This athletic identity can lead to role engulfment, which is where the athlete nearly excludes all other roles to become progressively more committed to the sport role.

The commercialization of sports has played a significant part in the identity development of Black males. For many, sports are seen as a rite of passage that boys in the urban community must go through in order to reaffirm their masculinity. Young Black males are inundated with images of professional athletes playing their sport and earning millions of dollars in the process. These images are ingrained in the Black male's psyche and perpetuated over and over again as the child grows and experiences greater success in his sport. Ultimately, too many Black males develop a heightened sense of athletic identity that, when left unchecked, can have negative results. Brewer et al. (1993) claimed that sport career transitions can affect patterns of self-identification. They suggested further inquiry into how individual differences variables (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity, personality) affect the relationship between athletic identity and sport career transitions. Good, Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raalte, and Mahar (1993) suggested that student-athletes possibly commit to the role of *athlete* and fail to investigate other identities.

Black male athletes in football and basketball often fall prey to athletic identity issues because they place less value on academic achievement and more emphasis on athletic involvement. These negative behaviors include an indifference to academics and a stunting of their social interactions outside of athletics. Rankin et al. (2011) found that male student-athletes, particularly those in high-profile sports across all divisions, experience less academic success and possess a greater athletic identity than female athletes. As Black male athletes matriculate to college, often a level of uncertainty and disconnect exists as they attempt to navigate the social norms of being a minority on a predominantly White campus. In addition, the exaggerated level of athletic identity along with racial identity issues can cause the Black athlete to feel alienated. These issues are

only further intensified when the Black athlete is underprepared for the academic rigors of

college. Compared to White athletes and other non-White students, Black male athletes are

the least prepared academically for college. Upon enrollment, they often struggle

academically, and in many cases fail to graduate. To counter that outcome, it becomes vital

that the narrative change and that Black males be shown a different path toward academic,

personal, and career development. This current narrative stereotypes the Black male

collegiate athlete as a dumb jock. The misconception is that the only reason the Black

athlete is at the university is to play his sport. Although some athletes are admitted under

the athlete exception, many others are more than capable intellectually and are college

ready.

Hoberman (2000) discusses the influence that athletics and particularly professional

sports has had on the Black community. The influence of media has created a heightened

awareness for Black males and the Black community. Sports figures are idolized by Black

males for their masculinity and their athletic prowess on the field of play. The overall

premise of the article is the need for educational programs that allow Black males the

freedom to make informed decisions regarding their place in American sports. The article

describes that there is an overemphasis on sports in the black community, and too many

black students are putting all their eggs in one basket. Edwards (1973) discusses how

realistic identities are lost because of the heavy influence of sports. He wrote, "Far from

being a positive force in the development of the black masses," he wrote in 1973,

"integrated big-time sports in its present form is perhaps a negative influence…athletics,

can stifle the pursuit of rational alternatives by Black people." Researchers have described

how the single-minded athletic goal pursuit can have negative implications. Athletic goal

discrepancy may be associated with poorer psychosocial adjustment once the student-athlete's career concludes. Some suggest that athletes whose athletic careers end expectantly suffer a number of psychosocial setbacks that spill into their later lives (Kleiber, Greendorfer, Blinde, & Samdahl, 1987; McPherson, 1976).

Racism in Intercollegiate Athletics

The current system of collegiate athletics reinforces the ideologies that place sports and winning on a pedestal above academic, social, and personal development. Entities such as the NCAA, Power 5 conferences, universities, alumni, and fans contribute to the hunger for sports. The demand for success on the field, combined with the financial investment from alumni and donors, often leads to athletic departments and coaches placing greater time demands on their athletes. In an intercollegiate sports context, investment in athletic teams, facilities, and coaches has been described as the *athletic arms race* (Edwards 2011). This idea extends beyond the athletic department. Winston (2000) described an analogous *positional arms race* between college and universities for students. Athletes will often conform to the demands of their coaches in order to solidify their position on the team. Cooper's (2012) examination of the history of Black athletes' experiences at predominately White institutions identified four challenges these athletes faced on campus: (a) racial discrimination/social isolation (Adler & Adler, 1991; Benson, 2000; Hawkins 2010; Sailes, 1993); (b) academic neglect (Adler & Adler; 1991; Gaston-Gayles, 2005; Hawkins, 2010; Sailes, 2010; Sellers, 2000); (c) economic deprivation (Byers, 1995; Funk, 1991; Zimbalist, 2001); and (d) limited leadership opportunities (Harrison, 2004). As a result, many Black male student-athletes experience negative educational outcomes, for example, lower writing skill, reading comprehension, critical thinking, etc. (Pascarella

et al., 1999). Black male athletes have consistently graduated at the lowest rates among all student-athlete cohorts at NCAA institutions (NCAA, 2012a, 2012b). When this occurs, athletes develop a personality imbalance that becomes detrimental to their academic and social development. Targets of this imbalance would rather pursue their athletic interests than develop life skills that can help them once their sports career is over.

When athletes' transition from high school to college, athletics often becomes more prominent in their lives. In high school, athletics is primary to the athletes' self-identity, but at the collegiate level, sport plays an even more central role in their existence (Melendez, 2008). Melendez (2008) conducted a qualitative study regarding the racial identity of Black football players and relied upon interviews from six undergraduate Black athletes at a PWI. Findings revealed that Division IA football programs indoctrinate their players in the athletic subculture through social distance. Social distance was defined as a product of the extensive travel, practice time, and family like orientation that exists within the athletic subculture. This creates an environment where football players most often socialize with the other football players (Melendez, 2008) Upon arriving at college, athletes begin to notice the commercialization of sports (Coakley, 1982; Eitzen, 1979; Hoch, 1972; Sack, 1977; Underwood, 1980). Black athletes in particular are inundated with visuals that depict the professional aspects of sports. The indoctrination is that if they are good enough and perform well, they can pursue a career in sports.

The current model of collegiate athletics is a form of systematic racism since a White majority group of people supervises, legislates, and controls the entity of college sports. A large and growing body of research on the Division I Black male college athlete experience has documented this ongoing social, political, and economic phenomenon

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(Hawkins, 2010; Nocera & Strauss, 2016). At the NCAA level, the majority is made up of White males who legislate rules concerning amateurism and who can profit off of college athletics. Singer (2019) discussed how U.S. college sport is rooted in the elite White male dominance system, and this has implications for the educational experiences and outcomes of Black male college athletes. In *Race, Sports, and Education*, the author describes a need for systems and learning environments to be constructed and sustained by leaders and professional practitioners in higher (and secondary) education that help nurture and extract from Black male athletes the unique gifts and talents beyond the athletic prowess they possess (Singer 2019). Although the NCAA sanctions dozens of varsity sports, the two that generate the most significant revenue are football and men's basketball. For example, in 2016–2017, the University of Kentucky's football and men's basketball teams (which were 59% and 57% Black, respectively, compared to the 6.8% Black student population of the institution as a whole) generated $36 million and $28 million in revenue, respectively, which comprised 52% of the school's athletic revenue for the year (Gaines, 2016;). It also has been reported that Division I men's football and basketball players generate about $12 billion in yearly revenue primarily through television contracts and ticket sales, making Division I athletics more profitable than professional sports leagues (McArdle, 2014). Through corporate sponsorships and lucrative television contracts, both sports generate a tremendous amount of revenue, in particular within the Power 5 conferences. The impressive (albeit questionable) commercial success of the "nonprofit" NCAA and its member institutions has enabled disproportionally (privileged) White athletics power brokers (e.g., coaches, athletic directors, conference commissioners, and externalities such as sponsors) to reap the material benefits from this athletics enterprise, enriching

themselves on the sweat and undercompensated athletic labor of often disadvantaged and predominantly Black male athletes (Branch, 2011). The problem with the current model is that a dominant White majority is in place that is profiting off the athletic ability of a minority class. The racialized bodies of Black male college athletes have become hyper-visible commodities (Hawkins, 2010). Under the current structure and conditions, Black amateur athletes are turned into godlike figures and serve as walking billboards for apparel deals that ultimately support the deep pockets of companies and schools (Branch, 2011; Hawkins, 2010). At the highest level of college athletics, the rosters for men's basketball and football are primarily made up of Black males. On its face, the model is exploitive if Black males are not adequately compensated for their athletic contributions and do not receive the college education that they were promised (Donnor, 2005).

Although collegiate athletics have become a multimillion-dollar revenue-generating entity for colleges and universities at the highest level, the system is flawed because amateurism does not allow athletes to reap the financial benefits they help to generate. Millions of dollars are being generated annually via sponsorships and television contracts for football and men's basketball (Donnor, 2005). However, little of that revenue finds its way to Black student-athletes who make up the majority of the athletes on collegiate rosters (Lapchick, Little, Lerner, & Mathew, 2009). The NCAA's justification for legislating restrictions on paying the student-athlete is supposedly to protect amateurism. The belief is that because the student is receiving a scholarship that covers tuition, room, board, and books, all their financial needs are being met. Furthermore, the NCAA and these PWIs of higher education control access through NCAA initial eligibility requirements and admission standards. Because of these reasons, the literature suggests

that many Black males in these athletic programs are victims of academic and athletic exploitation (Benson, 2000; Edwards, 1983, 1984) and economic exploitation (Eitzen, 2003; Zimbalist, 1999). The belief is that PWIs are not genuinely interested in educating these young men but instead view them as commodities that can be used for the schools' commercial benefit (Davis, 2000).

Edwards (1969, 1973, 1984) stressed how the influence of racism and other macro level or societal/structure factors have stymied and stifled the education and holistic development of the Black athlete in organized sports. Brooks and Althouse (1993, 2000, 2013, 2020) have taken interest in the education experiences and challenges of African American male athletes at PWIs. Harper et al. (2013) reported the disparities (e.g., lower high school grade point averages [GPAs] and precollege admission test scores, lower college GPAs and graduation rates) between African American male athletes (particularly football and basketball players) and the rest of their athlete peers. Gaston-Gayles (2004) and Simons, Van Rheenen, and Covington (1999) suggested that the low-test scores and graduation rates are a byproduct of a lack of academic motivation or academic self-concept. Other scholars subscribe to the belief that *deficit-laden attributes* cause students to struggle academically. These attributes consist of factors at the organizational level (e.g., organizational cultures of university athletic departments) and societal level (e.g., systematic racism in U.S. society; see, for example, Donnor, 2005; Hawkins, 2010; Singer, 2015).

Scholars who have researched collegiate athletics surmise that the current model is a form of racism. The power, control, and influence reside with the White majority, who dictate the amount of success that Black male student-athletes can achieve. Brooks and

Althouse (2020) in their research on racism in college athletics highlight the contributions of Black athletes and coaches. In a series of essays, the authors examine the marginalization, discrimination, and exploitation that Blacks must endure in college athletics. The authors highlight the historical impact that Black athletes have had on collegiate sports and call for sustained advocacy in pursuit of reform. Researcher believe that in order reverse systemic racism in college athletics there needs to be greater accountability in the NCAA and amongst universities, administrators, coaches, and student-athletes themselves (Althouse and Brooks, 2020).

Hawkins (2010) discussed how Black males are overrepresented in the two highest revenue-producing sports of football and men's basketball, yet those students fail to graduate from college at the same comparable rate as their White counterparts. In addition, the number of Black male nonathletes admitted to these PWIs is significantly less than their White counterparts. Because these Black male athletes can generate revenue, a belief exists that there is an interest convergence that takes place where Whites are willing to sacrifice access to these historic institutions as long as it advances their own agenda (Donnor 2005). This form of systemic racism relegates the Black male athlete to a commodity rather than recognizes him as an intelligent human being.

For Black males in particular, that form of deficit thinking often stifles academic and personal developmental growth. Combining a mentality that is indifferent to academic achievement with a lack of study time is a recipe for academic failure. Far too many athletes fall into the belief system that because they are an athlete and are highly visible, they will be taken care of from an academic standpoint. Although those academic luxuries may exist on some campuses, most faculties require the student-athletes to meet the same

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academic demands that all students are required meet. High-profile student-athletes are often taken aback by the level of academic rigor since many come from high schools where they were "taken care of." It is important for student-athletes, particularly Black male athletes, to change the narrative and begin to embrace academic achievement over that of athletic participation. Black males need to dispel and reject negative stereotypes that categorize them as dumb jocks or cocky athletes. The dumb jock stereotype assumes a lack of academic ability and motivation (Simons et al., 2007) even though studies have demonstrated conflicting results regarding athlete and academic performance when compared to their student peers (Burke, 1993; Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Pascarella et. Al., 1999; Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1985; Simons, VanRheenen, & Covington, 1999).

Historically, in as much as the NCAA's governing body is made up of individuals from the dominant majority, the current model for collegiate athletics is a form of systemic racism (Singer, Weems, & Garner, 2017). Over the past century, Whites have controlled access, revenue, and legislation pertaining to amateurism. Once Blacks were allowed to participate in sports at the collegiate and professional levels, they showed an ability and propensity to compete at a high level. As the level of dominance of Black athletes grew, the effect it had on winning led many from the dominant White majority to look for ways to control the minority population. The interest-convergence principle provides understanding to the White majority mentality as they began to understand the economic benefits of allowing Black admittance into their institutions of higher learning. Bell (1992) illustrated that interest convergence is when practices, policies and laws are designated to provide equal access and fair opportunities that benefit the dominant class more than the group that suffered the racial injury. Davis (1995) stated that increased commercialization

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of college sports was one of the most significant intrinsic factors. It resulted in Black student-athletes gaining greater access to opportunities to compete. Commercialization enhanced the pressure on colleges to field winning teams. This, in turn, propelled colleges to recruit and obtain the services of the most talented student-athletes regardless of their color. While moral desire to end segregation may have prompted many to seek the integration of organized collegiate sport, the economic interest of others may have been of primary importance. (p, 100). The first step toward monopolizing the resources was allowing Blacks access to PWIs. In doing so, the White majority was able to monopolize the number of Black male athletes who had previously attended historically Black universities. Black athletes were solicited for their services and promised more money, a better education, and the opportunity to compete athletically on the highest level.

Today the NCAA and its institutions have been accused of various forms of exploitation including but not limited to: academic (Gatmen, 2011), athletic (Beamon, 2008), and economic (Overly, 2005). An article in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (News & Views, 2005) revealed, "The case is strong that flagship universities are exploiting Blacks for their athletic talents," by noting that "the majority of flagship state universities admit Black students who are not academically qualified . . . solely for the purpose of their participation in intercollegiate athletics" (p. 2). Black males in basketball and football are often at the center of the controversy. Their lack of academic qualification might cause them to have the most difficult time getting into college. Once admitted, Black male athletes in football and basketball typically struggle academically and are at the greatest risk of failing to graduate. James Duderstadt (2000), a former college football player and former President of the University of Michigan, also observed

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that universities exploit the athletic talents of college athletes "for financial gain and public visibility," in part by "tolerating low graduation rates and meaningless degrees in majors like general studies or recreational life" (pp. 5–6).

In addition, there are greater pressures placed on Black male student-athletes to focus on their physical capabilities rather than their academic progress. Sack and Staurowsky (1998) discussed this emphasis, stating, "Universities are far more concerned with exploiting the athletic talent [of student-athletes] than with nurturing academic potential" (p. 104). Thus, as Black student-athletes began to focus less on academic achievement, negative stereotypes eventually emerged that skewed Black student-athletes' role and how they were perceived on campus. In the context of higher education, images of the dumb jock student-athlete have created realities, limiting social and academic integration of student-athletes on campus (Shriberg & Brodzinski, 1984). Combining these concerns with the athletic, racial, and social demands that Black males must deal with at PWIs explains why they struggle academically and graduate at a lower rate than White athletes. According to Benson (2000), much of the data on the under-achievement of Black male football student athletes has focused on either the deficit perspective or on the 'problems within society at large suggesting that these students' underachievement may be caused in part by the way schools are structured to maintain the prevailing social and economic order' (p, 223).

The current collegiate model is revenue driven. Winning championships along with school branding are of the utmost importance. Athletic departments and head coaches are under immense pressure from the university and the alumni to be successful. The added pressure to win at the highest level has created an arms race within many athletic

departments at Power 5 schools. Coaches are under immense pressure to recruit the best and brightest athletes regardless of their academic ability. Among coaches, it is often said that before they can win on the field, they have to win in recruiting. In the effort to secure the services of a top recruiting class, head coaches will at times overlook an athlete's academic ability, as well as character and social shortcomings, to get him into school. This creates problems not only for the student but also for the coach, the athletic department, and the university. When a coach knows a student is severely underprepared for college yet recruits him and grants him admittance under the athlete exception, the process in and of itself is exploitive. Benson's (2000) study of Black scholarship student-athletes at a Division I program reveals that the 'marginal academic performance' of the participants was a 'phenomenon created by a series of interrelated practices engaged in by all significant members of the academic setting' (e.g., peers, coaches, advisors, teachers/professors, and the student-athlete) (p, 226).

Critical Race Theory

This dissertation study illustrates how racism and the institution of racism affects Black male football student-athletes at PWIs. These individuals carry the burden of being African American males in America's educational and other social systems (Blake & Darling, 1994; Garibaldi, 1992; Gaston, 1986), and as student-athletes in a major university and college athletic program, they must cope in a system that was not originally designed to support them (Engstrom,, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995). More specifically, at many postsecondary institutions, particularly major Division I PWIs, the social, cultural, and academic climates have been found to be unfit for meeting the unique needs of Black students (Allen, 1992).

Today, Black student-athletes are among a subgroup of college student-athletes who have had to struggle and continue to struggle to overcome racism in the context of PWI. African American faculty, coaches, and administrators are virtually absent, African American students at predominantly White universities face institutional racism, as well as overt acts of discrimination (Biasco, Goodwin, & Vitale, 2001; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Lapchick, 1996). For example, Biasco and associates (2001) found that 66% of the African American students in their sample had experienced racism on campus and 85% viewed the campus as racially hostile. African American students often feel alienated from Whites at PWIs (Altbach, 1991), and notice very quickly, as one student stated, "everywhere I look, everywhere I turn, right, left, is White" (Feagin & Sikes, 1995, p. 91).

Several scholars have written specifically about racism, racial discrimination, and the exploitation of African Americans in college sport (e.g., Bailey, 1976; Brooks & Althouse, 1993a, 2000a; Coakley, 2004; Edwards, 1973, 1985; Sellers, 2000, Singer, 2005). In the effort to understand how racism manifests itself within college athletics, scholars have examined the institution of college athletics and how the majority has created a system that places power in the hands of those who historically have always had control at the expense of others.

To understand the challenges that Blacks in athletics must deal with, scholars have examined the issue of race through the theoretical lens of critical race theory. Critical race theory provides a foundation for understanding the systemic form of racism that exists in collegiate athletics. Critical race theorists argue that the era of the new American dilemma highlights the shortcomings of a liberal discourse that framed (and continues to frame) civil rights legislation around notions of color blindness and an appeal to morality that is

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both unrealistic and ahistorical in a nation with a well-documented racist foundation

(DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Gotanda, 1991; Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 1995).

During the mid-1970s, the emergence of CRT served as a response to the limited

ability of critical legal studies to address the effects of race and racism in the U.S. judicial

system (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The scholarship of

Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado initially led to the development of CRT

within the legal system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The premise of CRT is to examine

the impact of race and racism on people of color in the United States and ultimately

deconstruct the hegemonic system of White supremacy (Cook, 1995; Crenshaw, 1995;

Dalton, 1995; Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Matsuda, 1995). Critical race theory is an

epistemological framework that has emerged in academia as a challenge to the positivist

and legal discourse of civil rights (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT advances a strategy to

establish and account for race and racism in social institutions and works toward the

elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of opposing or eliminating others from forms

of subordination based on gender, class, language, and other differences (Parker & Lynn,

2002).

According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), there are three underlying principles

of CRT: "(1) The first is that race is an integral part of American society, (2) property

rights are the bedrock of U.S. society, and (3) the intersection between race and property

forms a critical perspective to understand social inequity" (p. 48). According to Ladson-

Billings (1995), the examination of race and racism should begin with an understanding

that Whiteness has been positioned as the optimal status criterion or standard in this society. Ladson-Billings discussed the significance of race by stating,

> It is because of the meaning and value imputed to Whiteness that CRT becomes an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power. (p. 9)

CRT theorists have established the following five CRT tenets:

1. Racism is a salient and normal experience that impacts the life chances of racial groups; "the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country."

2. Interest convergence: Racism is addressed only when there is an interest convergence between the White majority and People of Color.

3. Race is a social construction rather than a biological or genetic difference; "races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient."

4. Differential racialization: refers to the manner in which dominant groups "racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labor market."

5. Storytelling: The recipients of racism have the authoritative voice to describe the experience of racism; "voice-of-color thesis holds that because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, Black, Indian, Asian, and Latino/a writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their White counterparts matters that the Whites are unlikely to know." (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, pp. 7-9)

Critical race theory and its tenets serve as one theoretical framework for understanding systematic racism in this country (Bell, 1980, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Freeman, 1977). CRT and interest convergence have become tools for exposing and analyzing race and racism within the United States (Cooper & Cooper, 2015). CRT emerged from the field of legal studies as a tool for exposing the systematic effects of racism that are deeply rooted in American culture. CRT theorists believe that racism is deeply embedded in U.S. culture, and the only way to move toward true equity is to embrace the realities of racism (Bell, 1980, 1992; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) described how CRT could be useful as a means for understanding the racial inequalities that exist within the U.S. educational system. These tenets act as a means for deconstructing the ideology of White supremacy and practices associated with systematic racism. In order for Black males to change the narrative, there must be additional perspectives/viewpoints to aid in counteracting those deficit-laden labels (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In the study on race and sport, CRT can help "highlight systems of oppression and negative power relations in sport" (Hylton, 2009, p. 30).

As to the first tenet subscribes to the belief that racism is normal part of everyday life (Bell, 1992). Within the U.S., endemic racism among postsecondary institutions has contributed to Black male student athletes' experiences with racial discrimination, social isolation, academic neglect, economic deprivation, and limited leadership opportunities (Cooper, 2012). As is it pertains to college athletics the problem is systemic and continues to reproduce itself over and over again. College athletics is a multimillion-dollar machine whose success by-in-large is predicated on the recruitment and retention of Black males in football and men's basketball. The athletes from those sports are not able to reap the

financial rewards of being an athlete while they are a student at the institution, yet they are responsible for millions of dollars that are generated annually. In effort to protect its financial interest, the NCAA and its member institution maintain tight control over the rights of the student athlete. The dominant White majority will maintain that their position is to maintain academic integrity and protect college athlete's amateurism status. The Whiteness as property tenet lends itself to the belief that because Whites are the dominant majority, they are entitled to a level of privilege and control. The Whiteness as property norm refers to the social structure of the U.S. society, which grants Whites certain privileges on the basis of race (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). The NCAA's governing board, school presidents, and athletics directors are made up of a majority White individuals. At PWIs, the fact that Whites fulfill a majority of the leadership positions on campus reflects the Whiteness as property norm as they determine the policies and subsequent enforcement as to which students have access to certain opportunities and resources (Singer, 2005).

(Counter) storytelling is a narrative method designed to challenge taken-for granted meanings particularly beliefs, values, and norms associated with a dominant group (e.g., White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) in the U.S.; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The dominant White majority will assert the narrative that Black male athletes are rewarded, as they are being provided a full athletic scholarship to attend the institution. But the counter narrative is that the football commitment is a full-time job that often does not allow students the opportunity to maximize their academic potential or take advantage of career development opportunities on campus. When a Black male does poorly academically, the dominant White majority does not attribute the students struggle with the unrealistic athletic time demands that are placed on these young

men. The dominant narrative associated with Black male student athletes promotes a deficit perspective whereby their academic underachievement is primarily attributed to their individual inadequacies with little emphasis on the influence of environmental factors (Benson, 2000).

The interest convergence tenet refers to the idea that any progress associated with a marginalized group is only accomplished insofar as it also benefits the dominant group (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). As to the tenet of interest convergence and athletics, Donnor (2005) stated that while the Black athlete may be interested in receiving an education or playing professional football, the White stakeholders at the institution often have ulterior motives that often have very little to do with the student-athlete's welfare. Those White individuals are often motivated by their own interests, which may include cash bonuses and institutional advancement.

Finally, there is the critique of liberalism tenet which challenges the notion of colorblindness. The White majority will assert the notion that race is social construct, and they do not see color. CRT theorists contend that adherence to the colorblind ideology or beliefs of a post racial society undermine the critical examination of systemic racism, which is engrained in every facet of U.S. society. More importantly, CRT provides a guide to deconstruct racist institutions, policies, and practices and construct new institutions of true equality (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Critical race theory and its various tenets had a prominent role in this study because the current system for collegiate athletics is viewed as being oppressive for many Black student-athletes. A fundamental position of CRT is that race and racism are profoundly entrenched in a state of permanence within the foundations of American society and its

institutions legally, culturally, and psychologically (Bell, 1992; Tate, 1997). Through the lens of CRT, racism is perceived as ordinary and fundamental to American society. CRT also provides a mechanism by which to examine and critique the dominant storyteller since they have historically controlled the narrative. In order to protest against the current arrangement, counter-storytelling must be offered that constructs a new narrative that is based on experience. Furthermore, CRT holds that the dominant culture will promote social and racial progress as long as it benefits their White self-interest agenda.

These tenets are contrary to some of the scholarship that asserts that racism has ended and is primarily a cultural phenomenon (D'Souza, 1995). Instead, CRT asserts that the current collegiate athletics model is based on White privilege and is built on maintaining control over the student-athletes and the revenue. CRT also challenges the dominant ideology, which states that the system should be based on race neutrality, meritocracy, and equal opportunity. However, research shows that for Black student-athletes, the starting point is different in many cases; thus, opportunity gaps exist with academic achievement (see Singer, 2019).

It is incumbent that these ideologies that create negative stereotypes about Black student-athletes be challenged. Dominant ideologies are challenged based on their maintenance of racial inequities that persist at macro- and microlevels of society under ideological veils benefiting persons with inherent power over others (Bell, 1987; Bonilla-Silva, 2009). Storytelling and counter-storytelling allow Black student-athletes to centralize and illuminate their voice. However, the Black voice is often silenced in favor of the dominant perspective that marginalizes the Black student-athlete as indifferent to academic achievement. The importance of storytelling and gathering counter narratives

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(Delgado, 1989) meaningfully facilitates self-reflection of experiences within marginalizing conditions and engages one in a process of critical thought to advance a consciousness of the complexities of race and racism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Finally, because CRT provides scholars with a theoretical framework from which to study the position of race in this country, the importance of a commitment to social injustice is critical to this study. In collegiate athletics, the narrative has remained the same for a number of years. Racial manifestations continue to exist, yet the powers that be are unapologetic in their application as it pertains to a cultural, political, and social agenda.

Critical race theory provides a theoretical framework for looking at the current collegiate athletic model. Scholars in the field or education and sports management have explicitly used CRT to examine and interrogate racism in organized school sport contexts and the experiences of African American male athletes (Cooper, 2016; Donnor, 2005; Singer, 2005, 2009, 2016). Critical race theory has been described as a radical legal movement that seeks to transform the relationship between race, racism, and power. According to Lynn and Adams (2002), CRT scholars have emphasized "the many ways that race and racism were fundamentally ingrained in American social structures and historical consciousness and hence shaped U.S. ideology, legal systems, and fundamental conceptions of law, property, and privilege" (p. 88). Several CRT tenets help explain the connection between Black student-athletes and their inability to explore and attain certain majors at PWIs. Understanding White privilege creates an understanding of the historical challenges that Black student-athletes have dealt with since first being allowed to compete athletically with Whites in intercollegiate athletics.

A critique of liberalism is another tenet that was incorporated into the study. Bonilla-Silva (2009) argues that modern use of liberalism reinforces White radical dominance because it ignores the systematic barriers and disadvantages that people of color face by focusing on individual freedoms. The White majority would content that the rules are in place for everyone, White and Black. It is their belief that the system is consistent and fair. However, I refute that claim because the Black student-athletes' starting point on average is lower when it comes to the quality of education they have experienced and the level of academic and cultural support they have received. Because there is a self-interest component within collegiate athletics that the dominant culture is determined to keep in place, the social injustice component is critical to the study. Black male student-athletes are admitted into these PWIs for the sole purpose of playing their sport; their success on the field of play benefits an institution greatly in the form of notoriety and revenue. Consequently, as long as the Black student-athlete produces on the field, the system is willing to allow them access.

Finally, storytelling and counter-storytelling are important aspects of CRT because they allow the Black male student-athlete a voice to tell his story. Often the story from the dominant culture focuses on national championships and TV revenue dollars. Obviously, there is more to the story, including terms like clustering students and athlete-friendly degree programs. A profound need exists to provide more narratives that shed insight through African American male athletes' own voices and positions on what education means to them, as well as on the impact racism might have on the educational and developmental experiences of this student population (Milner, 2007).

While many young Black males aspire to be professional athletes, most will never realize that dream. The majority must rely on education and any social skills they might have acquired over the years. Far too many Black males spend an excessive amount of time developing their athletic abilities and not enough time cultivating their academic and social skills. By failing to develop the necessary skills, these young men are destined to never realize their full potential. Thus, it is critical to examine the importance of cultural and social capital, a concept first introduced by Pierre Bourdieu (1984). Cultural and social capital theorizes that education, knowledge, and intellect can alter a person's social mobility. If one is able to acquire the various forms of capital, the opportunity to improve a person's quality of life exists. The benefit of educating and promoting cultural and social capital is that young Black men are able to see and understand the importance of acquiring knowledge and creating a social network. Cultural and social capital can leverage success in a desired career opportunity and potentially offer Black males an exceptional life.

Often, athletes are unaware of the transferable life skills they process. Many have been preoccupied with their sport for a majority of their life and have never envisioned how the learned skills they have acquired on the field of play can potentially benefit them away from their sport. The ability to lead, adapt to difficult situations, and work in a team environment, along with a competitive spirit, are all skills that most employers value.

Scholars have pushed to incorporate race-based epistemologies in the examination of sports and the experience of Black male athletes within higher education (Singer, 2005). Because race and racism have played such a significant role in American society, it is only logical that scholars use CRT as the theoretical framework to examine and analyze the impact that race and racism has had on Black student-athletes (Cooper, 2012).

CRT assists researchers in counteracting the presumptions that exist regarding the experience of the Black college athlete. CRT recognizes the disparities that exist between Black males athletes and their peers and also recognizes research that offers counternarrative "success stories" to the dominant discourse (e.g., dumb jock myth) on African American athletes' academic underperformance (e.g., Bimper, Harrison, & Clark, 2012; Martin & Harris, 2006; Martin, Harrison, Stone, & Lawrence, 2010).

Career Development Theory

Career development can be defined as the process by which individuals become aware and understand the role that life experiences play in their professional development (Hanson, 1976). An individual's work identity is formed through life experiences. How an individual learns to socialize and interact with others plays a pivotal role in the personal development process. Donald Super (1957) and other theorist of career development recognized the changes that people go through as they mature. Career patterns are determined by socioeconomic factors, mental and physical abilities, personal characteristics, and the opportunities to which persons are exposed. People seek career satisfaction through work roles in which they can express themselves and implement and develop their self-concepts. Career maturity, a main concept in Super's theory, is manifested in the successful accomplishments of age and stage development tasks across the life span. Self-concept is an underlying factor in Super's model: "…vocational self-concept develops through physical and mental growth, observations of work, identification with working adults, general environment, and general experience…As experiences become broader in relation to awareness of world of work, the more sophisticated self-concept is formed" (Zunker, 1994, p. 30). For the purpose of this study, Super's

developmental self-concept theory was used to help examine the career decision-making processes that Black male football student-athletes utilize as they transition away from their sport. Several developmental theories fall under the category of career development. Career development theorist Donald Super proposed a theory that placed emphasis on the importance of self-concept development. Super contended that an individual's own self-concept changes over time as a result of different life experiences.

As an extension to original work done by colleague Eli Ginzberg, Super created five stages for life and career development. Each developmental stage is based on the age of the individual. Factors such as life experiences, influences, and maturity play a significant role in how an individual moves from one stage to the next. The first stage is Growth, which is typically from age 0–14. At that early age, an individual is developing the concept of self along with his or her own attitudes and needs. The second stage is Exploration, which is the stage most college students are at; the age range is 15–24. In exploration, the individual is *trying out* through classes, work experience, and hobbies. The third stage is Establishment ranges between 25-44, which is often entry-level and involves skill building and stabilization through work experience. The fourth stage is Maintenance, which ranges 45-65; at this stage, the individual is often established in his or her professional role and is working to improve or adjust his or her position. Finally, the last stage is the Decline stage, and the age range is 65+. Individuals at this stage reduce their level of output and are preparing for retirement.

Super (1996) incorporated *career maturity* into the developmental self-concept theory. Career maturity is when an individual is considered ready to cope with the developmental tasks within a given stage. According to Super, the process is affective and

cognitive. The stages can only be implemented when the individual is prepared to develop

a realistic self-concept and implement a vocational preference through role tryouts and

exploration. This exploration process, according to Super, takes place during the ages of

14–25. The first substage of the exploration process occurs during teen years, when the

individual makes tentative choices concerning his or her needs, interests, and abilities. It is

in the individual's late teen years that a crystallization of preferences will occur. This stage

occurs as the individual goes through the process of choosing a college or field of training.

Finally, during the individual's early 20s, he or she will go through the first initial trial that

involves a little commitment, often manifesting itself in a first job (Super, 1996).

In regard to the literature, most of the career development research that has been

done has focused on White males from middle- and upper-class backgrounds (Parham &

Austin, 1994). Career transition has rarely been examined from the scope of the Black

student-athlete at the collegiate level. The literature, however, has shifted toward looking

at the effect that career maturity; race, social class, and racial identity can have in career

development. According to Lundberg et al. (1997), career maturity is the time when an

individual is best prepared to begin making career decisions. When an individual can

reconcile his or her own life experience with his or her values, he or she will begin to

create patterns in the career decision-making process (Leong, 1995; Peavy, 1995).

However, collegiate athletes have been found to have delayed career development, low

levels of career maturity, and a stunted ability to make career decisions, including choosing

a major and an occupation (Blann, 1985; Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Murphy et al., 1996;

Remer et al., 1978; Sowa & Gressard, 1983). Career maturity is defined as "maturity of

attitudes and competencies that are critical in realistic career decision-making" (Meeker et

al. 2000, p. 126). Several studies have linked athletic identity foreclosure to a lack of career maturity, thus creating a more difficult transition out of the sporting world (Adler & Adler, 1991; Beamon & Bell, 2011; Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Murphy et al., 1996).

In an effort to understand the role career decision-making has on Black male athletes in football, it is best to look at the reasons individuals choose a career. Within the Black community, several factors as to why a Black male chooses a career path exist, and those factors include race, social class, family background, or an exaggerated belief about one's own personality. Historically, much of the research done on career development theory has been based on White males and originates from a position of privilege. Black male athletes often approach career decision-making from a position of weakness, making the assumption that they do not have the prerequisite academic or social skills to be successful in a career outside of their sport. Career development theory theorizes that one's personality and life experiences play a pivotal role in the decision-making process. The basic assumption of Roe's (1956, 1957) theory is that vocational choice is determined by one's personality, which is shaped by early childhood experiences. John Holland (1973) also theorized that career choices represent an extension of the individual's personality. The problem, however, is that when race is inserted into the equation, the narrative changes. A Black male student-athlete may aspire to career and professional heights beyond his sport, but because of over involvement in sports, his academic development may be limited. Career Aspiration attempts to counter the societal, often internalized, belief that professional sports is the best career path for Black males (Edwards, 2000; Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002). Exposing Black male student-athletes to student-

athlete engagement programming can ultimately alter the narrative and show those students that their choices are not limited.

Cooper (2015) suggests a formal faculty-student mentorship program as one approach to active mentorship. Mentor pairing of family, peers, faculty, coaches, administrators, and community leaders would meet the needs of Black male student-athletes for psychosocial support, career development, nonathletic identity enhancement, spiritual guidance, etc. (Cooper, 2015). The interaction between traits such as race, social class, racial identity, and life experiences plays a pivotal role in an individual's readiness to succeed in understanding the various stages of career development (Kerka, 1998). Researchers of career development theory have indicated that career maturity is influenced by age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and work salience (Kerka, 1998; Naidoo, 1998). The literature indicates that African American students struggle with career decision-making because of the self-imposed boundaries that they place on their career aspirations. Researchers believe that issues occur because the student's decision-making process is heavily influenced by African American role models, culture, and social expectations of family and community or the lack of familiarity with alternative careers (Parham & Austin, 1994). Parham and Austin (1994) indicated in their research that Blacks base their career choices on how they view themselves professionally and how they view their role in society. According to Snyder (1985), sports can provide a greater sense of self-worth that may spill over into other parts of academic and personal development. Sports can in many ways push academic achievement and place an emphasis on work ethic and personal development.

A greater emphasis is now being placed on the holistic development of the Black college athlete. Scholars have suggested that a systematic support for career preparation exists aside from sport participation (Beamon, 2008, 2012; Beamon & Bell, 2011). The holistic development of Black college athletes, particularly in football and men's basketball, is important because Black males are overrepresented in those sports, and the odds of advancing to the professional ranks is less than 2% (NCAA, 2016). In the effort to assist Black college athletes with career success beyond their sports, it has become important to investigate the ways in which these institutions prioritize time, space, and resources in order for Black male college athletes to be engaged in best practices for culturally relevant educational, personal, professional, and holistic development (Cooper, 2016). Exploring different occupations exposes Black male student-athletes to a range of career opportunities through collaboration between the athletics department, career services, academic advising staff, and other members of the campus community (Cooper, 2015).

During the latter half the of the twentieth century desegregation along with the emergence of the Black athlete in collegiate and professional sports helped changed the perception of what Blacks could accomplish in society. These changes along with the growing popularity of sports from a fan perspective, along with the amount of revenue that could be generated in sports began to alter how Blacks, particularly Black males, envisioned what they could achieve through athletics. Coupled with the White establishments desire to win, as well as the financial profit, and desire to create competitive winning teams were the motivations that eventually led to the integration of collegiate and professional sports teams (Davis, 1995).

As media outlets began to promote and celebrate Black sports figures for their athletic accomplishments, these figures would be mythologized and placed on a pedestal in Black communities. With the emergence of the Black star athlete, there began a shift within the conscious of those within urban and rural Black communities. The belief was that sports could provide a path to respect, notoriety, wealth, and fame. This belief began to manifest to such a degree that professional athletes in the MLB, NFL and NBA were replacing career professions such as doctors, lawyers, and teachers. Disproportionate to White athletes, more Blacks aspire to professional careers in basketball, boxing, and football as a means to economic and social mobility (Bilberry, 2000; Burden et al, 2004; Sales, 1996, 1998a).

As young Black males began to gravitate to sport involvement, they were celebrated for the accomplishments on the field and often treated differently within both the White and Black communities. This evaluated statute within American society began to lend itself to more Black males socializing further into athletic involvement. As with any pursuit, the draw of wealth, fame and notoriety can often lend itself to a disproportionate number of individuals that will sacrifice their own identity for a potentially more intriguing and lucrative pursuits. This, coupled with heroic athletic accomplishments by some Black athletes, eventually led tokenism closer to full integration of previously all-White athletic teams (Reese, 1998.) Yet for many in the Black community, a career in professional athletics provided a more realistic intriguing occupational pursuit.

While sports possess inherent traits that can be attributed to building character, the overemphasis and single-minded pursuit of a career in sports can have detrimental effects on the human psyche and stunt personal, social and career development. There are other

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underlining negatives that can be associated with Black being associated primarily with sports involvement that are based primarily in racism.

Finally, career development theory is the theoretical framework that was used to look at the reasons why an individual is or is not inclined to develop the necessary occupational skills to establish career satisfaction. Career development theory is lens for understanding the stages in which an individual will determine their career path. The career decision-making process is established over time as the individual enhances their career maturity. This process centers on the individuals holistic development. Without holistic consciousness, internalized empowerment, and engagement in counteractions (Cooper & Cooper, 2015), the oppressive system of athletic exploitation and academic neglect will continue to prevail.

Academic advisors and athletic administrator play a pivotal in role in advising and counseling student-athletes given their occupation and relationship with the student. The literature on career development discuss the role that academic advisors have on college student-athletes. Because student-athletes have frequent contact with their academic advisors and work with them on a multitude of issues (Vaughn & Smith, 2018), the authors surmised that academic advisors may play a role in both preventative and reactive strategies concerning student-athlete wellness. Literature on the college student-athlete experience extensively details the many obstacles student-athletes encounter due to their athlete status. They commonly endure academic challenges (Ayers Pazmino-Cervallos, & Dobose, 2012), face career adjustment issues (Houle & Kluck, 2015), partake in at-risk behaviors (Anderson & Petrie, 2012; Yusko et al., 2008), and are more likely to experience discrimination and bias than non-athletes (Parsons, 2013). Due to stigma and availability

of services that are conducive to their schedules (Lopez & Levy, 2013; Moore, 2016, 2017; Wahto, Swift, & Whipple, 2016), student-athletes are less likely to seek much-needed support, which perfectly positions academic advisors to fill that gap. Additionally, the NCAA has identified student-athlete wellness as a priority by releasing two publications related to understanding student-athlete wellness and the best practices for facilitating student-athlete wellness (NCAA, 2014; NCAA, 2016). The NCAA acknowledges that student-athletes could be "at greater risk for mental health concerns because they have the same risk factors as non-athletes, while also dealing with the pressures related to sport participation" (NCAA, 2014, p. 96). Further, they recommend a collaborative approach of a variety of campus services to help support student-athletes (NCAA, 2016), which makes academic advisors perfectly positioned to support them.

Though time and stigma hinder student-athletes seeking help (Lopez & Levy, 2013; Wahto et al., 2016), they may open up to their academic advisors. The National Academic Advising Association ([NACADA]; 2016) website uses a definition from (Kuhn, 2008) that says that advisors should provide guidance to students on academic, personal, or social concerns. Further, their advising handbook specifically identifies student-athletes as a high-needs population and directs advisors to not only address academic eligibility with them, but to also help assist with challenges that interfere with their academic, career, and personal aspirations (Harding, 2008).

Though guided by NACADA, the academic advising field has struggled with finding a professional identity, which is partly due to a lack of standardized education and training (AikenWisniewski, Johnson, Larson, & Barkemeyer, 2015). Challenges faced in advising sessions include poor multicultural awareness, inadequate listening and

interpersonal skills, and discomfort when dealing with psychological issues (Hughey, 2011; Preece et al., 2007; Zhang, 2016). For psychological issues, it is imperative to know signs of serious issues like suicide or self-harm (Granello, 2010) and be able to confront these issues with care before making the appropriate referral (Ivey, 2013).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

For this dissertation, I completed a qualitative study using purposeful sampling that examined the career decision-making process of Black male student-athletes. A qualitative case study can be particularly useful for studying a process, program or individual in an in-depth, holistic way that allows for deep understanding (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2002), defines case study as a process of investigation. Creswell details the process as "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection" (p.485). Creswell recommends case study as a methodology if the problem to be studied "relates to developing an in-depth understanding of a 'case' or bounded system" (p. 496) and if the purpose is to understand "an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (p. 496). Patton (1990) suggests that case studies are valuable in creating deep understanding of particular people, problems, or situations in comprehensive ways. This study is particularly suitable for a case study design because it is a bounded system, it is contextual, and it is a study of process (Merriam, 1998). Like Creswell (2002), Stake (2000) defines case study as the study of a "bounded system" (p. 436). According to Creswell (2002), "'Bounded' means that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries" (p. 485). In other words, it is possible to create limits around the object to be studied (Merriam, 1998). A case study can focus on a variety of different things. A case could be an individual, a group, a school, a community (Merriam, 1998), or a case could also include "a program, events, or activities" (Creswell, 2002, p. 485). Patton (1990) identified criterion sampling as a form of purposeful sampling that involves the review and study of

all the cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance. For the purpose of this study, I focused on selecting former Black male football student-athletes that could speak directly to their experiences as an athlete at a power-five PWI. Predetermined criteria included identifying Black males that had participated at the highest level of college football and had recently graduated from a predominantly white institution. Because the basis of the study focused on Black males, no other race or gender was selected. I chose a case study design because it involves "detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61).The information collected in this study was based on personal experiences and provided a wealth of data to the overall inquiry. Yin (2003) says, "you would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions-believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study" (p. 13). The sample size included 15 former Black male student-athletes. All participants were involved in football at the Division I level. The sampling pool included graduates who currently reside in the state of Texas. This study builds upon previous research that was been done on Black male football student-athletes from the perspective of a Black athletics administrator within a PWI power-5 institution. As it pertains to this study, it was the researcher's desire to look at Black male football student-athletes through the lens of a Black administrator that works and interacts with the population on daily basis.

According to Parker and Lynn (2002), thick descriptions and interviews, characteristics of case study research, not only serve illuminative purpose but can also be used to document institutional as well as overt racism. The interviewing process can be

pulled together to create narratives that can be used to build a case against racially biased officials or discriminatory practices. (p. 11)

This study incorporated a combination of the three types of case study. Stake (2000) delineates three types of cases studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. Intrinsic case studies focus on a case that is unusual and is of particular interest to the researcher (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 2000). The intent is not to build theory (Stake, 2000). An instrumental case study is pursued in order to provide insight about a particular issue that may be generalizable (Creswell, 2002). The primary purpose of an instrumental case study is to help advance understanding (Stake, 2000). The collective case study encompasses more than one case "in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition" (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Since the purpose is to help advance understanding, a collective case study is a grouping of instrumental case studies (Stake, 2000). Using a collective case study approach can allow for the possibility of stronger interpretation and "perhaps better theorizing" (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Based on the aforementioned criteria, I chose to incorporate elements from the different types of case studies. Because the idea of looking at how Black male football athletes define success beyond their sport was an unusual topic and was particularly interesting to me as an academic and career counselor, I incorporated those intrinsic elements to the case study. The study also encompassed elements of an instrumental case study as the desired outcome was to provide an understanding as to why Black males make the choices they make as it pertains to career and personal development. Finally, the study had elements of a collective case study as multiple cases were discussed involving different subjects with the purpose of adding to the collective thereby developing a stronger interpretation.

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Research Design

A qualitative case study based on semi-structured interviews that were completed during hour-long interviews with former Black male football student-athletes. Participants in the study were Black males whose ages ranged from 21–26 years of age. All had participated in collegiate athletics at the Division I level and were scholarship student-athletes. In the effort to gather data, interviews were conducted, and the responses were transcribed by myself for the purpose of identifying similar and different themes that emerged from the results. Data were analyzed, and those experiences were compared, which led to further discussions on student-athletes and their holistic development. Former football student-athletes, as key stakeholders, possessed the requisite knowledge and experience regarding being in college and competing at a high level. Because of their dual role as athlete and student, they had to simultaneously balance their academic responsibilities with athletic participation in order to remain eligible. The goal of this study was to delve into those experiences, which included dealing with coaches, navigating the recruitment process, and conforming to the athletic department structure.

The case study method also allowed me to define boundaries for the research (Corbin & Strauss 2008; Creswell, 1998). By focusing on a qualitative case study as a method, I was able to identify key points within the data and thus bridge the gap with similar points and concepts. The ability to draw from the experiences of key stakeholders provided a wealth of information that could be analyzed and interpreted. When the interviews were completed, responses and inserts were coded to create common concepts and themes. The study was a naturalistic inquiry. Data for the study were derived from interviews conducted during one-on-one sessions. Interviews were conducted in a closed

environment and ranged between 45 minutes to 1 hour in length. The interviews consisted

of 10 to 15 open-ended questions, which allowed for greater flexibility during the question

and answer phase. Through the interviews, grounded theories emerged as to why Black

male athletes in football do or do not get involved in student-athlete engagement

opportunities outside of their sport at PWIs.

Population and Sample Size

Since the purpose of case study research is to provide an in-depth exploration of the

person, program, or process under study, it requires intensive data collection (Merriam,

1998; Yin, 2003). The population for the case study consisted of former Division I

collegiate Black male football student-athletes who graduated from a historic PWI. The

participants attended a university that participates in an FBS conference. The participants

attended a large public research institution within the Southeastern Conference. The school

is located in the southwestern region of the United States. The institution is one of the

largest public institutions in the country, with an athletic department with upwards of 200

full-time employees. The athletic department consists of 16 varsity sports and is anchored

by a high-profile football program. In addition, the athletic department provides athletic

academic advising and student-athlete engagement personnel to assist students with their

academic and personal development growth. Participants in the study consisted of Black

male football players who graduated from the university and were at least 5 years removed

from attending the institution. These participants met the qualification based on

experiential knowledge as former college athletes in an ultracompetitive environment. The

age range for the population was 21–26 years of age. The reason for utilizing a sample size

of recent graduates was to narrow the focus and identify individuals who would have a

better perspective due to having only recently gone through the college experience as a student-athlete. Current undergraduates lack the proper perspective to delineate the importance of career development since they are often operating under the belief that they will eventually become a professional athlete. All subjects identified themselves as Black male athletes. The pool of interviewees included 15 individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds. All participants were Black males and had attended the university on an athletic scholarship. All participants had graduated from the university in no less than 3 years and no greater than 6 years. The participants came from one- and two-parent households. All those interviewed had the desire to pursue a career in professional sports upon admittance into the university; however, for most, those desires changed as the student matriculated through the university.

Data Collection

Since the purpose of case study research is to provide an in-depth exploration of the person, program, or process under study, it requires intensive data collection (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). As part of the data collection for both case studies, I collected both formal and informal interview data (Patton, 1990). Informal conversational interview questions were interwoven into meetings that we had in relation to ongoing research (Merriam, 1998) and were recorded as part of observation transcriptions. The data process included one-on-one interviews with past football student-athletes at the Division I level. Each session included a 45- to an hour interview at an off-campus location. The data collection process consisted of asking a series of questions that were geared toward learning about the challenges that Black student-athletes have to deal with when balancing athletics with academics. Pertinent topics that were discussed included (a) the determining

factors that led the individual to choose the university, (b) whether the student-athlete was promised that he could major in any degree program that he wanted, (c) if the student-athlete's athletics schedule allowed for exploration of different degree programs, (d) if the athletic scholarship and role with the team affected his career decision-making process, (e) if family and friends played a pivotal role in the decision-making process, and (f) whether the athlete was completely satisfied with his choice of degree or did he feel pressured and influenced by those within the athletic department. Questions concerning these and other topics were asked during the data collection process, which involved conducting the one-on-one interviews. Once the data collections process was concluded, the responses were transcribed, analyzed, and entered into a data set. The process of transcribing the data was critical to the qualitative process.

Candidates in the pool were initially contacted to participate in the study via phone and email solicitation. A variety of data collection methods and purposeful sampling were used to gather information. The data collection process consisted of semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The interviews took place in a designated closed environment outside the university to provide confidentiality for the participants. The foundation for the interview questions were derived from the three initial research questions; the questions were open-ended, thereby allowing for further inquiry from the interviewer. As details from the interviews begin to emerge, modifications and adjustment were made to help guide the subsequent data collection process. The interviewer also observed the participants' body language and verbal and nonverbal cues, which added to the depth of study and provided a richer understanding of the mindset of the participants. The primary purpose for the interviews was to gain sufficient information from key stakeholders.

Data Analysis

After completing the case study, I had accumulated a large volume of data. I organized the data in what Yin (2003) calls a case study data base. After transcribing the audio recorded data, I began to familiarize myself with the data, which meant I needed to read through the entire data base. Once I was able to read through the data information, I began to code the data. The process of analyzing the data involved creating a list of ideas. Within the process of coding the data and creating ideas, themes and patterns began to emerge. A theme is anything that captured something important about the data in relation to the research question, representing some patterned response within the overall data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to some researchers (e.g., Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Boyatzis, 1998), there are two primary ways through which themes within data can be identified: in an inductive or "bottom up" way or in a theoretical or deductive or "top down" way. In this study, I chose inductive and deductive approaches, which meant that our identified themes would be strongly linked to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, I decided to focus on the semantic content of the data—that which are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach lent itself well to another decision, that of conducting the thematic analysis within a realist/essentialist paradigm. Within such a paradigm, "you can theorize motivations, experience, and meaning in a straightforward way," Promoting the Academic Engagement and Success of Black Male Student-Athletes 187 (Braun & Clarke, p. 85). As the study progressed, I looked for events with common elements within the data that had "issue-relevant meaning" (Creswell, 1998, p. 154) or significance for the study. As I recognized these common elements, I focused on determining whether they continued to

be supported throughout the data collection process. Creswell (1998) calls this process categorical aggregation.

The process for analyzing the data was guided by the grounded theory approach; data were constantly compared to allow for modifications when necessary (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Originally introduced by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), grounded theory is used extensively in education and related fields. Ground theory researchers gather non-numeric data from a variety of sources, including interviews and field observations (Haig, 2005). Once gathered, the data are analyzed using coding and theoretical sampling procedures. A set of interpretative procedures are then used to assist in the construction of theory that emerges from, and is grounded in, the data (Haig, 2005). Once the data were collected from the interview, the information was analyzed, coded, and grouped into categories that were later developed into theories. Following a grounded theory approach, the analysis was based on the process of open, axial, and selected coding to identify emerging patterns and themes from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Open Coding is "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p.61) by which concepts and the proprieties and dimensions are identified from data that are transcribed by the researchers. This can be achieved either line by line or by focusing on main ideas in sentences or paragraphs (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Axial coding is the process of reassembling data that were broken down through open coding. Essentially, it is the process of relating categories to subcategories. The first step in integration is to identify the central or core category, which represents the main theme of the research. To be core, the concept must appear repeatedly in the data. The central category acts as a master that

pulls the other categories together to form an explanatory "whole picture" by using the paradigm model. In this step the categories are redefined at a high level of abstraction, and categories that need further explication are given more descriptive details (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

During the open coding process, the focus is on the main ideas that emerge from the sentences or paragraphs (Strauss and Corbin 1990). The process involves naming or labeling categories that should be selected from the data. For instance in this study, race, athletic status, career success and being a Black a predominantly White institution are all overarching categories that are foundation for the study. The basis for identifying these overarching categories do not always come directly from the literature, but rather develop from the words and phrases of the participants. It is in this way that names are assigned to categories (Stauss and Corbin 1990). During the axial coding phase, subcategories are generated by constant comparison of the similarities and difference between such concepts. So, in the case of this study, the common thread between all the participants were they all former football student-athletes at a PWI, but their experiences varied depending on their interaction with coaches, students, faculty and staff on campus. The central phenomenon or idea that connect these key participants is the effect that race, and systematic racism has on the decisions that Black males make as it pertains to career choices. There were also obvious consequences that emerged from the choices that the Black males made or did not make while they were students at the university. The response to those questions were assigned a theme and categorized under race, athletic participation and/or career decision making. Selective coding looks at the core theme or concept that continues to emerge in responses. The central category acts as a master that pulls the other categories together to

form an explanatory "whole picture" by using the paradigm model. In this step the

categories are refined at a high level of abstraction, and categories that need further

explication are given more descriptive details (Strauss and Corbin 1990). For the purpose

of this study, a pattern of responses emerged which indicated that while Black male

athletes understood the value of career development programming, the participants main

focus at that time was achieving a career in the NFL and that pursuit did not always

coincide with academic achievement and career and personal development. Time, career

maturity, and an athletic identity were some of the determining factors that lead to the

participants either pursuing career development opportunities beyond a professional

football playing career.

My Positionality

At the outset, I believe it is important to acknowledge my relationship to the principal stakeholders and participants. As the researcher of the study, I acknowledge that there was a preexisting relationship to the participants. I am a Black American male that was a high school and collegiate football player. In addition, I work as an academic advisor and mentor to Black male football student-athletes at a PWI and have interacted with Black male athletes for several years. For this reason I was compelled to embrace a CRT approach to study Black males athletes' educational experiences and challenges in high profile athletic programs at HWIHE. Moreover, in line with education scholars who have highlighted and promoted the interconnection between CRT and qualitative inquiry (Parker, 2015; Parker & Lynn, 2002), I have found qualitative inquiry to be most compatible with and suitable to this research and work being done with African American male athletes. Having served as the academic advisor for all of the key participants in the study, I can speak from the position of knowing them as individuals as well as students. The challenge was to not make assumptions about how the interviewee would answer, but rather ask probing questions to answer the research questions. Thus, although a preexisting academic relationship existed between the participants and myself that relationship did not impede the study, it only established a level of rapport with the participants. This prior relationship allowed me the ability to remain in contact with the participants after graduation. Participants were identified by looking at team rosters from previous years to determine which students would me the criteria for the study. Solicitation for the study included reaching out to graduates via email and phone calls. Having served as the academic advisor for the participants for four or more years, I had maintained phone and

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email information for the participants. While there was a pre-existing relationship, there was no coercion involved because the participants were no longer student-athlete under my supervision. As an academic advisor, I am professionally invested in the overall academic success of football student-athletes at the institution. It was through that established relationship that I was able to achieve credibility with the participants. I also believe by pre-existing relationship with the participants helped with trustworthiness. I did not approach the participants from the position of a stranger, but rather a familiar face and voice that each participant had known for more than four years. As the researcher, I made a concerted effort following the IRB process, to protect the identities of the subjects. I explained to the participants the steps that I was going to take once I recorded, analyzed, and ultimately destroyed the data.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter IV presents the findings of the study. The study itself explored the experiences of Black football student-athletes who were recent graduates of a PWI in higher education. The research study was qualitative in nature and consisted of one-on-one interviews that took place over a 2-month period. The interviews took place at a designated off-campus location, and each interview ranged in length from 45 minutes to hour. The participants were asked a series of 15 open-ended questions to allow for greater flexibility within the interviewing process. Responses to the questions were recorded and then transcribed. From those responses, common themes emerged that later become usable data that helped guide the study. Nine central themes emerged from the data. Each theme was derived from the common and relatable experiences of the participants. Those identified themes were (a) racism in college athletics, (b) isolation among Black male football student-athletes, (c) institution norms for student-athlete, (d) transitioning from high school and balancing academics with athletics, (e) coaches recruiting and career development, (f) athletic identity, and (g) career maturity and career development.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked the following: How do race and ethnicity affect the experiences of Black male football student-athletes while in college? Themes concerning race and isolation emerged in the responses to the first research question. The following are the responses from the participants.

Racism in College Athletics

The study focused on Black male football student-athletes and their experiences at a predominantly White university; therefore, it was not a surprise to see that race figured prominently as a theme. Akin to the role of athletic identity, the role of racial identity plays an important part in Black college student-athlete development (Bimper & Harrison, 2011). Several researchers have noted how negative stereotypes such as racial microaggressions toward Black male college athletes are commonplace at PWIs (Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Martin et al., 2010; Melendez, 2008). The variable of racial identity may be considerably important to the relationship between college student-athlete identity and academic outcomes for the disproportionate number of Black athletes in NCAA revenue-generating sports. The assumption of some individuals who follow collegiate athletics is that sports athletes are offered scholarships to prestigious colleges and universities to play their sport, and their transition in and through the university is seamless because they are provided so many resources. In many cases there is truth in those assumptions; however, often very little thought is given to Black male athletes' personal well-being as they matriculate through the university. Therefore, in an effort to gain a better understanding of the role race plays at PWI for Black male football student-athletes, the following question was asked: "Did you ever experience any forms of racism on campus?" The answers from the 15 participants about race varied from a low to moderate level of significances for the student-athletes.

More than two-thirds of the participants interviewed acknowledged that they had witnessed some form of racism while at the university. Those stories included situations where the student was ostracized or singled out because of his race. Participant A indicated

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that White students would make disparaging remarks toward athletes in class, such as "The only reason they were able to get into school was because of football." Participant A believed that prejudiced statements like that often-created mistrust among White students and Black athletes. In this participant's opinion, those situations could potentially have had more of a damaging effect from a psychological standpoint if they had not been a student-athlete. Because the students were athletes, they were often elevated in the eyes of their peers because of their athletic prowess. This elevation in stature often helps mitigate the micro- and macroaggressions that most minority nonathletes experience. Microaggressions being those subtle, often unintentional, form of prejudice. While macroaggressions often more overt and aggressive declaration of racism or sexism. Black male athletes, however, are often stereotyped on White college campuses as dumb jocks or not real students because they may not have been accepted based on their academic ability. The dumb jock myth, although applied to athletes across various identity groups, carries a particularly gendered racist undertone when attributed to Black males because they have historically experienced distinct oppressions in the United States as a result of their gender and race (e.g., more likely to be suspended and expelled at the primary and secondary educational levels, disproportionate incarceration rates, etc.; Howard, 2014). Researchers indicated that the institutional cultures at many Division I PWIs include two pervasive and insidious realities: (a) exploitative athletic subcultures with significant racial, ethical, moral, economic, and educational implications (Byers, 1995; Hawkins, 2010; Nocera & Strauss, 2016; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998); and (b) Black male college athletes who are routinely underserved and underdeveloped due to institutional neglect (Beamon, 2008; Benson, 2000; Cooper, 2012, 2016; Davis, 1992; Singer, 2009). As a result, issues such as

academic disengagement and other maladaptive behaviors and outcomes among this subgroup are a byproduct of institutional structures that exploit Black males for economic purposes while neglecting the development of their minds and holistic identities (Cooper, 2012, 2016; Donnor, 2005; Hawkins, 2010; Oseguera, 2010).

Participant A, a scholarship football student-athlete from a two-parent household, was a first-generation college student with aspirations of attending a Power 5 university. He acknowledged that his high school was made up primarily of minority students and his 1st year at the university was a culture shock. During the interview, he talked about perception and the challenges of exercising restraint in a situation where racist comments were made:

I remember I was out. I had my headphones in, walking across campus, and I overheard these students, you know talking about watermelons. And one of the guys was like, yeah, I bet those people out there, I bet those athletes, they love watching that. I wanted to say something, but then again, I was like, well, should I react to it or should I keep moving?

Participants noted that not all experiences were as obvious; there were other situations where the Black male athlete was subjected to microaggressions in which a White person would not acknowledge the Black student or make eye contact. Participant A indicated,

I had this one incident when I first got to the university when I was walking down the hall and I passed a White woman, and she went to the other side of the hallway, and when she walked past me, she put her hand down, and she clinched her purse, and so something told me, like, once the lady passed me by, to turn around see

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what she was doing, so and so. When she passed me by, she picked up her head and she kind of relaxed her shoulders, and this was … this was like the first week that I got to the university.

Comments from the participants revealed that issues with racism were evident but were often subtle and were rarely overt. The 15 participants interviewed indicated that they were aware of certain micro- and macroaggressions on campus, but in most cases, they tried to compartmentalize those experiences and not let it affect their overall college experience. Participant G came to the university from the inner city, and he was from a single-parent household. Although he had not grown up around a large number of White individuals, his initial experiences with microaggressions did not cause him to have negative feelings toward all White students. Participant G shared,

I knew the university was a school that had great traditions, great love for their students, you know, and a great love for everyone around. So, I didn't want to let the select few ruin it for me. I came across other people that actually took heed and wasn't racist at all.

Participant J came to the university from a small town in the southwest region of the United States. He was from a divorced household, but both his parents stressed the importance of a college education. During his time at the university, he felt as though he was being prejudged based on his race, size, and athletic status. Participant J talked about how he was prejudged during his initial semester on campus. He talked about various microaggressions that he experienced: "You see a big Black dude, and you think I'm not here for my academics, I'm a scholar. You know what I mean." As he reflected on those situations, he did not know if students did it on purpose:

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I think a lot of time we run into jealousy from students who are nonathletes.

Because they feel like we have everything handed to us. And they do not know

what we work for, and we had to earn our scholarship to get here.

Participants were asked if they observed any forms of racism in the community

around the university. The majority of them indicated that very few experienced overt

racism. Participants F said, "I never got anybody coming for me, calling freakin, you

know, the N-word or anything like that. But obviously, people are slightly biased toward

us, whether they realized it or not." Participant F said that he sometimes felt targeted in the

community because he was a Black male. It was his belief that because the community was

made up of primarily White people, young Black males were easy targets of harassment.

He revealed,

We would go out on the weekends as a unit sometimes, and the police would

literally harass us, or they would pull us over. They would take all of us out the car.

There's unnecessary things from a Black man's standpoint and an athlete's

standpoint, so being a Black athlete, we were sometimes targeted by police down in

the city.

In other instances, the interviewees felt they were at times given a pass within the

community, not because they were Black, but because they were football student-athletes.

Status as a football student-athlete in a football-crazed community often came along with

cache, which often shielded students from random acts of racism. Participant G explained

how, initially, he was treated with disdain when he attempted to enter a bar that White

students often frequented. He stated, "Before somebody knew that I was a football player it

was kind of like, oh, y'all can't be here." However, after it became known that he was a

football player for the university, attitudes changed. Participant G stated, "Once I divulged that I was a football player, people would get kind of buddy-buddy, just kind of, and hey, I didn't know that you played football. We'll you're welcome, come on in."

Participant E was asked about his experience outside of campus, and his response was positive toward the city and his experiences off campus. Participant E did not encounter very much negativity because he had grown up in the region and understood the importance of football within the city and its prominence in the community. He acknowledged that while some fans may have felt a certain way about Black people, they rarely voiced those concerns because the people in the community were huge fans of football. Participant E stated,

> I really didn't encounter too much. … The people in town were awesome, actually, man. I really didn't feel that negative vibe from people in town. Maybe because they are such big fans of the team. I was a player on the field a lot, but for the most part, I feel … it was just warm and welcoming with the community.

Stories of racism also crept into the classroom as well. According to 2 of 15 interviewed, preexisting prejudices often appeared once they entered the classroom or were assigned to a group project. They immediately felt as though they were prejudged based on their race or because they were an athlete. According to the participants, there was immediate pressure to elevate oneself and be on one's best behavior—to not give off the impression that because they were a Black athlete, they were somehow different or did not care about school. Participant B shared, "Every day a challenge for me was to show people that I'm not only a good football player, I'm not only a good individual on the field, I'm actually a great student as well." He further noted,

Sometimes people thought maybe I wasn't as intelligent or maybe I wasn't that smart. However, once I begin to speak, once I begin to talk to them, they clearly understood that there was no shortage of knowledge on my end.

The participants were asked if the university had done enough while they were enrolled to help with their career and personal development as Black athletes. Participant A, a former scholarship football student-athlete who eventually transferred from the university in an effort to achieve more playing time, stated that his high school really did him a disservice because he was grossly underprepared for the academic rigors of college. He insisted that the educational system was flawed, and far too many Black males were being pushed through high school with the intention of qualifying them for college. He indicated that not enough was done while he was a student to help students grow holistically. He explained,

In my opinion, there's more to be done. Like I said, this upcoming generation that's coming up, especially with Blacks, this generation coming up doesn't have the tools, the skills versus the White students. I think the schools really need to focus on that.

Participant F explained that many campus personnel do not understand the background of many of the Black male athletes. For example, Participant F was from the inner city and raised for a short period of time by a teenage mother who was not prepared to raise a son on her own. Participant F was raised primarily by a guardian and, because of his circumstances, did not trust very many people. He indicated that it is difficult for Black males to let down their guard and be vulnerable because they do not want to be perceived as weak or unintelligent. He suggested that how he was raised played a significant role in

how he interacted with individuals outside his race. Participant F further indicated that many Black student-athletes do not take advantage of the resources at their disposal because they do not fully trust the people who are trying to reach them. He offered advice to staff professionals who are trying to engage the Black male athlete. Participant F stated,

> I would like to get more Black people to work with football because it's a majority of the student-athletes, and those are the guys who are hurting the most. A lot of times, we have people that surround us that don't really understand where we're coming from, and they don't understand our background, and it's hard for some of us certain players to open up to certain faculty and administrators to get them to know how we feel.

One recurring issue that continued to come up in the interviews was the lack of time. Thus, although participants indicated that there may have been staff to help them with career decision-making and personal development, they were unable to take full advantage of the resources because of a lack of time. Participant H indicated that his sole reason for attending college was to become a professional football player. Although he understood the importance of a college education, he acknowledged that his coach expected him to dedicate himself fully to football and his production on the field. He felt that in order for him to be all that the coach expected him to be from an athletic standpoint, he had to sacrifice his academics to a certain extent. Participant H explained, "The time commitment was a huge piece. If I were exposed to more campus resources, I may have been inclined to take part if I had the free time, but that was rarely the case."

While some participants said the university could have done more to help promote student-athlete development and various career programing, others were pleased with the

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level of support they received from campus personnel while they were student-athletes. For example, Participant M indicated that it is important that Black males evolve and show a level of maturity. He indicated that academic personnel cannot be blamed when a student is unwilling to take some responsibility for his or her own future. Participant M explained,

> I would say that a lot is on the person. It's a person-by-person case. Like I said, the programs, the resources are there. It's kind of like anything in life, if you don't use it, it's not gonna work for you, so you have to take personal initiative and say, hey, if nobody else is gonna do it for me, if no one else is gonna make it important, you have to make it important for yourself.

Isolation Among Black Male Football Student-Athletes

Black student athletes even more so than other Black students feel themselves apart from non-athlete campus happenings (Murty, K., Roebuck, J., & McCamey, J., 2014). Because of this form of isolation, Black athletes often only socialize with one another. They create their own peer groups of the other Black student-athletes (Sanders & Hildenbrand, 2010). The transition from high school to college can be difficult for students in general, but the unique responsibilities, expectations, and experiences that come with being a NCAA Division I college athlete compound and impact college athletes' academic experiences (Parham, 1993). Not only is the academic transition between high school and college complicated to negotiate, but the change in social surroundings that come with moving away from home may also impact the experiences of college athletes at PWIs, especially those who are racial minorities (Hawkins, 2010). The issue of transition is especially salient for Black college athletes since many come from predominantly Black neighborhoods and are suddenly thrust into a predominantly White setting at PWIs (Carter

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& Hawkins, 2011; Hawkins, 2010; Singer, 2005). In addition, student-athletes, because of their athletic obligations, often prioritize athletic participation over social interaction with nonathletes on campus. The highly regimented athletic schedules are organized in such a manner that college athletes find themselves isolated from the general student body population and immersed in a sport culture that focuses more highly on athletic performance than academic performance (Gaston-Gayles, 2004).

Because race and racism can play a prominent role in how a Black male football student-athlete acclimates to the social and academic culture at a PWI, it was important to ask participants in the study if there were times when they felt as though they were isolated from the student body. Participant A talked about his experience of being in a relatively large classroom with a majority of White students and arriving to class 5–10 minutes after class started and noticing some rather peculiar looks on their faces. He noted,

> Yes, I had a … football shirt on, and I remember when my class was over with, I overheard a young lady say, "Ah, they got it made anyways. They get tutors, special attention, and so here we are working hard, wasting our money, and they get to come in all late."

These comments annoyed Participant A because he had a legitimate reason for being late, but because he was a Black male student-athlete, he was stereotyped as a dumb jock that was ungrateful for the opportunity to be at the university. Participant A indicated that he overheard the same White female tell another White male on another occasion,

> They always come in late, this and that. They always think they are smart and wanna come in and sit at the back of the class; some of them don't even care, they just want to waste the scholarship and sit in the back of class.

Participant F talked about how he often felt that, outside of his teammates, he had no one else with whom to talk. He stated,

> If you don't have anyone to relate to and to want to talk to, and often times I'd go to class, I'm either coming from a football-associated activity and my energy level or my morale might be low, and sometimes, I may need someone to send me all the notes, as I might get to class a couple of minutes late. But I never had the luxury of asking one of my peers. So yeah, I did feel some isolation.

Participant N talked about the feeling of isolation that he felt while he was a student-athlete on campus. He mentioned that many of the White nonathletes that he came in contact with had no idea about the path he had to overcome in order earn his scholarship, nor did they understand what truly goes into being a football student-athlete. Participant N stated,

> Many of the students I went to school with don't understand what poverty really means. I feel like, I mean, they got some people that's been through it, but mainly the kids that I was around, I mean they never struggled. They didn't have to worry if they were going to eat that week or nothing like that.

He further noted, "When you've been through something like that in your life, it provides you with the proper prospective." He also indicated that many White nonathlete students do not associate participation in a sport with work. Participant N stated, "They would say I gotta work to go to school, and I was like, you don't think football is work? You don't think hitting your head against somebody else, you don't think that's work?"

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked the following: What effects do the institutional norms and practices of a predominantly White institution have on Black male football student-athletes' perceptions of their experiences? The number of Black males attending the university as undergraduate students is a relatively small number. Of that relatively small number, a significant number of those students are student-athletes in two particular sports, football, and men's basketball. Black student-athlete in particular often feel that they must conform to institutional norms in order to survive at the institution. In order to understand those experiences and how it could affect a Black male football student-athlete, it became vital to the study to get a firsthand account of those experiences. The following themes pertain to institutional norms and practices at PWIs.

Institutional Practices for Student-Athletes

At predominantly white institutions (PWIs) black male student athletes are often marginalized based on their race, athletic status, and sociocultural backgrounds (Eitzen 2000; Sellers, Kuperminc, and Waddell, 1991). Erroneous stereotype is perpetuated at PWIs through various institutional practices such as the disparate enrollment of black student athletes compared to black student non-athletes (Donnor 2005; Harper et al. 2013; Hawkins 2010), the unwelcoming campus climates that stigmatize black male student athletes (Lawrence, Harrison, and Stone, 2009; Melendez 2008; Sailes 1993), and the differential treatment of black male student athletes by faculty and academic support staff (Benson 2000; Comeaux 2010a).The institution of college football is exploitive to student-athletes, particularly Black male student-athletes. Black male are recruited to these PWIs and are expected to conform socially and academically to institutional practices.

Black student-athletes are extremely impacted by academic exploitations of all kinds because they are the most heavily recruited race in college sports; especially in their participation in football and basketball (Gatmen, 2011). Because Black males are minorities at PWIs, there is often pressure on the athlete to conform to existing institutional norms in the effort survive. Adapting to an existing culture may involve dealing with the negative actions and behaviors of coaches, students, or faculty. Coaches in their desire to win can create an athletic culture that monopolize the athlete's time, at the expense of their academic obligations. Historically, it has been shown that Black male athletes in many cases will choose their athletic commitment over academics. When forced to choose between athletic involvement and academic achievement, the athlete will often concede to the desires of the head coach (Comeaux, 2015a). Because head coaches are highly paid in football and are given tremendous power, they are allowed to create an overemphasized athletic culture that often goes unchallenged. This exploitive culture benefits universities and athletic departments but does nothing to help the athlete in their holistic development (Lumpkin, 2008). Furthermore, because race plays a predominant role in how people are perceived, Black male athletes are often conflicted as to their presence on campus. In one respect there is a great appreciation for their athletic prowess and representing the school, yet there is also a resentment as to their presence because their elevated athletic status. This resentment often manifest itself in negative stereotypes as well as micro and macro aggressions. The existing cultures at many PWIs marginalize Black male athletes as only athletes and not real students (Sailes, 1993). The racist cultures that exists are often built on negative stereotypes that are replicated over and over again.

The adjustment from either a small rural community or an urban area can be difficult for any 17- or 18-year-old individual, but it can be particularly difficult for a Black student-athlete adjusting to an unwelcoming student body that is made up of a majority of White students. Participant A was asked about the adjustment to the large PWI, and his response included trepidation regarding the size of the institution, how I would be perceived as a Black male, and the overall time demands on the student-athlete. Participant A said, "I knew that I was going to a huge university; I didn't know how few minorities were on campus."

The expectation for all student-athletes is that they are able to successfully manage their academic responsibilities with their athletic obligation. But for many, the challenge of balancing athletics with academic was overwhelming. Participant A indicated that early on he had doubts as to whether he could survive academically. He said,

> I just slowly got worried, got afraid. And I thought to myself, well, I don't know if this is for me. I've got to wake up early, go to practice, lift weights, and then go to my eight o'clock class. Right there, and now here I am, 18 years old basically having a full-time job, with school and in sport.

As for adjusting to the institutional norms, Participant A indicated that schoolwork with professors was not particularly challenging; however, dealing with students had its challenges. White nonathletes often presented the greatest challenge for Participant A because those students often lacked the requisite racial sensitivity to understand the social and cultural dynamics that exist at a public White institution.

Participant A said,

I don't think White students understand how challenging it is to be Black and manage

being a student-athlete at an all-White school. The expectation is that you do your

work just like everybody else, except we're not like everybody else.

Often the expectation for university and athletic staff is that student-athletes assimilate into

the university like non-athletes. But according to participant J the process of adjusting to a

PWI is more challenging than many non-athletes know, noting,

You have to deal with the looks and off comments from the White non-athletes. People

just assume you're an athlete and you don't care about school. As it pertained to athletic

and academic staff, the participants also discussed the challenge of allowing a non-family

member to have control over their personal and academic lives. Participant J recalled:

It's an adjustment. They basically tell you what your day is going to be like every

single day. There is someone literally telling you what to do everything single day. You

basically have to deal with it if you are an athlete.

Participant A recalled when the former president of the United States visited

campus. White students' reaction to that news revealed the underling racial issues that

existed on campus:

And I remember one-time former President Obama came to campus, and I think

that's what really uncovered the racial undertone at the school. You know, I've

seen students with nooses on their shirt, monkeys on their shirt, with big ears.

Participant A was disgusted by what he saw, noting,

Basically, I think it was just a total disrespect. Cause where I'm from, we were told

to respect one another, you know respect other's opinion, or just respect overall.

And mainly the people that I was around, I was hearing from a distance. I was like,

man, that's how they really, that's how they really act. This is mainly the

Caucasians.

According to Participant A, it was after that situation that his view of the university

changed. He revealed, "That experience opened my eyes, that really, really, really, in a

way it made me look at the university in a different way."

Haywood and Payne (2017) discussed the challenges that Black student-athletes

have to deal with at a PWI. Many of these challenges have to do with race and how Black

student-athletes cope with being a minority at a PWI. Black student-athletes are especially

confronted with issues regarding race and their intellectual capabilities. These issues often

manifest themselves in the forms of micro- and macroaggressions. Sue and colleagues

(2007) defined *racial microaggressions* as "brief and commonplace daily verbal,

behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that

communicates hostile, derogatory, negative racial slights and insults to the target person or

group" (p. 273). Racial microaggressions are found to be more commonly used with

Whites against Blacks by those who do not understand the origins of racism or the impact

of their behaviors (Constantine et al., 2007). Black students can experience negative

feelings from White students in a number of ways. These microaggressive indicators can

be both verbal and nonverbal. Sue (2007) describes *Microinsults* are "unintentional

behaviors or verbal comments that convey rudeness or insensitivity or demean a person's

heritage identity, gender identity, or sexual orientation identity" (p. 111). Sue (2007)

describes *Microassault* as a "blatant verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack intended to

convey discriminatory and biased sentiments" (p. 111). Unlike microinsults and

microvalidation, which may be unconscious and unintentional, microassault is done openly and under conscious awareness (Sue et al., 2007).

Overcoming stereotypes are often a challenge for student-athletes, particularly for Black male student-athletes. It is often assumed that the Black male is not a legitimate student because his involvement in sports is the key to his admittance. Black athletes are subject to being objectified by non-Blacks who are curious of the unfamiliar or to learn what things that are racial stereotypes (Anderson, 2004; Morales, 2014). Being Black on PWI campuses suggests (to some White students) that Black males are athletes and were accepted for their athletic ability rather than their intellectual ability. In conjunction with this stereotype is the idea Black athletes are seen to be knowledgeable about Black-dominated sports like basketball and football (Morales, 2014). These stereotypes are often difficult to overcome and, in many cases, create assumptions that eventually become institutional norms that cast Black student-athletes in a negative light.

Participant J also indicated that the culture that existed on the campus was unwelcoming at times due to subtle micro- and macroaggressions that he experienced as a student-athlete. He explained,

> Sometimes they don't think we belong. I've heard people … I have friends who are nonathletes who've expressed [that] to me in a non-offensive way. You know, they are just kind of being honest about how students view us on campus. I got some pretty good insight on how they view us.

The university is a historic public institution that is keenly aware of its brand and the strong traditions that it is known for. For some participants interviewed in the study, the challenge of adjusting to institutional practices and norms was often a burden to one's

own individuality. Participant J said, "At a predominately White institution, I guess, to a certain degree you have to conform. …You have to portray a certain image or certain representation of what they want us to be like." He further noted, "You definitely feel as though you're under a microscope." According to Participant J,

> I remember a specific situation, I tweeted out something that I didn't really… it didn't really directly point to a certain situation that was going on, on campus, but it kind of inferred something. And I had freakin' three coaches' texting me within five minutes of me putting it up, and they were all over me about it.

He continued,

> It's kind of just a weird thing, if I was out own my own, it wouldn't have been a situation. But because I was part of this team, it somehow could've been viewed as a misrepresentation of the university. And so, it was an issue at that point.
>
> At a PWI, Black male student-athletes often associate exclusively with one another

because there is often a comfort in familiarity. According to the participants for the study, Black athletes often remain in the athletic sphere in the effort to avoid any potential negative feelings that may exist among nonathletic students at a PWI. Participant F indicated,

> Well, I was there to play football, so I kind of kept in perspective the reason that I was there, and I had to keep a level head. I was mad a lot, and I kind of wanted to be to myself, and I didn't really want to talk to any White people because I felt like they weren't being genuine, you know?

He went on to say that because his focus was primarily on football, he had very little interest in pushing back against prejudiced individuals. Participant F believed that most

Black male football student-athletes would rather remain in their athletic bubble than subject themselves to negative stereotypes that exist at PWIs.

A number of participants interviewed described the feeling of isolation while on campus. Although many felt in a safe space within the confines of the athletic department, they displayed less confidence when forced to socialize and interact with nonstudent-athletes on campus. As for the question about whether the student felt isolated as a Black student-athlete at a predominantly White campus, Participant F explained,

Some classes, I was the only Black student in there up until my senior year. … It made it difficult, like associating with other students in the class, the nonathletes, just being the only Black; it was a challenge for sure.

Participant A indicated that he did not attempt to assimilate with other students on campus because he felt more connected with athletes: "As a team, we were so well connected as brothers on the football field that I hung around them, so often I really never gave it much thought."

The Black male football student-athletes often felt confused by how they were treated by the student body. Some of those interviewed felt that it was difficult to build honest relationships with students on campus because they never quite knew what the person's true intentions were. On game days, the athlete is celebrated for their accomplishments on the field of play, yet during the week, they are largely ignored on campus or in the classroom. Participant G stated,

I have witnessed a little bit of both. Most of the time, just because you're an athlete, people wanted to be friends with you. Especially if you're a football player, they

really want to just say they know somebody on the team. When they're at the

stadium, like, "Oh yeah, that's my friend."

However, according to Participant G, on the other hand, there is often resentment because

the Black male is an athlete. The assumption exists that the Black athlete did not get in

college based on their academic ability but was given an opportunity that was not earned.

Participant G explained, "The other side of it is the thought that you are only here because

of athletics. And some people didn't think that you deserved to be here, or you took

somebody else's spot because you're an athlete."

Research Question 3

The third research question asked the following: What role does college athletics

play in the holistic development of Black male football student-athletes at a predominantly

White institution? In the effort to address research question three, there were themes that

emerged from the interviews that addressed the issue as to the role college athletics plays

in career development.

The first theme to emerge looked at the Black male football student-athletes

transition from high school to college and how those students balanced athletics with

academics. The participants discussed their transition from high school to college and the

challenges that they had to overcome. Edwards (1984) argued that Black student-athletes,

men in particular, were the least prepared for college compared with the other student-

athletes and students on campus. The reason behind this is because many Black male

athletes are recruited from economically disadvantaged communities with poor schools and

few resources to fully prepare students for college (Kelly & Dixon, 2014). The themes that

emerged in response to this question are discussed below. Although Edwards

conceptualized this stereotype and the factors that contribute to it nearly 30 years ago, other scholars have acknowledged that this trend has continued for decades in the late 20th century (Benson, 2000; Eitzen & Purdy, 1986) and remains prevalent in recent years (Edwards, 2011). For the purpose of the study, questions were posed to the participants that look at their experiences transitioning from high school to college. Their responses provided understanding as the challenges that Black males' athletes as they transition into PWIs.

Researchers in the past have discussed the challenges that Black male athletes have faced trying to balance their academic requirements with their athletic obligations. Striking a healthy balance between academic, social, and athletic lives can be difficult; many college athletes find that the demands of one role make it difficult; many college athletes find that the demands of one role make it difficult to meet the demands of the other (Harrison, Stone, Shapiro, Yee, Boyd, & Rullan, 2009; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). Adler and Adler (1991) found that male revenue college athletes enter college with feelings of optimism and pragmatism about their academic roles, but many devalue their academic role as early as their second semester, largely because sport demands structurally inhibit athletes' academic presence on campus. Under such conditions, athletes can experience academic and social isolation (Benson, 2000; Howard Hamilton & Watt, 2001).

The role that coaches play in the career development of the football student-athletes they recruit, was also a theme that emerged from the study. Coaches play a prominent role in the recruitment of the student-athlete, and often know first-hand they type of student they are bringing to campus. Black males recruited from low socioeconomic backgrounds, can potentially have a difficult time adjusting to PWIs if they are recruited from poor

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performing schools and lack the necessary support at home. The study examines the responses that participants gave on the role coaches had on their recruitment and whether or not those coaches were invested in their career success once they arrived on campus.

The next theme that emerged from the interviews was the role that athletic identity had on the participant's academics and career choices. Black males are often socialized in sports at an earlier age, and over time some can take on an athletic identity. This athletic identity is often perpetuated by societies desire to celebrate the American athlete. Young Black males are often susceptible to the role shift in their identity because a select number of Black males have attained a level of fame and fortune in professional athletics. Participants in the study discuss how their identity upon entering the university was focused primarily on football and achieving a career in the NFL. The participants also detail how the time commitment that was required for their sport often left little time to pursue career development opportunities.

The final theme focused on career maturity and career development. The participants were asked questions which examined their experiences as student-athletes, and they were able to develop the skills necessary to transition to life beyond sports. The following are the participant's responses to the overarching question as to the role athletics played in their career development.

Transitioning From High School & Balancing Academics with Athletics

To examine the challenges that Black male football student-athletes face when they transition from a high school to a PWI, the participants were asked about their experiences during the time they were a student at the university. The responses varied, but a number of the participants indicated that balancing one's time between athletics and academics and

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adjusting to the academic rigor of the institution were two of the biggest challenges that they had to overcome. Traditional college-bound students experience academic and social challenges during the transition to college (Turner, 2016; Turner & Thompson, 2014). For athletes, that transition can be even more difficult due to participation in sports (Bjornsen & Dinkel, 2017; Gayles & Baker, 2015; NCAA, 2014). Though college athletes receive support from academic advisors, tutors, and athletic trainers (Osborne, 2014; Sudano & Miles, 2017), they still struggle with academics, career exploration, time management, and other stressors that impede their mental health and well-being (Cosh & Tully, 2013; Mahoney, 2011; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Though many college freshmen are ill prepared for college academics (Turner, 2016; Turner & Thompson, 2014), it can be an even bigger challenge for athletes because their ability to play sports is tied to academic performance.

Participant A revealed that the time required to prepare one's body and mind for football often put a strain on his ability to focus on academics. He explained,

It was a struggle for me to try to excel and get, whether it's A's, or A's and a few B's, it's really tough to be in that mindset whenever I am required, and actually have to spend, most of my day, whether I'm in football, or trying to take care of my body for it, and all the stuff that comes with it. It was definitely a challenge trying to balance that.

In addition, some participants struggled because they felt they were underprepared for college. One of the participants mentioned that he attended an inner-city high school and the school did little to prepare him for the academic rigors of college. He said, "My biggest problem was academic-wise, just 'cause coming where I'm coming from school

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wasn't really important." He further noted, "I never learned how to study so I used to never really take notes … not because I didn't want to, just 'cause I didn't think I had to 'cause I didn't do it in high school." He stated that the lack of study habits and time management skills inhibited his ability to be successful his first year, revealing,

> I never really had to learn how to study, learn good study habits and time management, anything like that. So, when I got to the institution and those things were to be understood, that's hard being a student-athlete and a college student. I didn't know any of that. So, I got on academic probation. I almost failed out of school.

Participant C talked about the pressures of balancing all the effort that goes into playing football at the highest level with finding the time to focus on academics:

> At times, academics may seem secondary. When you're traveling and practice and games, just remain[ing] focused throughout those four years I was there and keeping academics first in my mind and then also being successful on the field. You kind of have to balance the voices and the critics and all the noise from outside and still stay focused on the task at hand.

The social transition for a number of those interviewed was one of the biggest challenges. Socially, many of the Black male football student-athletes had never been in a situation where they were overwhelmingly the smallest minority group represented. Many had come from high schools that were either mixed or majority Black, so as those students transitioned to a PWI, a definite adjustment period took place. Participant F spoke about the lack of diversity on the campus and the role it played in their transition, noting, "Culturally, that was the biggest challenge for me, just being around so many White people

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and not a lot of Black people." He talked about the adjustment of having to conform to social norms in order to fit in:

> Not seeing a lot … of Black people was really challenging. There was a feeling that I had to talk a certain way, I had to leave out different things that I would normally say because I don't think they would relate or understand what I was talking about. So it was just real difficult, you know, in that regard.

Many felt that while difficult, the transition helped in their overall growth and understanding of people from different backgrounds. Participant D noted,

> You're forced to interact with people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. … If I interact with someone that's different from me, maybe I get a diverse understanding of how they went about understanding material; it may be able to benefit me in a better way than what I'm accustomed to. So having different knowledge on how to attack things to understand things can definitely go a long way with you being successful and transition to success a lot easier.

The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports evaluated the graduation success rates of players enrolled in the 70 FBS schools (formerly known as Division I-A schools) that played in college football bowl games in 2011 (Lapchick, 2011). The graduation success rates of Black and White male football student-athletes were 61% and 81%, respectively, revealing a 20% achievement gap (Lapchick, 2011). Research has shown that a student-athlete's success in college will depend on the student's commitment to athletics and/or academics. If a student favors one side over the other, he or she is likely to suffer to a certain degree in the other area. Successful student-athletes are able to simultaneously balance their academic commitment with athletic participation. The pure athlete, one who

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is primarily committed to the athletic role with minimal or no commitment to the academic role (Snyder, 1985), is least conflicted by an environment of disproportionate high athletic demands. By contrast, the pure scholar demonstrates an opposite role identity, and the commitment to the academic role leaves minimal energy for athletics (Snyder, 1985). The ideal balance is reflected by a scholar athlete who has a high degree of commitment to both academics and athletics (Snyder, 1985).

The challenge for many college student-athletes is maintaining balance in a system that favors financial gain over academic achievement. The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (2010) cited the current business-like model of intercollegiate athletics, which prioritizes athletics over academics when it comes to funding structure, institutional values, and the treatment of college athletes. This phenomenon is especially true in Division I colleges, where pressure from coaches and the stakes for winning are particularly high (Eitzen, 2012). The numbers indicate that while many male athletes aspire to a career in the NFL, only a few students actually make it. What is most troubling is that less than 2% of college athletes in Division I football are projected to make it to the NFL, yet on average 45% of Football Subdivision School football players do not receive a college degree (Madsen, 2014; New, 2015).

According to many of the Black male football student-athletes interviewed for the study, it was difficult balancing academic rigor with athletic commitment. It was particularly difficult for Black male football student-athletes who were unprepared for the rigors of higher education. Participant A described how balancing athletics was difficult for him because he lacked an academic foundation and therefore struggled with basic skills

such as note taking. He said, "I really had to grow up quick. I took the notes that I had to do but realized that I needed a recorder." He further stated,

> Every time I went to class, I would record what he was saying, and the following night or so, after practice or during study hall, I would play earlier messages, and I would simply write the notes down like that. … So I would have to say academic-wise, it was tough, and I had to learn quickly.

Participant A talked about the difficulty of pursing a major that he believed was too rigorous. He explained, "Most of my teammates that came in with me looked for classes and majors that weren't too difficult." He also revealed, "A lot of guys didn't have the proper study habits, so they took the easy way out 'cause they didn't know how to adjust." Time, according to many of those interviewed, is a precious commodity that student-athletes wish they had more of. Despite there being a NCAA 20-hour rule that restricts the amount of practice time per week that can be designated toward a sport, many participants felt that there was very little time to devote to academics or personal development. Participant A said, "Outside of practice, there are so many other things that are going on that are athletically related that it's difficult to find time to rest." He further noted,

> Your focus outside of practice is going to class and getting good grades. We're always in class thinking about whatever the task is at hand, and then we're thinking about how we can either get a five- or ten-minute nap in before workouts or class or whatever we have.

Coaches' Recruiting and Student-Athlete Career Development

One of the most sensitive issues in intercollegiate athletics is race and its implications on athlete recruiting and career development. Basketball and increasingly

football are dominated by talented Black athletes whose representation in these sports program far exceeds their presence elsewhere in the university. The separation that exists between athletic programs and the rest of the university can only harm the educational experiences and opportunities available to minority student-athletes (Duderstadt, 2000).

Because of the tremendous athletic demands that are placed on college athletes during their first 2 years, it can be difficult for students to explore various majors and/or career development opportunities. Coaches, because of their desire to win, will often push athletic participation over academic success. In order to remain eligible student-athletes are often pushed into choosing majors that are most compatible with athletic participation, even if they are uninterested or unprepared for those majors (Adler & Adler, 1987; Cornelius, 1995). While student-athletes often fulfill their obligation to the university by performing athletically and bringing notoriety to the universities, all too often Black students do not see the benefits of their labor by playing professionally or earning a degree. Of those who do graduate, many graduate in less marketable majors "riddled with 'keep 'em eligible' less competitive 'jock courses' of dubious educational and occupational relevance" (Edwards, 1988, p. 138). Exploitation has been alleged in studies and commentaries (Donnor, 2005; Hawkins, 1999). Meggyesy (2000) stated that the NCAA and its member institutions "exploit the talent of Black athletes and deny these same athletes' access to quality education" as well as limit "employment opportunities of Black athletes after their career ends" (p. 27).

In an effort to gain an understanding of the role that coaches play in the development of Black male football student-athletes, participants were asked if the coaches invested in their development away from sports during their time in school. Those

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interviewed indicated that although their coaches supported them emotionally, they rarely provided any solutions to the academic time imbalance. There was an expectation from the coaches that students would "figure it out." Participant A stated, "I remember telling a coach, dang, when am I gonna study? He said, 'Man, you're just gonna have to make time for it.'" Participant A did admit that his position coach took time to ask him about his academics and his future. He stated, "After, I was at the school 2 years, one of the coaches came up to me and asked me what I was going to do after college." Participant A further noted, "The coach said that everybody got a small chance to make it, so you really need to have that intact on what you are gonna do after football." Participant A also stated that he understood that the bottom line was winning and that was what most of the coaches focused on. He said,

> All these coaches just care about is winning. That's what most of 'em wanna do, just win, win, win, win. And you got some that don't care about academics and what not, that just throw ya in classes 'cause they know it's easy, and then you have some coaches that expect a lot out of you on the field and off the field. They hold you to a higher standard. And so I really appreciated those coaches that held me to a higher standard.

There were a number of those interviewed who credited their coaches with helping them grow personally as men. Participant C indicated,

> The coach that recruited me was an honorable man. He didn't attempt to lie to me so I would come to the school, but rather he told me the truth from Day One. He told me what he thought of me and what he thought I could do for them. I liked what I heard, and I made the decision to go with them.

Participant C discussed how the coaches and academic advisors were up front with him during the recruiting process and that, while they did provide the necessary resources for him to be successful, it was up to the student to take advantage of the resources that were afforded to them. Participant C remarked, "While the coaches want students to utilize the resources, it's gonna kind of be on you to take advantage of those things; they're really kind of … their focus is more on football." He went on to talk about the level of academic support that student-athletes receive from academic advisors in the athletic department. He stated,

> You have those academic advisors and those people who are willing to help you be successful, but no one is gonna babysit you through it, in a sense. Like you're a grown individual, so you're gonna have to … you're responsible for your own success; no one is gonna force you to successful, and no one is gonna babysit you in order to be successful. So it's all about that growth and grown person maturity that you're gonna have to develop really fast, or you could possibly get left behind in this world.

Athletic Identity

Athletic identity can be characterized as the extent to which one identifies with fulfilling the social role of an athlete (Brewer et al., 1993). Associated with the development of an individual's athletic identity are the perceived elements of the strength and exclusivity of the athlete role (Good et al., 1993). In a study, L. Harrison et al. (2011) found evidence that Black Division I football players reported significantly higher levels of athletic identity than did their White athlete peers. Black athletes possess a modern-day double consciousness. Identifying both with being Black and an athlete are two salient

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self-concepts that Black athletes may struggle to negotiate (Steinfeldt, Reed, & Steinfeldt, 2010) and apply meaning to under an umbrella of others' negative stereotypes.

The popularity of sports, particularly in the Black community, has grown significantly. Lapchick (2009) reported the high proportion of Black athletes participating in sports such as football and basketball in the NBA, NFL, and NCAA range from nearly 47–77% of the participating athletes. African American sport participation has generally been concentrated to only a few high-profile sports (e.g., football, basketball) in the United States in the past few decades (Coakley, 2009). Good et al. (1993) contended that identification with the athlete role is linked to the strength and exclusivity of that identity. Webb, Nasco, Riley, and Headrick (1998) argued that athletic identity usually forms early in one's years of sports participation. After the recognition of early sport talent in young athletes, the consistent development of their talents and sports skills may lead to an internalization of athletic identity (Webb et al., 1998). Athletic identity is regarded as both a cognitive structure and a social role (Brewer et al., 1993). As a cognitive structure, athletic identity serves to systematically interpret and organize information and influence behaviors related to the athletic role (Brewer et al., 1993; Horton & Mack, 2000). Considering the social nature of sport, development of an athletic identity by means of social identification and evaluation concedes that identification with the athlete role is influenced by others' perceptions (Brewer et al., 1993; Li & Andersen, 2008).

Historically, many Black male athletes, because of their love of sports and their desire to become a professional athlete, fall into the trap of believing a career in professional sports is a realistic and viable option. Many Black male athletes, particularly in football and basketball, will sacrifice their education and personal and social growth in

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favor of a potential career in sports. The participants shared their experiences of when they were a college athlete and the challenges they dealt with as it pertained to their identity. Participant J shared how he felt that he was an athlete first and a student second:

> I can see why athletes would say they don't really experience college, because, of course, I didn't have a lot time to go out and do what college students do, but at the same time I was working towards a goal. … Looking back, of course I wish I could go back and experience college like a normal college student. But I wasn't just a normal college student. I was a student-athlete.

Participant J talked about his experience and about how many young Black male football athletes are so preoccupied with their sport that they learn very little about anything outside their sport. He explained,

> If you look at it, a lot of guys leave with degrees and stuff, but they really only know football. We use the term student-athlete, but really, you're just an athletic student. That's true. You spend more time on that football field, in that meeting room, than you get to spend in the classroom and study hall, because the demand is so great.

> For many participants, the prevailing thought at the time was that, in order to achieve the goal of playing professional football, the entire focus had to be solely on football. Participant J noted,

> Back then in college, I believed if I'm going to make it to the NFL, not necessarily do just enough in school but you want to do good in school so you can continuously play football. I thought you had to choose one over the other. But

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now, since I'm a little older. Since I'm a little more mature, I really believe you can focus on both.

For many Black male athletes in urban and low socioeconomic areas, the seeds for athletic identity are planted at an early age. More often than not, family and friends become complicit in pushing the athletic identity. While athletic participation alone is not detrimental to personal growth and development, the unrestrained push toward athletic participation can have a negative effect on academic achievement. Existing empirical research has also shown that strong athletic identity may negatively compromise and be detrimental to academic achievement, behavior choices, and transitioning out of sport (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002; Webb et al., 1998). Participant J stated, "As much as they preach the whole narrative around the student-athlete, sometimes it gets put the opposite way around, the athlete-student." College coaches in particular are often the ones pushing the focus toward athletics. Participant J remarked,

> Coaches will say, if you learn this, and you have this much knowledge, you're going to be on the field. You can take your family to the next level; you can get the money and pay for whatever you want to.

In addition, Participant J talked about the journey early on and how the desire to be a professional athlete became a driving force in his life. He stated, "I was completely wrapped around the game. I put my all into it, and I wanted to be successful in that area. Because that's where I received my praise, and that felt good to me."

For participants, choosing a career path beyond sports was at times difficult because the mindset for most from the beginning was to achieve a career in professional

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sports. The interviews revealed two different mindsets. The first mindset was reflected in participants who knew exactly what they wanted to major in as a degree and who were able to continue on that path all through college. Those students appeared to understand the importance of achieving a degree and the challenges associated with balancing athletics with academics. They were not under any pretense that football would last forever; they understood that football had an expiration date, and it was important to them and their family to achieve a college degree. Participant I stated,

> In order to play football, you got to keep the grades. That was always instilled in me at a young age. My parents used to threaten to take football away from me if my grades slipped. So for me, everything I needed to do or need to get done, I wanted to do it, because football was that driving force for me. It kept me grounded. It kept my head on straight. I had a goal to make it into the NFL. If I have bad grades, I can't be on the field. That was definitely a part of it.

Participant E talked about the importance of graduation, noting that he and his family asked about the school's graduation rates during the recruiting process:

> Getting a degree was definitely brought up. The graduation rate was one of the biggest things that was talked to me about during the recruiting process. I know that was really important for my parents because that's all they preached to me. They're like, you may not know what you want to do after you finish, but one thing's sure, you're going to graduate, and you're going to get that paper.

Participant I detailed how his relationship with his mother and the discipline she instilled within him at an early age helped prioritize academics and influenced his career choices:

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My mother instilled that in me from a little boy. I never really had an option when

it came to academics. I had to be good in football, and I had to be good in school,

and if I wasn't good in school, there was no football.

He went on to say that he never had athletic identity issues; it was never either/or. He

explained,

From Little League all the way up to high school, it was the same thing for me. It

didn't matter if the coach was begging her for me to play. If I got a seventy-nine or

below, there was no practice. There was no football game. I'm not joking about

that.

Another participant talked about the desire to control his own destiny, forge his

own path, and not allow someone else to devalue the importance of education. Participant

L explained,

A lot of times guys are pushed into what most players have already been through,

so you have a lot of the test and things like that to where it's an easier path, you

don't learn as much. But for me I just knew that wasn't the way that I wanted to go,

and I was going to do whatever it took to take on my own path and make that

happen. But a lot times, guys are pushed into majors and given that easier route so

they can focus more on athletics.

However, a number of participants reflected the mindset of indifference. They

entered college and were indifferent at the time toward academics and their major. It was

their belief that in order to achieve their ultimate goal of playing professional football,

academics and choosing a degree came second to playing football. In some cases, the

coaches reinforced those beliefs and desires by stressing to the Black male football athlete

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that they were talented enough to play at the highest level. According to those interviewed, the discussion on majors and career aspirations were not discussed or emphasized during the recruiting process, only the player's athletic talent. Participant K noted,

> I don't remember any coaches speaking to me about career outside of the NFL. I remember them telling me, "This is the SEC, this is the best conference, this is … if you come here and you play, you're going to probably end up starting because you're very talented. And if you start here, you're gonna go to the NFL."

Career Maturity & Career Development

The students lead stressful lives, have unique and time-consuming demands placed upon them, and often face stereotyping and discrimination on campus and in the classroom (Sedlacek, 1992). In order for student-athletes to be successful in the classroom, a student must successfully navigate the difficult challenges of balancing football with academics. Historically, many Black male student-athletes at the Division I level in football and basketball enter college with the expectation of becoming a professional athlete. A large number of Black male football athletes become narrowly focused on the pursuit of becoming a professional athlete at the expense of their career and personal growth beyond sports. Often, contributing factors perpetuate these types of behaviors, such as the enormous economic growth of college football and potential wealth and celebrity that goes along with professional sports. Family and cultural dynamics also contribute to the Black male student-athletes' willingness and/or unwillingness to participate in personal and career development.

Early literature in the sociology of sports suggested that athletic role behavior must be reinforced, and socializing agents such as parents and other role models influence sports

participation (McPherson, 1976). Studies show that in comparison to their White counterparts, African American males are socialized by family and the larger community into sports deliberately and intensively by limiting exposure to other hobbies and role models and pushing sports as a possible career path early in life (Edwards, 1983, 1988; Harris, 1994; Oliver, 1980). This type of sport socialization process has been associated with the overrepresentation of African American males in some spheres of athletic participation, and the consequences are distinctly different from the consequences of those who are not socialized as intensively toward athletics (Harris, 1994; Sailes, 1991; Winbush, 1987). The consequences of overemphasizing athletic participation that have been identified in the literature are lower levels of academic achievement, higher expectations for professional sports careers as a means to upward mobility and economic viability, highly salient athletic identities, and lower levels of career maturity (Adler & Adler, 1991; Baillie & Danish, 1992; Beamon & Bell, 2002, 2006; Clow, 2001; Edwards, 2000; Eitzen, 2003; C. Harrison & Lawrence, 2003; S. Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Lomax, 2000; Winbush, 1987). In addition, for many Black male athletes, very little emphasis is placed on personal and career development because the expectation is that they will achieve a career in the NFL.

The American Institute for Research (1989) stated that approximately 44% of the Black football and basketball players on a campus with a majority of White students indicated that they expected to become professional athletes. During this study's interview process, the participants shared their stories on career maturity and the challenges that they faced as they transitioned from high school to college and from college to life beyond football. Participant A discussed his thought process while he was in college. He explained

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that although he enjoyed playing football, he understood his primary reason for playing was to pay for his education: "I knew I loved football, but I wasn't in love with it. I was just getting by because I didn't want my mom and daddy paying all that money for school." Participant A explained, "I got me a scholarship, graduated, and the university got what they wanted out of me, I got what I wanted out of the university. And so I did my part." Unfortunately, according to Participant A, there are a lot of Black male football student-athletes who realize that football will end sooner than they think:

> You have guys year after year that try unsuccessfully to get into the league, but you learn quickly that it may not happen; therefore, you have to mature. I believe I matured faster than most because, like I said, I had a plan.

> Participant O talked about how his parents influenced affected his growth and

maturity as an individual:

> I give my parents all the credit, to be honest. Having a mother that is a physician and a dad that is an engineer, both went to college. … I devoted all my time and energy to football, but once I was over it, even though it was emotionally hard for me, I knew that it was time to move on and then time to get into the world that I was seemingly prepared for out of college.

> Participant I talked about the harsh realities of football when a football student-athlete realizes that the NFL may not happen. As the football student-athlete gets closer to the end of his college career, he is often forced to mature and look for other viable career options. He explained,

> At a certain point, you say, 'Damn, I'm going into my junior year. Certain guys, they're starting to get looked at by the NFL already, they starting to get praised,

they starting to get stuff in the mail. We'll what's my situation? What's going on

with me?' That's when it begins to be eye opening because most guys are like,

'Well, damn, what am I gonna do if football doesn't work out?'

Participant G understood that the odds of playing in the NFL were long, but it was

worth taking the risk of pursuing a career in professional football:

I know for me specifically, it was kind of like the end of my senior year where that

really starts to creep in, where you're kind of like, 'Do I really have a shot to make

it to the NFL?'

He went on to say that it worth pushing off his career goals for a shot at the NFL, noting,

For me personally, I know I always had … even though my numbers on the field

and stuff didn't show up, I knew I had some athletic ability. So I knew that was

probably going to push me over, at least give me a shot.

Participant E explained how he made a conscientious decision to prepare for life

without football just in case he did not make it to the NFL. He also believed that student-

athletes should be encouraged to explore pursuit of different degrees while in college. It

was his belief that Black male student-athletes can pursue both an NFL career and a career

beyond sports if they are continuously encouraged to do so. He said,

You really have to give some serious thought about what you want to do after the

sport is over. Students should be encouraged to think about what they're going to

do. They should be constantly pushing the different types of degrees.

Participant A revealed the challenges that he experienced once he graduated from

the university. He explained that although he completed his ultimate goal of graduating, he

was not completely prepared for the transition away from football. College athletes

struggle with transitioning out of sports because they feel a loss of identity and they lack

the career development skills necessary to function outside of athletics (Grove, Lavallee, &

Gordon, 1997; Hart & Swenty, 2016; Lally, 2007; Smith & Hardin, 2018; Warehime,

Dinkel, Bjornsen-Ramig, & Blount, 2017; Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004). It

has been suggested that the push toward athletics as seen within African American families

is hindering the social and cognitive growth of African American youth, particularly

African American males (Edwards, 1988, 2000). Participant A talked about leaving college

and entering the school system, but he began to question that decision early on:

> I thought I wanted to teach, but I was just like, man, this is not for me. So I
>
> struggled that first year-and-a-half after college. That year-and-a-half was
>
> frustrating. I was trying to find myself, like, what do I really wanna do?

It was only after some introspective thinking and planning that the participant found his

true career path. The career path did not involve teaching or working in a classroom per se,

but rather it involved mentoring youth in his community. Participant A revealed,

They ended up creating a position; they call it RESET—Reaching a Student Every Time.

Basically it's a position where you go around and focus on the behavior of the student.

And I found myself. I was saying, 'You know, I like this; this is something I can see, and I

can do.' It took some time for me to notice it, but after a year or so, I found myself loving

it.

Career development is a "continuous lifelong process of development experiences

that focuses on seeking, obtaining and processing information about self, occupational and

education alternatives, lifestyles and role options" (Hanson, 1976, p.44). Super's (1996)

developmental self-concept theory examined vocational choices based on the individual's

ability to self-conceptualize his or her growth from birth to adulthood. Statistics show that Black male student-athletes graduate from college at a lower rate than Black nonathletes (JBHE, 2005). Super identified five stages that occur during an individual's vocational development. Those life stages include growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. For the purpose of this study, the exploration stage in particular was examined because that is when individuals ages 18–21 begin to conceptualize their vocational preference. The exploration stage begins around the age of 14 and does not change until around the age of 25. Super characterized the exploration phase as the period when an individual goes through a self-examination that includes role tryouts and exploration of occupations; these evaluations take place in school, during leisure activities, and during part-time work. He suggested that an individual's career maturity along with their ability to self-conceptualize their realistic position often shapes his or her vocational preference. In regard specifically to Black male student-athletes in the sport of football, there is often an overemphasized athletic role identity that precludes the athlete from self-conceptualizing his realistic vocational opportunities. Adler and Adler (1991) categorized this positioning as role abandonment, which occurs when a student-athlete progressively detaches from investment in other areas and let's go of alternative goals or priorities.

Students who are academically engaged are actively involved in the learning process, devote full attention to their studies and have a commitment to their academic success, while students who are not academically engaged lack interest, display apathy, and participate only superficially in their academic pursuits (Newman et al. 1992; Finn 1993). That athletics can play such a dominant role in a student-athlete's life that it will cause the athlete to disengage from other aspects in his or her life, particularly areas that involve

career and personal development. Existing empirical research has also shown that strong athletic identity may negatively compromise and be detrimental to academic achievement, behavior choices, and transitioning out of sports (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Harrison et al., 2002; Webb et al., 1998). This overemphasis in athletic involvement manifests itself in academics, in society, and in career and development. Findings from a report on graduation rates indicated that a majority of Power 5 institutions (59%) graduated Black male college athletes at a rate lower than their Black male peers who were not involved in athletics (Harper, 2018). Of those who do graduate, many of those athletes from football and basketball graduate with less than desirable degrees. Often, Black male college athletes, along with many of their college athlete peers, are denied the freedom of pursuing a major of their choice without facing athletic consequences, which further contributes to their feelings of frustration and lack of autonomy (Beamon, 2008, 2010; Benson, 2000).

Historically, once admitted into the institutions, Black males playing football and basketball are often shuffled toward majors that are student-athlete friendly (Knight Commission 2006; Creapeau 2006). The practice of funneling a large number of college athletes into majors for athletic eligibility and scheduling convenience purposes is known as academic clustering. Black male college athletes in the highest revenue-generating sports of football and basketball are impacted disproportionately by this questionable practice (Fountain & Finley, 2009; J. M. Smith & Willingham, 2015). The primary reason Black male athletes either choose this path or are directed to do so by a coach and/or an academic advisor is to allow the student-athlete more time to focus on athletics in order to spend less time stressing about academic eligibility. Because less emphasis is placed on academic achievement, even less emphasis is placed on career and personal development.

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During the interview process for this study, the participants were asked a series of questions about whether they participated in career and personal development opportunities while they were students on campus. Sample questions included the following: (a) Did participating in football ever conflict with your ability to participate in career development programs? (b) If you did take advantage of career and development opportunities, how did it impact your time and prepare you for life beyond sports? Participant A revealed that he was exposed to a summer transitional course during his freshman year in college and that experience prepared him for what to expect during his first year:

> I really loved the transitional class I took my freshman year. It taught me what to expect in college, how to deal with college and how to balance everything. I also believe that colleges need to reiterate that when you're leaving … 'cause life comes at you from different angles. And if you're not ready, it's gonna keep ya off your feet.

Participant J noted that many Black male football student-athletes fail to take advantage of career programming because their primary focus and attention is on football and becoming a professional athlete:

> It's a difficult problem to solve. … You gotta find a way to create some kind of cool factor around the idea of a well-rounded student-athlete. Right now it just seems like academics is on the back burner, and that's for people who are not good enough to go to the next level.

Participant J also stated that although Black male football student-athletes may not want to take advantage of the career programming being offered, it is in the athletic department's best interest to make programming mandatory. He said,

> Sometimes you gotta take that horse to water, you gotta make 'em drink. It's not really enough to just put it out there for them sometimes. I think you kind of feed them a little bit, and you force-feed them a little bit.

A Black male student-athlete who is underprepared for college, is indifferent to school, and has an overzealous athletic identity is a student who is likely lacking the career and personal developments skill necessary to transition to life beyond sports. Based on the responses from those interviewed, it will continue to be a challenge to get Black football student-athletes at the highest level of college football to take advantage of the career and professional development opportunities on campus. A lack of career maturity, an overzealous athletic identity, and limited time appear to be some of the reasons that many Black male athletes in college football fail to take advantage of the resources inside and outside of the athletic department. The one-track athletic mentality plays a pivotal role in the career choices that many Black male football student-athletes make. Participant A reflected the mindset for many of his teammates:

> Most of these guys, they come in with the mindset … I'm going to the NFL. Everything else just doesn't matter. There is this one-dimensional mind frame. I remember one guy that I went to school with, that's all he talked about. He was like, 'Man, I ain't gonna be here long. I doubt if I graduate, but if I get a chance to go to the league, I'm going to the league.' He didn't go to the league. He didn't even graduate.

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In regard to the question of whether athletic- and university-related career and development should be made mandatory for student-athletes, a majority of participants indicated that while the student may be resistant to mandatory programming, it is necessary for student-athletes, particularly Black student-athletes in football and men's basketball. Participant M insisted that, although students may be resistant to participating in student-athlete development programming, athletic personnel must continue to push those opportunities:

> I would advise athletic personnel to keep pushing them to do whatever it is that I guess you're trying to get them to do. I guess 'cause, for me, it wasn't about me hearing it. If someone got me to do something and I like it, then I'm keep coming back. But if I just heard somebody just told me one time, I'm a be like, 'I ain't gonna do that.' But if somebody keeps telling me, keep telling me, then I'll be like, 'All right, I guess I'll give it a try.' Then I'll go and like it. And then I'll be hooked, then. Then I'll just keep going.

Summary of Findings

The responses from participants revealed that Black male football student-athletes and their career decisions were based heavily on their identity, family influence, and participation in their sport. Race played a pivotal role in how the participants perceived their role as Black student-athletes on a predominately White campus. Their interactions with White students or the lack thereof caused them to make assumptions about the school and the various stereotypes that exist regarding Black athletes. Although many of the participants acknowledged that attending the university was an overall pleasant and worthwhile endeavor, they did reveal they were initially disappointed by some of the racist

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and microaggressive comments made by White students. Of those interviewed, most indicated they had a positive experience when dealing with White individuals off campus and in the community. A predominant belief was that Black male football student-athletes were treated differently than other minorities in the community because they played football and were affiliated with the university. Consequently, because football was placed on a pedestal within the community, athletes were viewed as stars regardless of their race.

In regard to feelings of isolation, the participants indicated that, while they did not necessary identify with White nonathletes on campus, they did not feel isolated because they tended to take comfort in existing primarily within their athletic community. Their everyday social existence on campus contained little interaction with nonathletes—only the occasional interaction going to and from class. When it came to in-class socialization, interactions with White nonathletes was also limited unless students were forced to work together in a required group assignment. In instances where student-athletes took classes together, those students would primarily socialize with one another, thereby reinforcing the notions that athletes often cluster together because of their common interest and that they lack the social skills to interact with nonathletes who exist outside their athletic realm.

For those interviewed, the transition from high school to college varied depending on several factors that included academic background, family dynamic, socioeconomic status, and overall commitment to academic achievement and graduation. The majority of participants viewed receiving an athletic scholarship to a major Division I university as a monumental accomplishment. The general feeling was that their athletic prowess had provided them an opportunity to attend college without any financial cost to themselves or their family, and the reward might potentially be greater if that same athletic prowess

allowed them to play football at the professional level. The participants that were most grounded upon arriving at the university were more likely to be prepared for a career outside of football.

The majority of participants believed that upon arrival at the university, they would eventually have a successful college career, followed by a long career in the NFL. This mentality was nurtured and cultivated from an early age by family, friends, and coaches. There was an inherent belief that football led to a better life, including a scholarship to a major institution of high learning followed by a career in professional football. Participants revealed that their own identity was heavily influenced by sports, and it became their primary focus once they began to show the ability to perform at the highest level. They also indicated that upon arriving at the university, their focus shifted primarily to athletic participation.

Although participants understood the significance of academic achievement, many expressed a greater desire to win favor with their coach and dedicate their majority of their time to doing well in their sport. Many participants noted that so much emphasis was placed on athletic participation, there was very little time to dedicate to career and personal development. Participants believed that career and personal development was important but not as important as participation in their sport, at least initially. Only after an athlete either was unable to play or knew that he was not going to pursue a career in professional athletics did the student become more interested in career and personal development opportunities. In regard to the role that coaches played in their development, a majority of participants indicated a positive view of their coach and recruiting process. The participants indicated that their coaches were honest with them during the recruiting

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process. They also realized once they were enrolled that although pursuing a rigorous degree program might be possible, given the demands of their sport and lack of time available to adequately study for those degree programs might render a difficult degree unattainable. A majority of participants indicated that the school did an adequate job of offering career and personal development programming to help student-athletes transition to life beyond sports. However, many indicated that students-athletes, particularly in football and men's basketball, would not be receptive to such programming until they (a) understood its true value and (b) the possibility of achieving a career in professional sports was no longer a viable option. Many participants also said that participation in career development programming for student-athletes should be mandatory since many student-athletes would not participate unless required to do so.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study examined how universities and athletic departments can address academic and societal problems that exist with Black males in college football. Because the current collegiate model is a multimillion-dollar entity, the likelihood of making wholesale changes to the current system appears to be remote. The dominant White majority will continue to supervise, legislate, and govern the rules, as well as manage television revenue. However, within the system, effective change can take place. A greater emphasis has to be placed on engaging the Black student-athlete. In light of the millions of dollars that are generated annually for universities and athletic departments, schools must be willing to allocate the necessary resources to help student-athletes, particularly Black male athletes, with their personal, social, and academic growth.

For Black male athletes in college football, a propensity exists to prioritize sport over academic achievement and social development. Thus, coaches and administrators should make a concerted effort to improve the personal and career development of student-athletes beyond that of their sport. The goal should be to help them learn and develop holistically. All athletic activities should center on promoting academic achievement and enhancing student-athletes' personal development. Black male student-athletes should be encouraged to explore different degree options. Exposing these young men to various degree programs will allow them to make a conscientious decision without the influence of coaches and academic staff. Exposure to former football student-athletes who have both graduated and have not should be encouraged. The goal for this proposed programming is

to educate Black males football athletes and, hopefully, alter how they define career success (i.e., success distinct from professional athletics) as well as expand their understanding of the importance of cultural awareness and professional networking. If a greater number of Black male football are able to enhance this career development skills despite the racial, social, and academic challenges that they face at PWIs then perhaps a greater number will be adequately prepared for careers beyond their sport. This, in turn, will hopefully increase the number of Black male college graduates.

The research examining Black male student-athletes has produced a limited number of studies that focus on collegiate football student-athletes and how they define success beyond their sport. The chances of a Black male becoming a professional athlete are slim to none, but colleges and universities, primarily PWIs, profit from college athletics by sustaining this aspiration within the university environment. Black males made up only 2.8% of full-time undergraduate students in 2012, yet Black male student-athletes comprised 58% of the football and basketball teams in the six major NCAA Division I sports conferences (Harper et al., 2013). As it pertains to this case study, the disparity in numbers was much worse at the university, as the makeup up of full-time undergraduate Black males was less than 2% of the total enrollment. Despite the long odds of becoming a professional athlete, Black males have a greater expectation of becoming professional athletes than their White counterparts. In addition to the high representation in the major college athletic markets, the athletic expectations for Black athletes are much greater than White athletes from coaches, professors, and peers (Simiyu, 2012).

The findings revealed that Black male football student-athletes at PWIs face numerous challenges as they matriculate through college. For those who participated in in

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the study, many felt that their race played a role in how they were perceived by non-student-athletes and faculty. It was their belief that because they were a part of a minority male population, they were susceptible to racist comments that also included micro and macro aggressions. Racist comments and attitudes were often present when the athlete was operating outside the athletic bubble. The participants acknowledged that they felt most comfortable around their teammates and other athletes. For those individuals that did experience racist comments or micro aggressions while on campus, a few chose to address it, but majority chose to ignore it. The belief by many of the participants was that they believed they were at the school to play football and as long as they had their teammates there was little interest in building relationships with people they did not trust or believed they were a "dumb jock". According to those interviewed, many of negative experiences occurred in the classroom or while the Black male student was on-campus. It was during those times that micro aggressive behaviors were displayed by White students which in some cases caused Black student-athletes to isolate themselves and/or only associate with other student-athlete. Because many of the participants had adopted an athletic identity which had been cultivated by sport participation and the desires of their coach, there was little love lost on the relationships with White students. A majority of those interviewed acknowledged that they did not experience any racism off-campus as it was their belief that being a college football player in a community that celebrated sports provided "cover" for them to survive. For many of those interviewed, the greatest challenge was the ability to balance academics with athletics. Their belief was that the football and all the requirements that went along with being an athlete did not provide enough time effectively balance sports with academics. The participants believed that in order to become a professional

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athlete, more time had to be dedicated to athletics as oppose to academics. None of the participant felt that academics were not important, but there were those that were satisfied with achieving acceptable grades. There were some students that acknowledged the importance of grades and graduating, but the belief was achieving a career in the NFL was the far greater prize than getting a degree. As one of the smallest minority groups on campus, Black males are often subjected to micro- and macroforms of racism. These racial microaggressions are found to be more commonly used by Whites against Blacks and by individuals who do not understand the origin of racism or the impact of their behaviors (Constantine et al., 2008). According to many of the participants interviewed, there were times when racist comments were uttered, and they could have reacted in a negative manner but decided not to do so. The participants of the study also spoke of their interactions with White nonathletes while on campus and in the classroom. Negative interactions caused many of the participants to either harbor negative feelings toward White students, or it caused them to become closely guarded and only associate with other student-athletes. A majority of the participants indicated that while there were some White students who displayed negative behaviors in regard to race, others both on campus and in the community were fans of college athletics and were very much supportive of the Black male football student-athletes.

Research has shown that being Black on campus often leads to negative stereotypes. Being Black on PWI campuses can indicate that these students are athletes who were accepted for their athletic ability rather than their intellectual ability (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Black athletes are perceived to be only knowledgeable about Black-dominated sports like basketball and football (Morales, 2014). These

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microaggressions can play a critical role in how Black male athletes view themselves and their role on PWI campuses. Microaggressions can take a toll on a person's mental process. Blacks affected by an environment infested with microaggressions have been impacted physically, psychologically, and emotionally (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; W. A. Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Furthermore, racial microaggressions can lead to limited involvement and feelings of isolation on campuses (Comeaux, 2010; W. A. Smith et al., 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yasso, 2000) and contribute to higher dropout rates (L. Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010). These feelings of racism combined with isolation often cause Black male athletes to be less engaged with the social, academic, and career development components of the university. According to Clopton (2011), within college campuses there is a separation of both race and athlete status. This separation can increase the negative impact of academic and social outcomes of the students.

Concerning institutional norms, many participants acknowledged that they were aware of the big-business dynamic involved with college athletics. Revenue-generating sports, in particular football, help create a multimillion-dollar industry in and around collegiate sports (Luchs & Dale, 2012). When Black male student-athletes arrive on campus, they often must manage their status as first-generation college students (McCann & Austin, 1988), any overemphasis on athletic excellence (Benson, 2000), and negative peer and faculty attitudes about student-athletes (Comeaux & Harrison, 2007). Participants conceded that the pressure to perform and compete at the highest level left very little time to explore career and development opportunities outside of their sport. Many also admitted that their primary focus upon entering the university was participation in their sport. The majority of participants acknowledged that from an early age, the involvement in sports

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was a central part of their lives. The participants described their early views on college football and the role it played in their adolescence and college careers. They described how football participation played a pivotal role in their lives and how their identity was centered on achieving a career in the NFL. They explained that making it to the NFL was the ultimate goal, and academics, for many, was secondary. Consequently, Black males, particularly in the sport of football, struggle academically in college. Black males are often the focus of discourse on collegiate student-athlete graduation rates because they compose a meaningful percentage of athletes who compete in revenue-generating sports (Edwards, 2000). Meanwhile, Black male student-athletes' graduation rates are consistently and substantially lower than those of their White male student-athlete counterparts (Sellers, 2000).

Critical to fostering the development of college students is addressing issues of identity (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). Emerging research and literature have begun to explore germane psychosocial variables associated with the experiences and outcomes of Black student-athletes (Bimper & Harrison, 2011; Melendez, 2008; Steinfeldt et al., 2010). Athletic identity was earlier in this study described as a detriment for many Black males because athletics becomes the driving force in the Black male's life, often at the expense of personal and career development. An athletic identity is characterized as the extent to which one identifies with fulfilling the social role of an athlete (Brewer et al., 1993). When the athlete becomes so immersed in his or her role as a student-athlete that it stunts his or her overall personal development, then the student is likely to struggle with the transition out of sports once his or her athletic career is over. It is a reality all athletes must face one day regardless of their competitive level. Athletes from various sports, skill levels, and

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countries have reported transition difficulties (Park et al., 2013). Some athletes report feelings of loss (Smith & Hardin, 2018), psychological distress (Lally, 2007; Wylleman et al., 2004) and disengagement (Grove et al., 1997). Research shows that athletic identity, retirement preparation, support systems, and role exploration all can impact the quality of transition out of sport (Ronkainen et al., 2016; Beamon, 2012; Fuller, 2014; Grove et al., 1997; Murphy et al., 1996; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Schlossberg (1981) defines transition as an "event or non-event which results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 4). There a number of factors that often participate a transition out of sports, which can include events such as graduating from college, or receiving a career-ending injury. Non-events would include, not being draft to the NFL. According to Schlossberg there are four influences on an individual's ability to cope with transition and those are: situation, self, support, and strategies.

Studies have linked higher levels of athletic identity to several outcomes, such as athletic performance (Horton & Mack, 2000), academic disengagement (Adler & Adler, 1985), anxiety and delayed skill acquisition related to career development (Grove, Lavallee, & Gordon, 1997; Murphy et al., 1996), and difficulty transitioning out of sport participation (Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityte, 2004). For many participants, often an unwillingness to explore career development opportunities on campus existed due to a commitment to their sport or a lack of time. Although they did admit that there were athletic staff and personnel who attempted to get them to participate in career development, it was not a priority for them or the coaches. As some participants revealed, coaches place a high priority on athletic participation and those students who commit to their sport. For

the coaches, academics were important, but not above the commitment to their sport. For many participants, they often felt they were athletes first and students second. Participants did acknowledge that some coaches were concerned about them as men and their lives after football. They also remarked that coaches were generally honest during the recruiting process. Those interviewed stated that they were under no restriction and could pursue whatever degree program they desired. In most cases, however, they did not know the academic rigor would be as challenging as it was until they arrived on campus. Once they began taking classes and participating in their sport, most realized that they should pursue a less rigorous degree program. The belief was that while they were confident that they could do the work, they were less convinced they would be successful given their responsibility to their sport.

Those interviewed discussed how family influence played a role in their desire to attend college. Most believed that a college scholarship to a major public institution would help move them closer to achieving their ultimate goal of becoming a professional athlete. Most admittedly felt at the time that college was merely a necessary step toward a career in professional sports. Participants shared that both parents and friends operated under the same belief system regarding college and their prospects of making it to the NFL. The belief from parents adds pressure to make it, which only exacerbated the problem, causing young Black males to devalue academic achievement.

An overwhelming number of participants indicated that upon entering college their main focus was to have a career in the NFL. From an early age, a career in the NFL was the only measure to define success. To the participants, anything short of achieving a career in the NFL was regarded as a failure. For the majority of participants, transitioning

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from an athlete to a nonathlete was difficult because football had played such a prominent role in their childhood. For participants who failed to reach the NFL, the question of "Who am I if I am not a football player?" was foremost in their mind. For the students who came from two-parent households or a household where academics were a priority, the transition was not as difficult. For those students who relied solely on football as means to a better life, there was great disappointment when they fell short of achieving their ultimate goal.

Research has shown that PWIs embrace Black male students as representatives of their university in athletics, yet some question whether they are as fervent about their responsibility for Black male student-athlete degree attainment (Harper, 2009). The present sociocultural climate of intercollegiate athletics, particularly of high-profile (e.g., Division I), revenue-generating sports (e.g., football, men's basketball), may require Black student-athletes' racial identity development to complement sport cultural norms in ways that are restrictive to one's personal and academic development (Bimper & Harrison, 2011). While participants believed that the athletic department could have done more, they were not dissatisfied with the level of career and personal development opportunities that were offered when they were student-athletes. A majority of participants did not blame the university or the athletic department for participants not participating in any career or personal development programming while on campus. Many participants indicated that their mindset at the time was focused primarily on athletic participation. Furthermore, those interviewed indicated that their career maturity at the time was not where it needed to be. They stated that they were not yet prepared to have discussions about life beyond sports. However, once it became apparent that football would end, participants indicated that they were more receptive to conversations regarding career and personal development.

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Often an abrupt end to a career, perhaps unforeseen, occurred that forced the Black male athlete to reassess his athletic role and begin to establish a different role identity. To combat the problem, administrators and practitioners must engage their male football student-athletes early in their collegiate careers. Researchers suggest high impact practices as a strategy to promote student-athlete engagement. High impact practices entail educational programming that are designed to supplement and enrich students education (Kuh, 2008; McCormick et al., 2013). They facilitate peer and faculty interactions, provide students with feedback on their performances, and help students create and develop transferable skills, and broaden sense of self (Kuh, 2008). These practices can also provide student athletes with more diverse social networks to rely upon and help them develop post-sport strategies. Although some departments have reported difficulties implementing them (Ishaq & Bass, 2019), those who have been successful report great outcomes for their student athletes (Martens & Lee, 1998; Navarro et al., 2020; Sandoval, 2018). Knowing that football consumes a large amount of a student's time and many student-athletes face role conflict (Miller & Kerr, 2003; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2014), learning how to incorporate and introduce high impact practices to student-development programming could help facilitate engagement (Ishaq & Bass, 2019) and hopefully identity and role exploration. High impact practices have been shown to positively impact learning (Kilgo et al., 2015) and the development of leadership skills (Soria & Johnson, 2017) for individuals of different backgrounds.

Critical race theory and career development theory provided the theoretical foundations for the dissertation. CRT was used to underscore the challenges that Black male student-athletes deal with both from an academic and social standpoint at PWIs.

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Based on the responses from the participants, Black male athletes often feel unwelcomed at PWIs because they are often viewed as "dumb jocks." There often exists the narrative that the Black male athlete is not invested in academic achievement and is only interested in athletic participation. The responses from the study would suggest this was not the case. A majority of those individuals acknowledge the importance of a college education and what it would mean for themselves and their families. In my role as an academic administrator, it has been my experience that majority of Black male football student-athletes do place a high priority on making it to the NFL. But while sports participation often will dominates their identity and mindset initially upon entering the university, majority will over time see the value in completing their degree. CRT provides the counternarrative to existing beliefs that are often perpetuated by the White majority when it comes to Black male college athletes. CRT recognizes that systematic racism as part of our everyday life. As it pertains to college athletics, the system in and of itself is controlled by White males , White Americans govern the conferences and universities, legislate the rules, and control the revenue. Only in recent years has there been the discussion on compensating these athletes for their name, image, and likeness. I believe as someone working in the profession, this recent concession is a form of interest convergence. Which suggest that Whites are willing to concede some of the financial profit to the athletes as long as they are able to still maintain the current collegiate model, which allows them to retain a lion's share of the revenue. As it pertained to coaches and recruiting, head coaches and assistant coaches are compensated extremely well and are charged with recruiting the top-rated athletes to the institution. Based on the responses from the participants, most felt the coach that recruited them were honest during the recruiting process. But while majority of those interviewed

believed the coaches allowed them to pursue whichever degree program desired, there appeared to be skepticism from the athletes once they arrived at the university and realized the level of athletic commitment that was required. As someone that works in athletic administration, I see first-hand how students go through the recruiting process expecting to major in a particular degree program only to switch their major in their first year after they realize the amount of time they must dedicate to their sport. Because donors, and universities commit millions of dollars to athletic department annually, coaches are under immense pressure to succeed. The pressure on coaches ultimately trickles down to the athletes as they are jockeying to start or participate more. Black male student-athlete in particular often feel the ultimate burden of pressure as they arrive at the university with the expectation for playing right away and ultimately being drafted to the NFL. CRT helps provide and understanding as why many Black male student-athlete choose the major they do. In many instances the choice of major has less to do with ability and more to do with the amount of time the athlete is able to dedicate towards their academics given their athletic commitment. The narrative that exists among the dominant White majority would suggest that the Black male athletes are either unable or unwilling to pursue a challenging degree program.

Through the lens of career development theory I was able to examine the role that career maturity and life experiences have on a Black male student-athletes ability to pivot, and transition away from sport and focus on career and personal development. Through the lens of critical race theory, I was able to counter the notion that Black males are only interested in their sport and do not develop the career and personal development skill necessary to transition to life beyond sports. The responses from the participants indicated

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that the administration within athletics was supportive of career and personal development initiatives. But that demands of brought on by participation in their sport often superseded their willingness to engage with faculty and sport administrators. The participants indicated that their attitude at the time was focused solely on being the best football player that they could be. There was little time or interest in participating in career and personal development opportunities. Participants did acknowledge that once they became juniors or seniors in school they begin to recognize the value of developing the skills necessary to help them professionally beyond sports. This discovery lends itself to career development theory which subscribes to the notion that as an individual get older and their life experiences change, they begin to change their mindset as it pertains to career decisions. This change in mindset can be brought on by a host of different events. For and athlete, it could involve sustaining an injury, or being cut from a team. Regardless of the circumstance, the individuals career aspirations change as they pivot from an adolescent mindset to a more adult and realistic career path. In my experience as an administrator working with Black male football student-athletes, many are obvious to conversations regarding any career path other than making it to the NFL. It is only when football is no longer a viable career option do those students begin to explore a career paths beyond their sport. In the effort to combat this problem, academic advisors and career guidance counselors must introduce career development programming to student-athletes at the early stages of their collegiate careers. This programming must be intentional and engaging so that student-athletes, particularly football student-athletes will see its long-term value. College is a time for most students to explore jobs and prepare for the 'real world.' Having student-athletes participate in an internship, for example, creates a dedicated time in which

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they can get professional experience, explore careers with low risk, and diversify their

social networks (Finley & McNair, 2013; O'Neill, 2010; Parker III et al., 2016).

As it pertains to career development, the research would suggest that student-

athletes should avail themselves of career development opportunities on campus. For their

own social well-being, the belief is that student-athletes should assimilate in with the

overall student body at PWIs. Throughout the relatively limited literature body on student-

athletes and student development, scholars disagree as to whether student-athletes should

be integrated into the student body at-large or be given separate developmental training to

foster transferrable skillsets for life after college (Chartrand & Lent, 1987). Comeaux and

Harrison (2011) as well as Jolly (2008) support the importance of offering specific career

preparation programs for student-athletes and suggest separate development programs

allow student-athletes to more fully engage as they are surrounded by individuals who

share common schedules and challenges. While researchers believe this type of

engagement would benefit the student-athlete, many student-athlete do not take advantage

of the career and social opportunities available to them. Broughton and Neyer (2001),

Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001), and Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, and Hannah (2006) suggest

social isolation, faculty isolation, and even isolation from peers is elevated for student-

athletes during the college experience. Responses from the participants in the study

suggested that there are factors that ultimately prevent student-athletes from taking part

career in personal development opportunities on campus. The first, was the lack of time to

participate in those events. Many of the student-athlete in the study believed that their

football obligation was far more important, and they were unwilling to sacrifice their

personal time to attend events that could help them with career opportunities beyond

sports. The second reason for not exploring career and personal opportunities on campus was the student-athletes desire to focus exclusively on their sport. This reason lends itself to the athletic identity mindset that can be detrimental to the student-athletes overall growth. Adler and Adler (1987), Bell (2009), Comeaux and Harrison (2011), Harrison and Lawrence (2003), Miller and Kerr (2003), Linnemeyer &Brown (2010), and Snyder (1985) addressed how Division I student-athletes often struggle to balance athletic and academic roles during the college experience. The evidence suggested that student-athletes often associate more with their athletic- than academic-centered roles, which negatively influenced campus integration and student engagement (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009). In spite of being aware that their athletic career will inevitably end, college athletes' intense focus on sport over the years can deter them from exploring viable career options prior to retiring (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990; Murphy et al., 1996; Brown et al., 2000). Student-athletes are likely to postpone major developmental tasks until they are out of college sport, leading to career development deficiencies (Murphy et al., 1996) and a lack of adequate preparation for life after athletics (Tyrance et al., 2013).

In the effort to counteract the athletic centered mindset, athletic departments and universities are offering career development programming to assist student-athletes with the career decision making process. The challenge is convincing young Black male football student-athletes to participate in career development opportunities on campus. The research on athletes suggest, that they do not have the time to commit to such programming. They may not have enough time during their college years to fully engage in their academics and develop hobbies and interests outside of their sport (Parham, 1993). In my own observations as an athletic administrator, I have talked to many student-athletes

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and many indicate that their day is too busy with school, athletic participation, weightlifting, and tutoring to commit to career development training. But the research in this study also reveals that despite not attending career development programming on a regular basis, the participants did see great value in what was offered through the athletic department. Furthermore, majority of the participants that were interviewed believed the athletic department should have required programming for all student-athlete. For example many schools incorporate some type of summer bridge program to all freshmen and transfer students as a mode of skill building career development. College freshmen often struggle academically during their first year of college. Many are unprepared and are uncertain as to career opportunities beyond sports. Summer bridge and mentoring programs should be required each year for all student-athletes as this programming will certainly help when athletes transition away from the sport. It is my belief that athletic departments and career development practitioners should continue to offer career development programming and require all student-athletes to attend. Regardless of whether student-athletes attends on a regular basis or not, athletic departments and universities should continue offer those services. Career and personal development skills are extremely important to the student-athletes, particularly Black male football student-athletes.

Conclusion

Student-athletes, particularly Black males at the Division I level for football, believe that college football is merely a stepping-stone to the NFL. These conferences are represented by some of the premier and flagship institutions in America that are predominately White. In addition to the high representation in the major college athletic markets, the athletic expectation for Black athletes are much greater than White athletes by

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their coaches, professors, and peers (Simiyu, 2009). Families play a significant role in encouraging the dream of being a professional athlete at an extremely young age (Simiyu, 2009).A majority will reject opportunities to explore various degree programs and/or career development opportunities offered by the university in favor of athletic participation. Scholars have argued that endeavors to enhance their collegiate experience should include fostering both their personal and academic development (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009; Hodge et al., 2008; Melendez, 2008). There appears to be a level of hypocrisy that place in collegiate athletics as well as at many PWIs. While there is the appearance that these Black males are operating in a meritocracy, because that have shown the ability to compete and perform at the highest level. There is also the belief that these Black males are without any real power because their actual experiences on these campuses is far from ideal, as not enough is being done to promote career and personal development. Navigating the collegiate experience while dealing with time constraints, training and competition scheduling, social isolation, and social evaluation are among the many factors that differentiate college student-athletes from their nonathlete peers (Adler & Adler, 1985; Donner, 2005). Previous research has been done that suggests Black male athletes are often subjugated to ridicule and micro aggressions based on race, gender, and class. Blacks are subject to being objectified by non-Blacks who are curious of the unfamiliar or want to learn what things, which are racial stereotypes (Morales, 2014; Anderson, 2004). Participants in the study discussed how they internalized those negative feelings and the lasting effects it had on their college experience. In addition, the study also discussed how stereotypes and microaggressions can effect a Black male psychologically and emotionally. Microaggression can take a toll on a person's mental process. Blacks affected

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by an environment inducted with microaggression have been found to impact them physically, psychologically, and emotionally (Franklin, Boy, & Franklin, 2000; Smith, Allen & Danley, 2000). Majority of the participants in the study indicated that those negative interactions often left them feeling that they really were a minority on campus despite their academic achievements. Racial microaggressions can lead to limited involvement and feelings of isolation on campus (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano et al, 2000; Comeaux, 2010). In the effort to avoid these feelings of isolation, many of the participants would remain in the athletic bubble and seek solace exclusively among other fellow athletes. In addition the role that racial difference played on these student psychologically and socially, those negative experiences also played significant role in the student's career and personal development. As racial difference and microaggression are a true reality for Black student athletes, faculty recognized how these have a negative effect on these students "learning and personal development" (Davis, 1995). Previous research supported that Black athletes had difficulty in academic performance contributing to lack of educational involvement, athletic demands, and dealing with the racial maltreatment on campuses (Benson, 2000, Comeaux, 2010; Comeaux & Harris, 2007).

This dissertation examined those challenges and how the Black participants were able to navigate and overcome those experience. The responses from participants indicate that race and role identity have a prominent role in how Black male football student-athletes define themselves at PWIs of higher learning. Because race and racism are central components of American society, it inevitable that young Black male students will have a difficult time adjusting to the cultural environment that exists at a predominantly White university. Because athletics play a prominent role at Power 5 institutions, it is assumed

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that the transition for Black athletes is seamless. The results from this study reveal that Black male athletes struggle with the transition because many are unfamiliar with socializing with individuals outside of sports. Furthermore, there are often stereotypes associated with being a Black male student-athlete that make the transition that much more difficult. Based on the responses, Black male athletes often feel isolated on campus. Those interviewed indicated that they often operated within the confines of the athletic bubble. They also indicated that they socialized primarily with other athletes. Rarely did those students ever communicate with White students in class unless forced to as part of a class assignment.

Recommendations

Recommendations for additional research relative to the findings of this study include questions on mentorship and the influence that ex-athletes can have on current college football student-athletes regarding career and personal development. Although the current study suggested ideas for assisting Black male football student-athletes in career decision-making, the focus of this study was on personal experiences and suggestions for university and athletic department personnel. Similar studies have suggested the importance of mentorship and the effect that it can have on the student-athlete experience. Studies have shown that athletes gravitate toward other athletes because they often share common interests. A potential inference can be made that because athletics is often the common denominator between current college athletes and former college athletes, a preexisting relationship and a mutual respect exists between the two entities. The inherent relationship that exists often allows current athletes to be more open to mentors who have shared experiences. Thus, the question of whether ex-college athletes can steer current

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student-athletes toward career and personal development through mentorship is a recommended study for further research.

Mentorship can play a pivotal role in the overall development of the student-athlete. The term "mentor" was defined in Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978), *Seasons of a Man's Life.* Weaver and Chelladurai (1999) provide an operational definition which states mentoring is "a process in which a more experienced person (i.e., the mentor) serves as a role model, provides guidance and support to a developing novice (i.e., the protégé), and sponsors that individual's career progress" (p. 25). Jacobi (1991) provides a comprehensive analysis listing mentoring benefits and three central components necessary for the mentor–protégé relationship. First, the mentor's ability to provide direct assistance with career and professional development would serve as a guide for the development of one's career path. Second, the mentor's ability to provide emotional and psychosocial support therefore creates a confidant, and/or one that will listen to and aide in the adjustment in a range of conditions. Third, the mentor's ability to be an example to the protégé and create an experience which is role modeling is included. Thus, modeling preferred behavior in various settings and contexts. Research suggests that the foundation of a functional mentor–protégé relationship is grounded in four essential areas: (1) establishing a sense of basic trust (Simon et al., 2004); (2) the realization of the dream, or vision (Levinson et al., 1978); (3) professional skills and confidence (Johnson, 2002); and (4) networking (Ragins & Scandura, 1994). Each of these components could prove essential for the Black male athlete and his social balance. In my experience as athletic administrator countless student-athletes have reached out to me about career decisions and life beyond sports. Because I am a Black former football student-athlete, I am able to speak

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firsthand about the difficulty of moving beyond football when it has been a part of your identity for most of your life.

Moreover, a former college athlete from the same race and ethnic background might have a greater impact on helping Black male student-athletes with career and personal development if they are able to address that population on an annual basis as Black male athletes matriculate through a PWI. Recent graduates and particularly those who have had successful athletic careers will likely have a greater impact on current Black male athletes since Black male athletes can identify more easily with individuals who are not too far removed from their own position. As an extension of this study, further research can be done on the impact that male Black ex-athletes in the sport of football can have on Black male college athletes who are matriculating through PWIs.

Further recommendations include determining the effect that concussions and brain injuries can have on the long-term well-being of Black male athletes. Recent studies have shown that in sports such as football, the physicality of the game can create negative long-term mental health issues. Concussions and head injuries sustained in sports such as football, hockey, and boxing have introduced chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) to the American lexicon. Because the long-term effects of this disease can be debilitating, many are concerned about the risk/reward impact that sustained head injuries can have on the sustainability of football. Should young Black males continue to participate in football and pursue a career in professional sports when the short- and long-term effects of participation can negatively impact a Black male's well-being? Because brain and head injuries and the impact of CTE can hinder an athlete's life beyond sports, a worthy research study might be to look at whether the potential negative long-term effects are

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influencing young Black males to give greater consideration to football participation. In light of the research done on CTE, Black males may be more likely to use football as short-term vehicle to a quality education and to focus less on a professional career. A gap in the research exists on this topic and on the impact that it could potentially have on Black males' careers and personal development and on how they define success beyond athletic participation.

Due to the role conflict that exists between Black male student-athletes and participation in their sport, it is important for academic administrators and coaches to stress to student-athletes the importance of participating in career development activities. A coaches must be willing to allocate time to student-athletes which will allow them the opportunity to participate in vocational growth opportunities while they are enrolled in college. Student-athletes need career development programs that are dynamic and continuous. If male student-athletes do not see value in the programming, they will be resistant to attending those events. Students must be willing to participate, and administrators must emphasize the importance of vocational curriculum, and encourage student-athletes to be active participants in the programming.

In order to reinforce the importance of career development for student-athletes, athletic directors and senior athletic administrators must place a greater emphasis on holding coaches accountable for the holistic development of their student-athletes. If PWIs are going to continue to admit more Black male football student-athletes, then a greater onus should be placed on academic, social and career development programming. The White majority that controls college athletics is aware of the fact that most college football players will never be able to achieve a career in professional football. In the effort to help

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address that problem, a greater emphasis should be placed on allowing students more time to explore majors and develop the skills necessary to help them transition to life beyond sports.

Epilogue

My positionality played a pivotal role in my desire to study the experiences of

Black male football student-athletes at the Division I level. As outlined in the study, my

background as a Black former football student-athlete that presently serves as an academic

advisor and administrator in an athletic department provided me with a deeper

understanding of the concerns surrounding Black male football student-athletes at PWIs.

Having been a football student-athlete at the collegiate level, I am well aware of the

academic, personal, and social sacrifices that are required in order to participate in the

sport of football. In addition, as an academic advisor and administrator, I am able to see

firsthand how the athletic schedule, and the winning at all cost mentality can inhibit a

young person's cognitive, social and career development.

Researchers have maintained that the collegiate model is broken and exploitive

towards Black males in football and men's basketball. Under the current system, it is

challenging for young Black male student-athletes to develop the transitional skills

necessary to help them prepare for life beyond sports. Based on the research gathered on

the experiences of Black males football student-athletes at Power-5, Division I universities,

young Black men are at a unique disadvantage at these universities once they arrive on

campus. In addition to academics, there are often racial, social, and athletic time demands

that Black student-athletes must adhere to. From an academic and career development

standpoint, many student-athlete do not have the ability to explore different majors or

potential career paths as they are often encouraged by their coaches to focus more on their

athletic achievement. These young men often find themselves clustered into majors that

may help them remain eligible, but do not necessarily help them find a career path beyond

sports. The White majority that controls college athletics will assert the claim that these young men are on scholarship, amateur athletics must be protected, and student-athletes should be treated the same regardless of race, gender, and ethnicity. I disagree with that narrative, and assert the counter narrative that Black male football student-athletes should be treated differently given their targeted athletic recruitment, minority status on campus, and athletic contributions to the university. Football and men's basketball generate millions of dollars annually for the conferences, universities, and athletic departments, yet, only a small percentage of that revenue makes it the student-athletes. In addition, a large number of these students are leaving these institutions without their degree, and those that do graduate will leave with a degree they are not satisfied with and/or the skills necessary to maximize that degree. The system exploits Black male football student-athletes for their athletic prowess. More often than not, these young Black men are not able to capitalize on all the career and personal development resources that the university has to offer because of their full-time athletic commitment. Coaches and athletic departments are often more focused on the athletes contributions on the field than their achievements in the classroom or preparedness for life after sports.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework was used in this research study as the lens for examining the experiences that Black male football student-athletes face in collegiate athletics. Critical race theory provided the foundation for understanding the reasons why the existing collegiate athletic model was created, and has remained intact over the last century. Since the inceptions of collegiate football in American sports there has been a burning desire amongst competing institutions to determine a winner. As the attraction of college football has continued to skyrocket, so have the conferences, schools,

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and athletic department's desire to profit off the popularity of the sport. The desire to maximize profits at all cost, has financially, culturally, and systemically changed how college football is viewed in American sports. I as a researcher believe, that while there have been significant financial gains in college football; these advances have also had negative consequences for young Black male football student-athletes.

As the researcher for a study that was grounded in CRT, I was aware that my findings could shed a negative light on the racial issues that exist in collegiate athletics. Nevertheless, it was my belief that my positionality as an administrator in college athletics would provide me with a deeper understanding of the problems and challenges that exist for the key stakeholders. My current position allowed me the ability to write confidently, and intelligently about the experiences of Black male football student-athletes. Through the lens of CRT, I was able to understand the magnitude that interest convergence has had on collegiate athletics, particularly in college football. Interest convergence is a tenet within CRT that illustrates why Black males football student-athletes are allowed into PWIs. Interest convergence subscribes to the idea that Black male football student-athletes are allowed into universities at a higher rate because adding 5-star athletic talent to a roster contributes to winning more football games. White administrators and coaches understands that the best college football players are Black and therefore in order to win they must make admissions exceptions for some athletes. Schools that are willing to make these exceptions to their admission standards are at a distinct advantage when it comes building a winning football program. A successful winning football program will often lead to more money for the university and athletic department. Through the lens of interest convergence, I was able to critically examine the many perceived gains that exist within college

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athletics. While these gains may appear to help Black males student-athletes on the surface, there is often an underlining benefit to the White majority that is often overlooked, but is typically the primary reason for any progress made.

Career development theory was utilized in the study to underscore the challenges that exist with Black male football student-athletes as they attempt to develop the skills necessary to help them transition to life beyond sports. The current collegiate model is focused primarily on winning and generating revenue. The challenge for many athletes, particularly Black male student-athletes, is the lack of time. As the athlete transitions into college, their time and effort is focused primarily on their sport. Unfortunately, there is not enough time to explore or invest in developing the skills necessary to prepare for life beyond sports.

In this study, it was my desire to examine the experiences of Black male football student-athletes at the Division I level, and provide an understanding as to reasons why many of those individuals struggle on campus and later with the transition to life beyond sports.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS

Participant A is a former football student-athlete who was not heavily recruited. He was recruited from a small majority White community in the southwest region of the United States. He was recruited as an athlete, with plans to convert him to the position of defensive back. He was a 3-star student-athlete who attended college from 2013–2017. Participant A came from a two-parent middle-class household with multiple siblings. Although he had aspirations of playing in the NFL, his primary focus was to become an engineer. He was a 3-year letterman who graduated with a BS degree in industrial distribution. He was an active member of Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Participant A was an academic honor roll student-athlete who maintained above a 3.0 GPA throughout his time at the university. He also actively participated in student-athlete engagement events.

Current Status—Participant A is married and now makes his home in the southwest region of the United States. For the past 3 years, he has been working commercial real estate and was recently promoted to the role of president of a real estate company.

Participant B is a former football student-athlete and four-star recruit from a large metropolitan city in the southwest region of the United States. Participant B was recruited from a relatively large and diverse high school. He is from a one-parent working class household. His mother, herself a college graduate, stressed the importance of academics at an early age. When entering the university, Participant B had a strong desire to play in the NFL. Participant B was a 4-year letterman and would eventually graduate with a BS degree in economics. After his college football career was over, he attempted a career in professional football.

Current Status—Participant B is not married but has a child and currently lives in his hometown. He is no longer pursuing a career in professional sports. Instead, he has started a trucking company and manages a fleet of drivers.

Participant C is a former football scholarship student-athlete from a small town in central Texas. He was not heavily recruited out of high school; he had several offers, but they were mostly to smaller institutions. He arrived at college from a small predominantly White high school. Participant C is from a two-parent middle class household in which academics and education were a focus. He was a 3-year starter in college and initially had aspirations of a career in the NFL. Unfortunately, he had multiple knee injuries over the course of his career, and during his final season he was medically unable to compete. Participant C eventually completed a BS degree in sports management with an emphasis in teaching.

Current Status—Participant C is currently a teacher and coaches' high school football in East Texas. His goal is to become a head football coach at the high school level. He is not married but is currently engaged.

Participant D is a former scholarship football student-athlete from the southeast region of Texas. He was recruited to college from a relatively diverse high school in Texas. Participant D came from a two-parent working-class household. During his time in college, Participant D dealt with a coaching change and eventually transferred to a smaller Division I institution in Texas in an effort to play more. He eventually graduated from that institution with a teaching degree and currently works as a high school teacher in Texas; he specializes in working with students with discipline problems.

Current Status—Participant D is unmarried and lives and works as a teacher near his hometown.

Participant E is a former scholarship football student-athlete from Louisiana. Participant E was not heavily recruited because he was believed to be too short to play the center position. He was recruited from a predominantly Black high school in a small town in Louisiana. He was from a two-parent household and received a middle-class upbringing. Participant E was a 4-year starter in college and had aspirations of playing professional football. He graduated with a degree in Leadership Studies. He went undrafted but played 4 years in the NFL. He is currently playing professional football in the XFL.

Current Status—Participant E is currently married with a child. He is still pursuing professional football as a career.

Participant F is a former scholarship football student-athlete from an urban area within a large metropolitan city in Texas. Participant F was a highly recruited linebacker from a predominantly Black high school. The student arrived at college underprepared and struggled with the transition. Although his mother was in his life, a guardian served as his primary caregiver and raised him. Participant F struggled academically and athletically while in college, and he played sparingly during his 4 years in college. The student double-majored in recreation, parks, and tourism and leadership development. He eventually graduated and transferred to another Division I university in Texas as a graduate transfer in an effort to gain more playing time in his final season.

Current Status—Participant F is single and currently teaches and coaches football in his hometown. He has aspirations of becoming a head coach in high school football.

Participant G is a former scholarship football student-athlete from a two-parent middle-class household. Participant G was a 3-star football player who was not heavily recruited. He attended a predominantly White high school in a large metropolitan city in Texas. He did not become a full-time starter until his senior year. Participant G majored in sports management and graduated from college in 2015. He went undrafted in the NFL but participated on several practice squads for two seasons before quitting football.

Current Status—Participant G is currently engaged and has a child. He works as a personal trainer in his hometown and assists as a youth football coach.

Participant H is a former scholarship football student-athlete who transferred in from a community college in the state of Texas. He was raised by his mom in a single-parent home in a major metropolitan city in Texas. Participant H was recruited from a predominantly Black high school. He was not heavily recruited out of high school because he primarily played basketball. He played sparingly as a defensive end in college before suffering multiple leg injuries, which permanently ended his college football career. He eventually completed a degree in sports conditioning from the university.

Current Status—Participant H is single but has a child. He now works in sales back in his hometown.

Participant I was recruited from an all-Black high school in a major metropolitan city in Texas. His mom raised Participant I and his siblings in a single-parent household. He was raised in a poor community and would not have attended college if he had not received a football scholarship. Participant I was a scholarship football student-athlete who played sparingly as a junior and senior. He graduated with a BS degree in leadership development and eventually received a master's degree in youth development. After serving as a graduate assistant, he eventually became a football coach at a Division I group of five institution.

Current Status—Participant I is single with no children and is currently a defensive backs coach at a Division II university in North Carolina.

Participant J is a former scholarship football student-athlete from East Texas. He is from a single-parent lower-class household. Participant J attended a majority White high school. Several major football programs in Texas and Oklahoma heavily recruited Participant J; he chose the university in the study based on the coaching staff and academics. He is one of the few college graduates in his family. Participant J was a special teams and reserve player during his time in college. His career was cut short due to multiple knee injuries. He eventually graduated with a business degree in supply chain management.

Current Status—Participant J currently works in pharmaceutical sales in central Texas.

Participant K is a former scholarship football student-athlete from a small city in South Texas. He is from single-parent lower-class household. Participant K attended a majority White high school. He was a 3-star recruit who had aspirations of playing professional football. While in college, Participant K went through a coaching change, which he believes affected his playing time. He played sparingly as a reserve during his 4 years in college. He earned a BS degree in leadership development. After graduating from the university as a graduate transfer, he played his final season at a Historically Black College/University.

Current Status—Participant K is currently single with no children and works in the financial sector as an agent in investment and insurance.

Participant L is a former walk-on student-athlete who eventually received a football scholarship. He is from a middle-class two-parent household and was not heavily recruited out of high school. He played sparingly as a fullback and as a special teams' contributor. He graduated from the university with a BS degree in leadership development. He went undrafted and pursued a career in professional football for a number of years without much success. He eventually found a career in events management within college athletics. Current Status—Participant L is now married with a child and works in personal training on the West Coast.

Participant M is a former scholarship football student-athlete who was a 2-year starter at linebacker. Participant M was highly recruited out of a predominantly Black high school in Louisiana. He is from a two-parent working class household in Louisiana. He graduated with a BS degree in recreation, parks, and tourism. Participant M went undrafted but bounced around the NFL for two seasons and participated on practice squads before playing briefly in the AAF professional football league. He is still pursuing a career in professional football but is also looking to transition beyond the sport.

Current Status—Participant M is currently participating in minor league football but would eventually like to transition into a career working with young people.

Participant N is a former scholarship football student-athlete from a small town in East Texas. He experienced a two-parent middle-class upbringing. Participant N was not highly recruited out of high school. He admits he was under no illusion about his prospects in professional football but was determined to achieve his BS degree in agriculture leadership and development in 2011. Participant N understood that football was not a long-term goal and actively participated in career and personal development opportunities while he was a student.

Current Status—Participant N is currently married and works in oil and gas in a metropolitan city in Texas.

Participant O is a former scholarship football student-athlete who transferred in from another Power 5 Division I institution within the state of Texas. He was raised in a two-parent upper middle-class family. He was a highly recruited football student-athlete from a major metropolitan city in Texas and was recruited from a diverse high school Texas. After transferring to the university, Participant O became a full-time starter during his junior year but was forced to retire permanently prior to his senior year due to medical injuries. He graduated with his BS degree in sports management in 2016.

Current Status—Participant O currently works as an investment banker in a metropolitan city in Texas.

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC TABLE OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants	Race	Social Class	Family	Residence	Major	Career Dev. Participation	College Graduate	NFL Experience	Employed	Career
Participant A	Black	Middle Class	Two-parent	Texas	Industrial Dist.	Heavy	Yes	No	Yes	Real Estate
Participant B	Black	Working Class	One-parent	Texas	Economics	Moderate	Yes	No	Yes	Business Owner
Participant C	Black	Middle Class	Two-parent	Texas	Sports Management	None	Yes	No	Yes	College FB Coach
Participant D	Black	Working Class	Two-parent	Texas	History	Limited	Yes	No	Yes	High School Teacher
Participant E	Black	Middle Class	Two-parent	Louisiana	Leadership Studies	Limited	Yes	Yes - 4-years	No	TBA
Participant F	Black	Lower	One-parent	Texas	Youth Development	Heavy	Yes	No	Yes	Teacher/HS Coach
Participant H	Black	Working Class	Two-parent	Texas	Sports Management	None	Yes	Yes - 2-years	Yes	Personal Trainer
Participant I	Black	Lower	One-parent	Texas	Ag. Leadership Dev.	None	Yes	No	Yes	College FB Coach
Participant J	Black	Lower	One-parent	Texas	Supply Chain Mgt.	Heavy	Yes	No	Yes	Pharmaceutical Sales
Participant K	Black	Working Class	One-parent	Texas	Leadership Dev.	Limited	Yes	No	Yes	Insurance Sales
Participant L	Black	Middle Class	Two-parent	Texas	Leadership Dev.	None	Yes	No	Yes	Event Management
Participant M	Black	Working Class	Two-parent	Louisiana	Youth Development	None	Yes	Yes - 2-years	No	TBA
Participant N	Black	Middle Class	Two-parent	Texas	Leadership Dev.	Heavy	Yes	No	Yes	Oil & Gas Transport
Participant O	Black	Upper Middle	Two-parent	Texas	Sports Management	Moderate	Yes	No	Yes	Investment Banking

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for Subjects –

1. What was it like for you to be a Black student-athlete at a predominately White institution (PWI)?
2. Did you ever experience racism from the students or staff while you were a student at TAMU?
3. Did the fact that you were a Black male football student-athlete ever cause you to feel isolated on campus? If yes, how?
4. What were the biggest challenges that you had to overcome as a Black football-student at PWI?
5. What was the transition like for you as you went from high school to college?
6. What role does participating in "Big Time" college football play in the personal and career development of Black male football student-athletes?
7. What were your career aspirations when you entered the university?
8. How have your views on the importance of college football changed from the time you were a freshman until now?
9. Does participation in "Big-Time" college football hinder Black male football student-athlete from maximizing their career and personal development away from sports? If so, how?
10. Do you feel that coaches misled you during the recruiting process as it pertained to your major and realistic career opportunities?
11. Do you feel that coaches were invested in you overall personal development away from sports? Can you explain if the coaches discussed realistic career opportunities with you away from sport?
12. Do you feel that during the time you were a student, the university and athletic department did enough to support your personal and career development? If so, explain?
13. Did you take advantage of career and personal development opportunities on campus?
14. What step would you suggest academic and career development personnel take to ensure that Black male football student-athletes are maximizing the resources available to them?
15. Do you feel the career and personal development programming that you received while you were a student was beneficial to you and how?