

African-American Male Student-Athletes in Division I Collegiate Sports:
Expectations and Aspirations for Undergraduate Degree Attainment

by

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive qualitative case study explored undergraduate degree attainment by African American males in football and basketball at a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I institution in the Southwest. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four participants at the institution to uncover experiences that helped or hindered their progress toward degree completion. Student perceptions of their environment, the role of athletics in determining future goals, and the role of the athletic institution and its constituent members in promoting or deterring degree completion is explored. Student aspiration to attain a degree, expectations for job prospects and financial opportunity after college is also discussed. Contextual and perceptual elements emerged as salient attributes in their experiences as students and athletes. The study results are consistent with previous findings linking academic engagement and motivation, to family and environment.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, thank you for sharing your truths
and giving me the freedom to explore my own.

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purpose and supporting mine in turn.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Academic Advisor: for the purposes of this dissertation and discussion herein, academic advisor is an athletic department employee whose position within intercollegiate athletics is to provide academic support services to assist student-athletes in making academic progress and graduating from the university.

AAMSA (African American Male Student-Athlete): For the purposes of this study, individuals participating in Division I collegiate basketball and football who identify their gender as male, and race as African American. (See also student-athlete below).

Aspiration: something that a person wants very much to achieve; a strong desire to achieve something high or great.

Academic-related activities: time spent in class, independent time spent on homework, time with tutors, or participation in a structured study hall.

Athletic-related activities: time spent lifting weights, receiving physical therapy, structured team practice time, structured team meetings, independent film study.

Contextual elements: non-physical, non-structural characteristics of an environment that are related to the effectiveness of collaboration (connectedness, collaborative history, etc.) .

CRT (Critical Race Theory): CRT refers to a specific set of practices and theories advanced in the 1990s primarily by African American, Latino, and Asian American legal scholars. CRT typically strives to advance a social justice framework and is typically interdisciplinary, embracing multifaceted disciplines and research methods. Recognizing that race and racism work with and through multiple factors (e.g., gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, nation of origin) as systems of power, contemporary CRT often relies upon and investigates these intersections.

Division I: the top tier of NCAA membership, as defined by the NCAA.

Division I members must offer at least 14 sports (at least seven for men and seven for women, or six for men and eight for women). The institution must sponsor at least two team sports (for example, football, basketball or volleyball) for each gender. The school also must have participating male and female teams in the fall, winter and spring seasons.

Expectation: a belief that something will happen or is likely to happen; a feeling or belief about how successful or good, someone or something will be.

FAR (Faculty Athletic Representative): A FAR is a member of the faculty at an NCAA member institution. He or she has been designated by the institution to serve as a liaison between the institution and the athletics department, and also as a representative of the institution in conference and NCAA affairs. Each institution determines the role of the FAR at that particular institution.

FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision): The top tier of Division 1 football as delineated by the NCAA. The FBS consist of 6 major conferences across the United States: The Pac-12, Big 10, Big 12, Big East, Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) and South Eastern Conference (SEC).

First-generation college student: These are students defined by the U.S. Department of Education as “Neither parent had more than a high school education.” An expanded definition includes students whose parents do not have a bachelor’s degree, but had either some college or obtained a two-year college degree.

GSR: Graduation Success Rate - The GSR measures graduation rates at Division I institutions and includes student-athletes transferring into the institutions. The GSR differs from the methodology of the measure mandated by the federal government, which does not count incoming transfer student-athletes at all and counts student-athletes who transfer out as not having graduated, regardless of whether they actually did. The Graduation Success Rate also allows institutions to exclude from the computation student-athletes who leave their institutions before graduation, so long as they would have been academically eligible to compete had they remained.

HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities): as defined by the Department of Education 34 CFR 608.2, any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation.

IHE (Institution of Higher Education): according to Title 20, Chapter 28, § 1001 of the U.S Code of Federal Regulations, an educational institution in any state that has the following characteristics.

- Admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate,
- Is legally authorized within such state to provide a program of education beyond secondary education;
- Provides an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a 2-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree, or awards a degree that is acceptable for admission to a graduate or professional degree program,
- Is a public or other nonprofit institution; and
- Is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted pre-accreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized for the granting of pre-accreditation status.

IRB (Institutional Review Board): The role of the IRB is to review all proposed research involving human subjects to ensure that subjects are treated ethically and that their rights and welfare are adequately protected. All

research activities involving the use of human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before data collection can begin. Investigators may not solicit subject participation or begin data collection until they have received written approval from the IRB.

NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association): governing body of collegiate athletics whose members are also NCAA members. The NCAA national office consists of paid staff members, most whom are headquartered in Indianapolis. The role of the staff is to assist the membership with the development, interpretation and enforcement of the rules and to otherwise assist in the administration and promotion of intercollegiate athletics.

NVivo: a qualitative data analysis computer software package produced by QSR International, for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based or multimedia information. NVivo provides a framework where deep levels of analysis on small or large volumes of data are required.

Perceptual elements: awareness of the elements of environment through physical observation. For the purposes of this dissertation, perceptual elements refer to knowledge gained through observation and interaction as expressed in participant narratives.

Progressive action: an interaction or behavior, relationship or outcome that was viewed by a participant as helpful to their sense of well-being or progress toward degree completion.

PWI (Predominantly White Institution): A higher education institution where White students have historically represented a majority; the population of White students is greater than any other single or aggregate race on campus.

Redshirt: a term that refers to a delay or suspension of an athlete's competitive participation in a collegiate sport for an academic year, resulting in the lengthening of the period in which an athlete is eligible to play competitively.

Regressive action: an interaction or behavior, relationship or outcome that was viewed by a participant as harming their sense of well-being or progress toward degree completion.

SAAC (Student-Athlete Advisory Committee): A SAAC is a group of student-athletes assembled to provide insight to an NCAA-member IHE on their experience at the institution. The group also offers input on the rules, regulations and policies that affect student-athletes' lives on campus.

Structural elements: having or relating to the physical makeup of a constructed space; something arranged in a definite pattern of organization. For the purposes of this dissertation, structural elements refer to the space(s) within which participant experiences take place (sport coach office, academic advisor office, locker room, etc.).

Student-athlete: a full-time enrolled member of an intercollegiate athletics team who receives athletic related financial aid from their home institution, and practices and competes in NCAA sanctioned and regulated intercollegiate athletic events that represent their university.

Unstructured mentoring: multiple short-term exchange(s) between individuals that take place as a result of common or immediate shared space but not explicitly sought out by either party e.g. teammate, classmate, sport coach, academic advisor, or peer.

Value: a measure of the worth, merit, or importance of a given variable or outcome. For the purposes of this dissertation, the value of degree attainment is equal to the evidence of demonstrated effectiveness in achieving the desired outcome of employment and income. Example: “The value of a college degree to me is that it will allow me to make more

money to help my family live a better life. That's why it's important for me to graduate.”

Chapter 1

COLLEGE DEGREE COMPLETION BY BLACK FOOTBALL AND BASKETBALL ATHLETES IN DIVISION I

The underlying goal of this study is the delivery of a set of recommendations to assist the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), individual institutions, conferences, and administrators raise the rates of graduation and degree attainment for African American Male Student Athletes (AAMSAs). Specific to this study was a concurrent goal to uncover experiences in the context of Division I athletics that promoted or deterred progress to degree completion by AAMSA football and basketball athletes, their aspirations and expectations for future employment opportunities based on degree attainment, and their contextual and perceptual experiences on the campus of a large West coast university.

This study was informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw, 1993). Critical theorists who do qualitative research focus on issues of gender, race and class because they are viewed as the primary means power is differentiated in society (Duncan, 2002). CRT refers to a specific set of practices and theories advanced in the 1990s primarily by African American, Latino, and Asian American legal scholars. CRT typically strives to advance a social justice framework and is typically interdisciplinary, embracing multifaceted disciplines and research methods. Recognizing that race and racism work with and through multiple factors (e.g., gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality,

nation of origin) as systems of power, contemporary CRT often relies upon and investigates these intersections. In the chapters that follow, an introduction to the study and a review of literature outlining the supporting frameworks for the investigation is provided in chapters one and two. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology used to conduct the research, followed by a discussion of participant narratives in chapter four.

Introduction

Alex M. Johnson (1996), in an unpublished manuscript, argued "it is rational for individual [African Americans] to place emphasis on attaining a professional sports career given the underinvestment in human capital created and caused by the historical effects of racism" (Johnson, 1996, p. 888). For Americans of color, and African Americans in particular, the end of World War II did not deliver [a change in civil rights or] an immediate promise of prosperity or access to social, academic or economic institutions (Kincey, 2007). Those promises had appeared very slowly in sport first (e.g., horse racing and boxing), but arrived more robustly via judicial and legislative act second. Athlete-scholars such as Fritz Pollard (Brown University, class of 1917), Paul Robeson (Rutgers University, class of 1919), and Bill Russell (University of San Francisco, class of 1956) represent the small number of AAMSAs who had gained access to Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Up until the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling however, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (e.g., Howard University, Fisk,

Jacksonville State, Grambling State University) were the predominant option available to African American students who attended college (Kincey, 2007).

For many Americans, and young White Americans in particular, the end of the Second World War ushered in a period of significant economic growth. Riding the back of wartime mobilization, the United States economy was large in size, and equally large in opportunity. For young White soldiers returning from war, the GI Bill as well as federal housing subsidies provided the means to both go to college and establish families in the rapidly expanding suburbs of America. Sport as pastime and entertainment also attained a place of social prominence as television in the American household created greater visibility of both college and professional athletics (Estler & Nelson, 2005).

Significant change in the civil rights of Black Americans and access to the promise of prosperity would begin in 1954 with the desegregation of K-12 schools on the heels of *Brown et al vs. Board of Education of Topeka et al.*, 347 U.S. 483. Following ten years of active social pressure, civil rights took another major step forward with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Pub. L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241, July 2, 1964). In addition, Executive Order 11375 (1967) reinforced efforts to recruit, admit, retain, and graduate underrepresented groups in higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Kincey, 2007; Terrell & Wright, 1988). Two outgrowths of this period are examined here: 1) the enrollment of African Americans in Primarily White Institutions (PWI's) of

higher education and 2) the visibility of African American men in collegiate sports in America (Harris, 1998; Schaeffer, 2000).

Despite increased visibility, and despite an increase in membership within coaching, professorial, and administrative roles, present day AAMSA participation in NCAA Division I athletics outweighs their membership in academe. Additionally, high participation in college football and basketball by African American men stands in contrast to their low graduation rates for both sports (Associated Press, December 2009; Burnsed, March 2010; Harper, 2006; Kincey, 2007; Lapchick, 2011a, 2012; NCAA, 2011c).

What accounts for the low rate of degree completion for AAMSAs? What accounts for the low rate of degree completion for AAMSAs considering their high participation numbers in college football and basketball? More so, what are the experiences of African American male football and basketball athletes in higher education who complete or are very near completion of their undergraduate degree?

Part 1 of this first chapter introduces the focus of the study, including three main questions that provided an initial framework for the investigators research. Supporting evidence for the importance of the line of inquiry is included with a general review of the literature, including a longitudinal view of AAMSA graduation rates relative to their White male counterparts and athletes in Division I regardless of race or gender. Also included are demographic and African American membership statistics in Division I athletic departments. This

includes membership at the level of athletic director, head coach, assistant coach, and faculty athletic representative (FAR), among others. Following this is a brief review of the literature regarding various institutional and individual forces experienced by AAMSAs at primarily white institutions (PWIs).

Part 2 presents the general context framing AAMSA degree attainment, including societal forces, institutional culture, campus forces, organizational isolation, and a perception of AAMSAs as academically disadvantaged. Part 2 includes references in researched literature supporting the saliency of each of these contextual elements.

Part 3 concludes the chapter with a succinct statement of the problem of a lack of degree attainment by AAMSAs in Division I football and basketball.

Part 1 - The Focus of the Study

This study explored degree attainment by African American males in football and basketball in Division I universities.

Specifically this study sought:

1. A better understanding of contextual experiences (e.g., socialization, campus culture, peer group interactions) that promote or deter degree completion for AAMSAs.
2. An understanding of AAMSA aspirations regarding their job future and undergraduate degree completion.
3. An understanding of AAMSAs expectations regarding their access to jobs as a result of completing an undergraduate degree.

4. What are the perceptual experiences of AAMSA's as they navigate athletics and academics on a Division I university campus?

Two premises support the focus of this study. The first premise is AAMSAs graduate at a lower rate than their White counterparts. While graduation rates for this group are on the rise (Harper, 2006; Lapchick, 2011a, 2012), AAMSAs trail White male football and basketball athletes (Burnsed, 2010; Harper, 2006; Lapchick, 2011a, 2012; NCAA, 2011c) and African American female athletes by almost 20 percentage points (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012; NCAA, 2011c). Data collected by the NCAA (2011c), and The Institute for Diversity in Sport (2011a, 2012) confirm this premise, that while AAMSAs make up a large percentage of college athletes, a smaller percentage actually complete their undergraduate degrees (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012; NCAA, 2011c).

The second premise is founded in the researchers professional field observation that AAMSAs may not correlate degree completion with long-term economic gain or stability. More pointedly, AAMSAs may deemphasize completing a college degree because of a perception that completing a degree will have little or no effect on their access to administrative or coaching jobs in collegiate athletics. A gap in the literature exists regarding this second premise. What is the perception of the value of a college degree for AAMSAs relative to future employment and financial compensation?

Some authors (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1997; Melendez, 2008) posit that race still plays a factor in how

academically successful AAMSAs are in higher education. Others (Burke, 1993; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom et al., 1997) contend a position that AAMSAs no longer face racial stereotypes in higher education owes its traction to a false perception that [they] are integrated and accepted in to the academic fabric as nothing more than everyday students. While AAMSAs graduate at a higher average rate than their African American peers in the general student populations (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012; NCAA, 2011c) and even as the number of AAMSAs entering Division I institutions continues to increase (see Appendix A), these athletes continue to perform worse academically than female cohorts and their White peers (Suggs, 1999).

NCAA data sets include a Federal Rate and Graduation Success Rate (GSR) to measure degree attainment of student athletes in Division 1. The GSR covers a six-year window of college attendance starting when the student began their college eligibility at an institution. Further, the GSR was developed to more accurately reflect the mobility of college students (transfer in, transfer out, leave early for professional athletic career). One difference between the GSR and the Federal measurement is that the GSR does include student-athletes transferring into the institutions. In that regard, it differs from the methodology of the rate mandated by the federal government, which does not count incoming transfer student-athletes at all and counts student-athletes who transfer out as not having graduated, regardless of whether they actually did. The Graduation Success Rate also allows institutions to exclude from the computation student-athletes who

leave their institutions before graduation, so long as they would have been academically eligible to compete had they remained (NCAA, 2012). For purposes of this discussion, the Graduation Success Rate of student-athletes will be used as it is most inclusive longitudinal measure identified by the researcher.

Based on NCAA data (2010b) only 46% of African American male basketball players who began school in 1995 graduated with a degree in six years as opposed to 76% of White male basketball players for the same time period (NCAA, 2010b). At the same time, only 53%% of African American male football players graduated versus 76%% of White male football players (NCAA, 2010b). NCAA (2010b) graduation success rates for other student-athletes were:

- 71% for African American females;
- 89% for White females; and
- 81% for White males.

A look at graduation statistics approximately ten years later (2010-2011) reveals that while graduation rates for AAMSAs in football and basketball are on the rise, they still lag behind their White male counterparts in the same sports (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012). In a study published by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES), Richard Lapchick (2012) confirmed the first assumption that AAMSAs graduate at a lower rate than their White counterparts: for the graduating class of 2009-2010, 59% of African-American men in Division I basketball graduated versus 82% of their White-male counterparts. A similar disparity exists in the degree completion of football athletes (Lapchick, 2011a). In

the same 2009-2010 graduating class, 59% of African-American male football players in Division I completed an undergraduate degree versus 80% of White males in the same sport (see Figure 1).

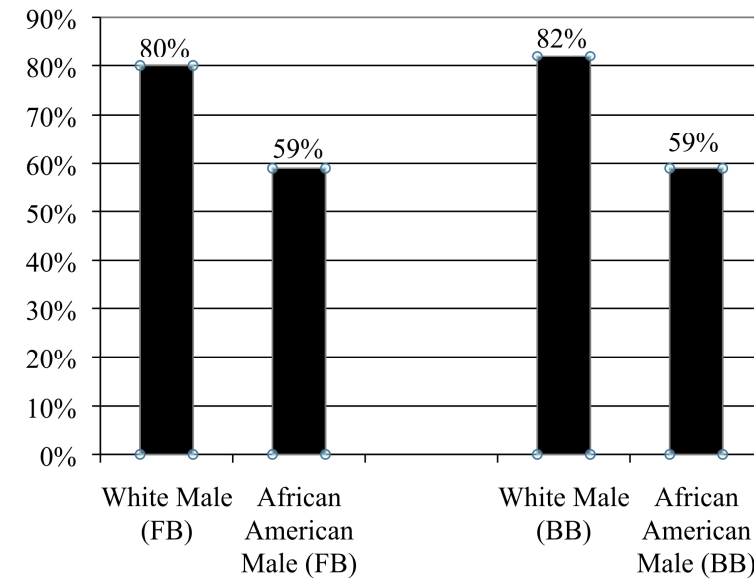


Figure 1. 2009-2010 NCAA Graduation Rates by Race and Sport

Source: 2011 NCAA Division I Graduation Success Rate Data (NCAA, 2011c).

For the same time period (2009-2010), the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) for all Division I student-athletes was 80% while members of the general student population graduated at a rate of 63%. The graduation rate of African American Males in the general student population was just 38% for the same period.

Regarding disparities in AAMSA degree completion, discussion in the literature has sometimes centered on the dichotomy between Black-White identities and the social, cognitive, and behavioral differences between the two (Association for the Study of Higher Education [ASHE], 1988; Fleming, 1984;

Furr, 2002; Loo & Rolinson, 1986; Steward, Jackson, & Jackson, 1990; Suen, 1983). Other studies have linked social, family, economic and behavior characteristics of African Americans to a high and inordinate emphasis on sports by individuals and those in the [African American] community (ASHE, 1988; Edwards, 2000). Coakley (2004), Eitzen & Sage (2003), and Siegel (1994) point to the influence of popular media outlets that celebrate with great fanfare the exploits and bank accounts of professional athletes through mainstream media.

Others (Clark and Parette, 2002; Greene & Greene, 2001; Hyatt, 2003; Person & LeNoir, 1997) point to an institutional perspective that views student-athletes of color through a lens of academic deficiency. Part of this latter perspective touches on the phenomena of “stereotype threat”: [it becomes more] difficult for (AAMSAs) to develop positive self-perceptions about their academic abilities if they have been led to believe they cannot or will not perform well academically (Hyatt, 2003; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992; Steele and Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005).

One impetus for this study was the observed phenomenon of diminished ‘value’ of degree attainment among AAMSAs (Weber, 2007) due, in part, to a lack of African American male membership, and male membership identity, within the ranks of university professoriate, administration, and Division I coaching staff (American Institutes for Research [AIR], 1989; Cross, 1991; Estler & Nelson, 2005; Harper, 2006; Lapchick, 2011c). AAMSAs are often on predominantly White campuses where they “feel racially isolated... are

overrepresented in football and basketball, have unreasonably high expectations of pro careers, and are uninvolved in other extracurricular activities” (Lapchick, 1996, p. 7, citing AIR, 1989). This latter description offered by Dr. Lapchick is principally what engaged the researcher in the study of AAMSAs and degree attainment.

As a Division I student-athlete, the researcher completed an undergraduate degree while experiencing all of Dr. Lapchick’s observed phenomena, except for feelings of racial isolation. As a White male, there was no shortage of avenues to which the researcher could turn to find a White male presence in athletic or academic leadership. From the years 1994 to 1999, the researcher competed at a large, research institution in the southwestern United States. During this time, the head football coach, the athletic director, the president of the university, and many of the positions considered by the researcher at the time as wielding a measure of significant authority or control over the immediate condition of athletes, were White and male. At the time, this observation remained innocuous because (however blind the observation) regardless of race, it was the researchers feeling that most student-athletes had access to, and were attempting to achieve the same things equally: becoming a starting player and completing a degree on the way to a professional athletic career, or getting a job after the fact.

A conversation some seven years later with an African-American friend, also in graduate school, also a former collegiate athlete, placed the researcher’s male identity as athlete and academic in contrast. The young man described his

return to family and friends by saying, “I don’t tell anyone I am pursuing a master’s degree.” He continued by saying his friends back home would never support what he was doing because they would look at him as a “sell-out.” The researcher’s immediate reaction was one of surprise. Why would he not tell people he was bettering himself? Other questions soon followed. If he felt he wasn’t going to get support from people at home, maybe he felt the same on campus. As an African American male on campus he was statistically in a minority already, so where did he turn for support on campus? Who were the people and what were the experiences that had helped him to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees?

The issue seemed to involve membership, mentorship, identity, and access to a social and professional structure in athletics and academics of which the researcher was already a part. The researcher never had to question his ability to find role models having high paying positions with authority and prestige in athletics and academics. At the heart of the conversation, the young man’s comment illuminated the subtle ways those in a non-minority status are unaware of their social privilege and its effects on those without (Johnson, 2001; McIntosh, 1990).

Low membership in academic, administrative, and coaching roles is important because AAMSAs spend significant time in the company of these personnel (Harper, 2006). It is within a very White dominated environment of college athletics that AAMSAs negotiate the terms of their identity. “To say that

most or even many White coaches are racist is a great exaggeration. But most White coaches were raised with White values in a White culture. The norm for them is what is important for a White society” (Lapchick, 1996, p.9). “In the case of college sports, White coaches, faculty, and administrators may be blind to their own privilege and unable to see and understand the experience of the black student-athletes they lead” (Estler & Nelson, 2005, p. 66).

Faison (1996) underscored the resultant dissonance in shared identity when he observed that AAMSAs are seldom able to find someone to help them effectively mediate the culture of their predominantly White setting. Rhoden (2006, p. 193) summarized the need for African American mentors and role models thusly: “The fact that so many of the athletes’ closest advisors are not African American means that they are never around [African American] models of leadership, a situation that undermines their own ability to become leaders, rather than pampered, passive followers.”

Alongside dual academic and athletic commitments, a dearth of professors or administrators of color in the academy becomes a factor in engaging AAMSA persistence to degree attainment (Astin, 1975; Himelhoch et al, 1997) and creates one more hurdle to creating mentoring relationships in or out of the classroom or athletics (Melendez, 2008; Parham, 1993; Rhoden, 2006; Upthegrove et al, 1999). These realities increase the likelihood that AAMSAs will not only lack interest in academic success, but also not develop an interest in professional placement

within athletics staff or administration at the collegiate level (Allen, 1987; Kinsey, 2007; Melendez, 2006; Wells-Lawson, 1994).

To address the question of AAMSA expectations regarding future professional benefits of degree completion, and the question of whether AAMSA expectations coincide with aspirations for finding a job outside of professional athletics, a general examination of the administrative makeup and institutional climate of PWIs will be undertaken. In support of a view that institutional climate and organizational make-up is significant to persistence with degree attainment, studies by Loo and Rolison (1986), and Sedlacek and Brooks (1976) revealed the ineffectiveness of considering just cognitive factors in academic success. Other studies have been carried out to explore these ‘non-cognitive’ variables including commitment to goals, integration into the environment, and experiences with racism, among others (Astin, 1982; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Hill, 1993; Parham, 1996; Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984; Tinto, 1993).

This study sought to understand why and if African Americans male athletes in NCAA Division I basketball and football perceive sports over education as an avenue of upward mobility in American society (Edwards, 1984; Estler & Nelson, 2005; Harper, 2006; Lapchick, 1996).

Part 2 - The General Context Framing the Problem

Five factors provide a general context framing the problem of why many AAMSAs do not obtain their degrees: societal forces, institutional culture,

campus forces, organizational isolation, and a perception of the student as “disadvantaged.”

Societal forces. William Julius Wilson (1978) noted that:

Recent American history (1860s to 1960s) has seen the continuous and explicit efforts of Whites to construct racial barriers [that have] profoundly affected the lives of Black Americans... whereas the previous barriers were usually designed to control and restrict the entire [b]lack population, the new barriers create hardships essentially for the [b]lack underclass; whereas the old barriers were based explicitly on racial motivations... the new barriers have racial significance only in their consequences, not in their origins.

While *Brown vs. Board of Education*, placed access to and integration of education on the national stage in 1954, legislative action providing access for all regardless of race or sex would not take place until ten years later with the signing of the first Civil Rights Act in 1964. Public Law 82-352 (78 Stat. 241) helped to break down segregation at the K-12 level first, followed by Executive Order 11375 (1967) which reinforced efforts to recruit, admit, retain, and graduate underrepresented groups in higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Terrell & Wright, 1988).

Within the above brief context, a dialogue involving access to higher education has generally involved the dichotomy between racial or reverse discrimination (e.g., Michigan Law School, *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306, 2003). Part of this discussion involves the a history of racial violence and

segregation in America, to the degree that economic, social, professional, and academic trajectories for African Americans are substantively controlled by a White majority. With this as a backdrop, a discussion of access to, and persistence within higher education, opportunity, ability, and academic success for African Americans became largely painted as one of deficiency more than proficiency (Burke, 1993; Engstrom et al, 1997; Engstrom and Sedlacek, 1991).

Institutional culture. Cureton (2003) writes that previous research on Blacks academic performance implies that campus environment (social and cultural) and student interpersonal factors significantly determine [their] academic success (Cross & Astin, 1981; Dorsey and Jackson, 1995; Fleming, 1984; Kemp, 1990; Nettles, 1988; Pascarella, 1985; Thomas, 1981).

Institutions, like people, have cultures defined by unique characteristics, such as region and size, mission and faith, public or private, and liberal or conservative. Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) defined culture as a pattern of basic assumptions that are invented, discovered, or developed by a given group [and] taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel (pp. 22-23). African-American students enter PWIs with their own social and individual constructions that many times differ from that of the institution (Lee, 1999). Because [African Americans] are generally underrepresented on university campuses, pivotal and peripheral norms are often established and enforced by the predominant culture (Cox & Finley-Nickelson, 1991). Thus, the majority [White, male] culture, constructs norms based on its own stereotypes and beliefs, resulting

in barriers [for non-White males], and people of color are subjected to stereotypes, which may impede their [academic] advancement within the organization (Madsen & Mabokela, 2000).

Campus forces. One key difference in the experience of student-athletes compared to the general student population, at the same university, exists because of the inordinate time involved in collegiate athletics, which can preclude extended interaction with other students, faculty members, and those not involved in athletics. This discrepancy in potential interaction, or “face time,” has partly been attributed to excessive time demands placed on student-athletes (Adler & Adler, 1985; Melendez, 2006; Siegel, 1994). These demands are generally associated with high-profile and high-revenue generating sports that present opportunities for athletes to move into professional sports (Hyatt, 2001). This lack of interaction for student-athletes of color is even more a detriment when one considers their significantly disproportionate membership in the ranks of administrators, professors, coaches, and the general student population on many college and university campuses (Estler & Nelson, 2005; Harper, 2006, Lapchick et al, 2010; Lapchick, 2011c).

This latter statement gets directly to the researcher’s experience that 1) universities remain largely non-integrated, and 2) intercollegiate athletics remains separate from the remainder of college campuses to the detriment of the individual, academic, social, and professional development of the student. The net result in this case, is an inability to find shared membership and subsequent

identity with potential mentors and peers within academia (Estler & Nelson, 2005; Harper, 2006).

Organizational isolation. Athletic departments on major college campuses have moved to house their services under one roof (e.g., Arizona State University, Ohio State University, University of Texas at Austin). This is done in an “effort to have the entire department together to improve communication and operations between coaches and administrators” (www.thesundevils.com, 2010). Ironically, this creates a situation where one of the major barriers to academic and social engagement with non-athletics-affiliated faculty, staff, and students involves the very entity tasked with student-athlete welfare—intercollegiate athletics itself.

A student can visit a coach, conduct an interview, eat breakfast, lunch or dinner, receive physical therapy, tutoring, complete study hours, lift weights, and watch game film, all within the same building. Thus, student-athletes spend a good deal of time in the company of other student-athletes, coaches, and administrators, moving through the same environment, exposed to the prevailing language, behaviors, attitudes, norms and mores that exist within those confines (Estler & Nelson, 2005).

Perception of the student as disadvantaged. AAMSAs face social and academic development obstacles (Hill, 1993; Melendez, 2006; Parham, 1996), many directly related to their membership in an underrepresented population of the overall college demographic (Estler & Nelson, 2005; Harper, 2006). Among

these, a lack of role models, mentors, and a lack of ability to find individuals with whom they self-identify (Rogers, 1951; Tomlinson-Clark, 1998; Young & Koplou, 1997) along with the time consequence of participation in athletics (Adler & Adler, 1985; Melendez, 2006; Siegel, 1994) coupled with unrealistic expectations for a professional career in their sport (Edwards, 2000; Estler & Nelson, 2005; Messer, 2008; Wells-Lawson, 1994) are just some of the issues faced by this population as they begin their career in college.

AAMSAs are also confronted with insidious presumptions of their cognitive abilities that appear in both the academic and social environments (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1997; Walter 1996). Among these is a false presumption that many AAMSAs come from backgrounds that place them at risk for academic failure (Clark and Parette, 2002; Greene & Greene, 2001; Person & LeNoir, 1997; Snyder 1996). Both fellow students and faculty perpetuate these stereotypes (Adler & Adler, 1991; Lapchick, 1989; Leach & Conners, 1984; Roper & McKenzie, 1987; Sedlacek, 1987; Wiggins, 1991). Students and professors generally assume AAMSAs are academically under-prepared, and that these students come from schools that don't stress academics, or come from families and environments that place more emphasis on athletic rather than academic prowess (Adler & Adler, 1991; Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991; D'Augelli & Herschberger, 1993; Nettles, 1988; Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984; Tinto, 1975).

Part 3 - Statement of the Problem

Current policy and practice within NCAA Division I member institutions addressing student-athlete graduation and more particularly the disparate graduation rates of black males to their White male counterparts continues to be lacking in solution. In fact, the disparity in graduation rates is growing (Burnsed, 2010). AAMSAs participating in the two revenue-generating sports of football and basketball graduate at significantly lower rates than do their White male counterparts (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012). Therefore, this study attempted in part to inform a larger question of why a large number of AAMSAs in Division I football and basketball do not attain undergraduate degrees.

To do this, the study engaged four questions in particular: 1) contextual factors that promote or deter degree completion for AAMSA's. 2) AAMSA aspirations regarding their job future and undergraduate degree attainment. 3) AAMSA expectations regarding their access to jobs as a result of completing an undergraduate degree and 4) perceptual experiences of AAMSAs navigating athletics and academics on a Division I university campus?

Two premises support the focus of this study. The first premise is literature addressing AAMSA degree (non) attainment highlights various issues faced by AAMSAs on college campuses: academic under-preparedness, social and psychological stressors, dissonant personal and institutional cultures, peer and institutional stereotypes, limited ability to participate in campus functions and social networking opportunities, and stress related to lack of playing time, fatigue

from practice, or both (Benton, 2001; Fleming, 1984; Tracey and Sedlacek, 1985; Willis, 2000). Hence this study will attempt to find other issues not already reported in previous literature. At minimum, this study should re-enforce some of the issues already identified.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review presented in this chapter first puts forward a brief historical review of African American participation in, and access to, higher education via athletics (Part 1). Part 2 presents a review of AAMSA expectations and aspirations as they relate to college attendance, and Part 3 presents a review of AAMSA identity and academic outcomes. Part 4 continues the discussion of AAMSA academic outcomes relative to, including a discussion of career aspirations and expectations. Part 5 concludes Chapter 2 with a statement of the significance of the study.

Part 1- Historical Context Framing the Problem

In the years preceding the Second World War, the opportunity to participate in the American University system was almost entirely limited to the White majority. Despite the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the abolition of slavery, only 28 of the nation's nearly four million newly freed slaves had received bachelor's degrees from American colleges (Bowles & DeCosta, 1971; Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009; Roebuck & Murty, 1993).

Access to higher education was specifically extended to African Americans with the passage of the second Morrill Act of 1890, which mandated that funds for education be distributed annually on a just and equitable basis to African Americans in seventeen states (Brazzell, 1996; Bowles & DeCosta, 1971; Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009). This Act led to the establishment of 17 state-

supported institutions for African Americans, which joined the list of existing private colleges and 54 other institutions founded for African Americans under the first Morrill Act (Rudolph, 1990; Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009).

The first Morrill Act legalized the segregation of Black and White public institutions and emphasized a curricular focus on mechanics, agriculture, and the industrial arts. This federally supported model of vocational education, although attractive to some African Americans, promoted the idea that they were intellectually less capable than Whites and should be offered a separate and lower-caliber education (Anderson, 1988; Davis, 1998; Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009). The American Higher Education system would be shaped by this model and ethos for the next 70 to 80 years, until key legislation in the early 1960s would change how and where college-bound African Americans would be educated.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that racial segregation, including the operation of separate, but equal facilities in public education would no longer be legal (Brown, 2001; Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009). That the Supreme Court had to reinforce the decision a year later showed the seriousness of the anti-integration stance taken by some Whites (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009). Brown (2001) contends, however, the mandate to desegregate did not reach higher education until one decade after Brown, when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (p. 49). Title VI of the Act provided that no person in the United States, on the grounds of race,

color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance (Malaney, 1987, p. 17).

Secondarily, the Higher Education Act of 1965 laid groundwork to ensure basic education grants to underrepresented and disadvantaged students as well as making monies available to private historically black colleges and universities. The Act in part provided some measure of access parity economically, but more significantly provided a means outside of an institution's own framework and resources, to attract and support competitive academic talent.

Further impacting membership and inclusion in higher education was President Lyndon Johnson's signing of Executive Order 11246 (1967). Fulfillment of the Order required federal contractors to increase the number of minority employees as an "affirmative step" toward remedying years of exclusion for minority workers in those firms (Harper et al., 2009). We know the policy set forth in this Order today as Affirmative Action. Between the years 1972 and 1976, African American enrollment at PWIs increased from 27% of student enrollment to 34% (Kelly & Lewis, 2000; Harper et al., 2009).

Part 2 - Aspiration Influencing Degree Completion

The following section presents a discussion of a number of social, institutional, and individual forces that sometimes act upon AAMSA aspirations and expectations for degree attainment. The discussion begins with a brief discussion of a few characteristics of AAMSA disconnect from academics before

reaching college due to oppositional forces. The influence of potentially low aspiration influencing degree completion and the importance of role models in creating aspiration are then explored in a review of associated literature. The section concludes with a statement of the significance of the study.

Oppositional forces and student disconnect. Wider literature (Edwards, 1984; Estler & Nelson, 2005; Harper, 2006; Lapchick, 1996) points to a perspective that AAMSA academic disconnect is rooted in their pursuit of sport as a singular means of upward mobility. This view posits sport is an overwhelmingly powerful attraction compared to academics to meet this goal. Edwards (1983) proposed four reasons for the significance of sports in lives of many African American males: 1) limited opportunities, 2) few role models, 3) the value of athletic achievement, and 4) demonstrations of masculinity.

This section puts forth four oppositional forces reviewed in current literature acting upon student academic engagement.. While it may be true that many young African Americans perceive sports as an avenue of upward mobility in American society (Edwards, 1984), so too are there structural barriers, various socio-economic dimensions, external motivating pressures, and social forces that offer explanations of AAMSA disconnect for academics.

The first explanation, a "structural barrier" perspective, suggests that the academic underachievement of these student-athletes is a function of the quality of the educational experience available to the African American society at large (Cross & Slater, 2000; Edwards, 1984; Leonard, 1986; Sellers & Chavous, 1997).

The second explanation is rooted in characteristic social dimensions: a) these student-athletes might be first-generation college students, b) may come from single-parent-headed households, or c) may come from families with low socioeconomic status (Messer, 2008).

A third explanation, the “motivational” perspective, posits that these student-athletes place more emphasis on athletics than academic because a career in professional sports allows young African Americans the opportunity to experience the money, power, and prestige similar to the majority White culture in non-sports arenas (Messner, 1990).

The fourth explanation emphasizes the influence of social interactions, social structures, and social contexts in producing and reinforcing so-called normative expectations of masculine behavior (Connell, 1995; Kimmel & Messner, 2007; Levant, 1996; Pleck, 1981). The net result is Edwards (1984) observation that since non-sports employment appears closed to many African Americans, the “athletic dreams” of becoming a professional athlete motivate AAMSAs to spend a great deal of time and energy improving their athletic abilities (Gaston, 2003; Parmer, 1994; Snyder, 1996). Conversely, AAMSAs who dedicate themselves to athletic prowess do not see their investment of time and effort in degree completion to result in equal outcome (Simons et al, 1999).

Aspiration and degree completion. AAMSA degree completion is aided or obstructed for any number of reasons: campus engagement, ability to identify socially and culturally with the institution and peers, student commitment to, and

aspiration to degree attainment among them. Astin (1975) and Tinto (1993) showed that commitment to the goal of obtaining a degree is the strongest predictor of persistence. In his longitudinal study of college students, Tinto (1987) demonstrated that students with low academic ability but high commitment tend to persist until poor academic achievement forces them to leave college.

For AAMSAs who may arrive under-prepared, have a lower grade point average, or low standardized test score, the likelihood of persistence is much lower when coupled with low aspiration toward degree completion (AIR, 1989; Ferrante, 1984; Petrie, 1993; Schulman & Bowen, 2001). The likelihood of failure to persist by AAMSAs in football and basketball is multiplied with the added time demands of sport alongside the number of highly visible African American male role models in professional sports (Estler & Nelson, 2005). Pressures associated with the high profile, revenue-producing sports of football and basketball, and the potential for the student athlete to advance in to the professional ranks also increase the likelihood of failure to persist by AAMSAs (Olsen & Mittler, 1996).

Importance of role models in creating aspiration. Recognizing a potential for social and cultural disconnect on large campuses where White students are the prevailing majority, universities have moved toward a mentoring model in part to deal with social adaptation problems when AAMSAs attend PWIs (Cureton, 2003). However, many conceptual and programming models of mentoring AAMSAs are based largely on the premise that African Americans are a stigmatized and devalued group in American society (Chavous, Harris, Rivas,

Helaire, & Green, 2004) and specifically, that this social status has a primary influence on their academic beliefs systems and behaviors (Chavous, Bernat, Schmeelke-Cone, Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, & Zimmerman, 2003).

Alongside confronting frameworks constructed from a deficiency standpoint, African American students are generally small in number relative to other student populations on college campuses. Of the 14,780,600 undergraduate enrollees in 2005, 1,918,500 (13%) were African American (US Department of Education, National Center on Education Statistics, 2007). Additionally, the low number of African American faculty in higher education: 65,999 out of 1,174,831 total (5.62%) creates a gap between African American students and potential mentors within the halls of academe (US Department of Education, National Center on Education Statistics, 2006). “With few campus advocates to speak on their behalf...African American student-athletes are limited in their ability to question institutional dynamics related to race” (Estler & Nelson, 2005, p.66).

While research suggests that same race or same gender mentors are not necessarily of immediate importance in a mentor-protégé relationship (Lee, 1999), students who desire mentors of the same race or gender, while attending a PWI, are less likely to be able to find a mentor of the same race or gender, as a result of low membership among the ranks of students and faculty (Estler & Nelson, 2005; Harper, 2006; US Department of Education, National Center on Education Statistics, 2006).

Part 3 - Student-Athlete Identity

Organizational influence. The racial make-up of many collegiate athletic administrations, as well as that of the NCAA, is largely White and male (Estler & Nelson, 2005; Harper, 2006; Lapchick, 2011c). Institutional homogeneity influences the experiential environment in which its members exist socially, professionally, and academically (Anderson & Hrabowski, 1977; Fleming, 1984; Hurtado, 1992). What leadership thinks, assumes, does, says, or for that matter, does not think, does not assume, does not do, does not say, ensures the perpetuation of institutional homogeneity (Estler & Nelson, 2005). “Although coaches and athletic administrators make most of the decisions affecting the dynamics of race in athletics, effective leadership at the campus level recognizes both the campus wide opportunities and responsibilities inherent in those decisions” (p.67).

Campus leaders can set expectations for the racial climate in both the athletics department and the campus at large. “Failure to do so assures both a compromised academic and athletic experience for [b]lack student-athletes and fuels racial disharmony within the campus” (Estler & Nelson, 2005, p.67). This disharmony can pose a hindrance in identity formation on both an individual and social level chiefly because the AAMSA experience mostly exists within the confines, behaviors, language, and identity of the athletic endeavor, athletic department, and related demands (Edwards, 1990).

Lack of Representation in Power Roles. In 2010, the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport reported, “while the percentages are slightly better in some categories, the general picture is still one of white men running college sport” (Lapchick, 2011c, p.2). This assertion is reflected in the demographic makeup of Division I college presidents heading the 120 FBS member schools in 2011-2012:

- Ninety (75%) were White males;
- Nineteen (15.8%) were White females;
- Four (3.3%) were African American males;
- Three (2.5%) were Asian males;
- One (0.8%) was an African American female;
- One (0.8%) was an Asian female;
- One (0.8%) was a Latino male; and
- One (0.8%) was a Latina female.

Of 120 Athletic Directors heading FBS member programs in 2011-2012:

- One hundred one (84.2%) were White males;
- Nine (7.5%) were African American males;
- Five (4.2%) were White females;
- Four (3.3%) were Latino males; and
- One (0.8%) was a Native American man.

There were 125 faculty athlete representatives (FARs) for the 120 FBS schools involved with athletic and academic policy matters such as academic

integrity, and student-athlete welfare (five universities have two FARs). “The FAR is a very important position within a university” (Lapchick, 2010, p.11).

In 2011-2012, FAR positions were filled by:

- Seventy-nine (63.2%) White males;
- Thirty-nine (31.2%) White females;
- Three (2.4%) African American males;
- Three (2.4%) women of color (non-stated ethnicity or race); and
- One (0.8%) Latino male

African American male representation among faculty on Division I campuses is also lacking, as reflected in a 2011 report published by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport. According to their report titled *Mild Progress Continues: Assessing Diversity among Campus and Conference Leaders for Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Schools in the 2011-12 Academic Year*, faculty demographics on Division I campuses reflected that:

- 79% were White;
- 7% were African American;
- 6.3% were Asian;
- 4.2% were Latino; and
- 0.5% was Native American.

The head coach of Division I football and basketball programs is perhaps the most visible representative of their respective teams given their sometimes very public standing within communities, cities and states. Moreover, with yearly

salaries reaching in to the multiple millions (Alabama head football coach Nick Saban is paid a yearly salary of \$4,833,333), head coaching positions offer lucrative compensation packages at a time when instructional spending at many schools has slowed or declined amid economic struggles and shrinking state education budgets (Brady, Upton & Berkowitz, 2011). An analysis by Brady et al. (2011) found that in 2006 the average pay for major-college coaches was \$950,000. A look at the average pay of Division I head football coaches five years later revealed a fifty-five% increase (\$1,470,000 average per year) in compensation (Brady, Upton & Berkowitz, 2011). Contracts or other documents showing head football coaching compensation packages of 110 of the 120 schools in Division I FBS revealed the following (Brady, Upton & Berkowitz, 2011):

- At least sixty-four coaches were paid more than one million dollars per year in salary.
- Thirty-two were to earn more than two million dollars per year.
- Nine were to earn more than \$3 million per year in salary.
- Three were to be paid more than \$4 million per year in salary.
- One, University of Texas' Mack Brown was to earn more than \$5 million per year in salary

Of the 120 head football coaches at FBS schools in 2011-2012:

- 101 (84.2%) were White males;
- Seventeen (14.2%) were African American males;
- One (0.8%) was a Latino male; and

- One (0.8%) was a Polynesian male.

A 2011 analysis by CNNMoney.com showed the median pay and benefits for coaches at major Division I basketball schools received average yearly compensation packages worth approximately \$911,000 (Isidore, 2011). Of the 335 Division one head basketball coaches in 2010-2011:

- 244 (72.8%) were White males, and
- 87 (26%) were African American males.

Assistant coach, and offensive and defensive coordinator positions in Division I basketball and FBS football are often viewed as the pipeline for future head coaching jobs. The assistant coaching position is often seen as a stepping-stone to the head coaching position, which attracts recognition and income. In addition, the head coach holds all the power within a team dynamic (Lapchick, 2010, p.20). Of the 260 Coordinators at FBS schools in 2011-2012:

- Two hundred twenty nine (84.6%) were White males;
- Thirty one (11.2%) were African American males;
- Five (2.4%) were Asian males; and
- One (0.4%) was a Native American male.

Of the 1,021 Division I basketball assistant coaches in 2011-2012:

- Five hundred sixty three (55%) were White males;
- Four hundred thirty four (42.5%) were African American males;
- Twenty three (2%) reported “other” and male; and
- One (0.1%) reported “other” and female.

The above statistics bring to bear the low number of African American men in positions considered to have high institutional status and large financial reward. These statistics underscore a potential lack of ability for AAMSAs to find place and identity within academic, social, and professional communities on campus. Moreover, these numbers illustrate the low number of African American men with whom AAMSAs can potentially build mentoring relationships. Finally, general stereotypes sanctioned in the academic and social spheres only compound a potential sense of isolation for these students.

Identity formation: stressors and barriers in higher education. Briggs (1996), Etzel, Pickney, & Hinkle (1994), and Funk (1991), among others, have written about stressors faced by AAMSA and the impact on persistence. Cross (1991) indicated that it is impossible for any Black person to pass through the formal educational system without being exposed to certain historical misrepresentations about Africa and the African-American experience. A problem occurs when individuals begin to believe the distortions presented to them. Carter G. Woodson (1933) described this process as "mis-education." Individuals have a tendency to question their own self-worth as a Black person when they internalize negative stereotypes about Blacks. As a result of extreme mis-education, Black internalized oppression is likely to occur. This notion of mis-education could possibly explain why some AAMSAs integrate and succeed in their academic studies and others become detached and fail academically.

Alternately, Connell (1995), Kimmel & Messner (2007), Levant, (1996), and Pleck, (1981) have written of the performance of socially constructed masculinities, a perspective that emphasizes the influence of social interactions, social structures, and social contexts in producing and reinforcing so-called normative expectations of masculine behavior (Harris III, 2010, p.299). In the context of AAMSAs, both positive and negative behaviors are posited as performed social identities, fundamentally concerned with the consequences of patterns of male gender socialization and prevailing societal norms. “This perspective also recognizes that some masculinities (e.g., White, heterosexual, able-bodied) are prioritized and situated as dominant above others (e.g., gay, feminine, racial/ethnic minority, physically disabled, working class)” (Harris III, 2010, p.299).

Partial explanations of these outcomes are also presented by Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement, Bean’s student attrition model (1981), and Tinto’s student integration model (1993). Integration into the college environment is a reciprocal and two-party process. Student success is related to the student’s level of commitment to the institution both academically and socially. This level of commitment however is also tied to the level of commitment of the institution to the student. The institution must provide an environment that is comfortable to the student, and [the student] must be willing to take the time to integrate (Roper & McKenzie, 1988).

Social integration can include but is not limited to the development of social communities vis-à-vis campus organizations and groups, faculty and peer networks outside of the classroom, and the participation and attendance in campus works or events. Academic integration can include but is not limited to interaction with faculty and advisors, counselors and academic organizations such as math and debate teams, as well as participation in professional development opportunities.

Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory provides another framework for deciphering the AAMSA experience within higher education by examining events or non-events that result in change by specifically looking at how stressful situations or supportive situations play a role in one's ability to change or "make it through" the period. Messer (2008) used Schlossberg's transition theory to describe various situations, stressors, and environments faced by AAMSAs. Among them, long practice hours, travel time for games, being the recipient of negative stereotypes about one's race or intellectual profile, confusion about post-athletic/collegiate career choices, or simply exiting a sport once eligibility has ended, are some examples of stressors.

Part 4 - Career Aspiration and Expectations

Organizational construct and influence. Coupled with the composition and governance structures of many intercollegiate athletic departments (see Appendix B), AAMSAs have fewer opportunities to find influences, experiences, relationships, and mentoring opportunities that lend to alternate identity

investigation, identity development, or both. These negative experiences could contribute to higher attrition rates among African American students attending these universities (Allen, 1992; Allen et al., 1991; Nettles, 1988). The present model of intercollegiate athletics is severely lacking of inclusion of people who are not White and male (see Appendix B) perpetuating a discrete and uniform language and culture of a White male majority.

Brewer (1979), Tajfel & Turner (1986), Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, (1987) provide that people tend to trust others with similar ethnic, racial, demographic or physical makeup thus creating in-group and out-group dichotomies of social membership. While it is not always the case, those who are brought into the administrative and coaching pipeline of collegiate athletics tend to physically, and in many cases, philosophically, resemble those already holding positions of authority. Thus, the likelihood of an administrative or coaching vacancy going to a person that is not a White, heterosexual, male, is very low. This cycle is continued when athletic departments turn to the largest and most familiar pool of applicants from which to draw—White and largely male. This perpetuates the discourse of the predominant, White male culture, particularly at predominantly White institutions, which may seem, and in some ways are, uninviting and unfriendly to those who have been historically underrepresented or absent (Okawa, 2002).

Allen (1992) found racial composition to be the strongest predictor of student outcomes for social involvement and career aspirations. Ultimately, if

African American athletes cannot and do not see their likeness in these power roles, they could logically conclude there is very little likelihood of a future for themselves in those roles.

Part 5 - Significance of the Study

As a result of historical inequities and in part because of the present day makeup of the higher education and athletics landscape, student-athletes of color in many instances relegate themselves to the pursuit of athletics over academics (ASHE, 1988; Edwards, 1984; Estler & Nelson, 2005; Johnson, 1996). This behavior may be more salient for individuals who possess negative self-perceptions of their own academic ability.

This study takes the view that universities and athletic departments can do much more than simply provide academic support to attempt to close gaps in academic achievement of incoming student-athletes. This study posits that universities can provide a successful, integrated and level environment in which athletes, in particular African American Male basketball and football athletes, can succeed and complete their undergraduate degree. In line with these positions, this investigation sought a greater understanding of the contextual experiences of African American male football and basketball players, their aspirations regarding their job futures and degree attainment, their expectations regarding access to jobs as a result of undergraduate degree attainment, and their perceptual experiences navigating athletic departments and higher education institutions.

Based on the questions formulated at the outset of this study, there were two themes participants identified as salient: relationships of meaning within the construct of athletics, and parental influence in creating aspiration to attain degree. These two themes also shaped participant aspirations and expectations for access to jobs. Relationships of meaning included interactions and relationships with academic advisors, sport coaches, and peers. These relationships were also described as unstructured mentoring opportunities.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The researcher was interested in discovering ways in which African American Male Student-Athletes (AAMSAs) perceive the value of a college degree and how they pursue degree completion. Additionally, the researcher sought to uncover participant perceptions of the athletic institution and its constituent members in promoting or deterring degree completion. The intent of this research was to produce a set of recommendations to help service individual institutions of higher education, athletic departments, and the NCAA in their efforts to graduate greater numbers of student-athletes. Descriptive qualitative analysis served as the primary means to address the focus of the study. This case study relied primarily on the use of two instruments, unstructured interviews and a short demographic inventory. Data collection for this research was collected at large west-coast university, over a four-month period during which four individuals were interviewed independently three separate times.

Chapter 3 is presented in four parts. Part 1 presents the framework of the study including the conceptual framework of the study, the research questions, the study's design, and the components of participant selection. Part 2 describes how the data were collected including an overview of how participant interviews were conducted. Part 3 lays out how data were organized. This includes how interviews were transcribed and coded. Part 4 concludes the chapter with an overview of the

operational elements of the study (participant confidentiality, ethical considerations and researcher privilege) are discussed.

Part 1 – Framework of the Study

This section presents a general overview of how, and where, data was collected for this study. Included are the research questions that guided the interview protocols in each session, and a description of the study's design. A brief discussion of grounded theory methodology follows. Part 1 concludes with an overview of site and participant selection, and a brief summary of the research participants from whom data was collected.

Conceptual Framework. Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides the conceptual framework for this study through which the researcher sought to understand and appreciate participant statements about their experiences as African American men on a primarily white campus. Based on scholarly perspectives from law, sociology, history, ethnic studies, and women's studies, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a conceptual lens used to examine racism, racial (dis)advantages, and inequitable distribution of power and privilege within institutions and society (Bell, 1987; Delgado and Stefancic, 2001).

CRT posits that racism is a part of everyday life, often lacking the ability to be distinctively recognized, and thus is difficult to eliminate or address (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson- Billings, 2000; Solórzano, 1998). CRT rejects the notion of a "colorblind" society, positing instead that the idea of colorblindness discreetly covers up socially constructed meanings of race

and presents it as an abstract idea instead of addressing how racial advantage propels the self-interests, power, and privileges of the dominant group (Solórzano, 1998). Further, CRT insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and their communities of origin in analyzing law and society. Finally, CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as a part of a broader goal of ending all forms of oppression (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado & Crenshaw, 1993).

The use of CRT as a lens through which to understand this data set is rooted in an attempt to give voice to the unique perspectives and lived experiences of people of color. According to Solórzano (1998), “CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of women and men of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education” (p. 122).

Acknowledging researcher privilege. The researcher as a White Male conducted interviews with participants that are African American and Male. Conducting research is a process that involves many decisions and choices that are ongoing and multi-variate. The researcher’s personal culture of Whiteness informs the decisions that are made throughout the research process. It is therefore necessary that the researcher acknowledge his role in this process as participating in the formation of the instrument, in fact becoming the instrument through which questions are delivered and participant narratives are filtered. This relationship between the researcher and the studied must be addressed and

restructured at the fore in order to properly validate the perspective(s) of the participant. The researcher must therefore acknowledge his location in the research and position of privilege as the researcher recognizing the participants as the experts and authorities on their own experiences. "Our own frameworks of understanding need to be critically examined as we look for the tensions and contradictions they might entail" (Lather, 1988, p. 576).

In acknowledging the researchers racial difference, so too must the researcher acknowledge his male and student-athlete identity as a means of validating his perspective of participant narratives. By addressing both shared identities of male and student-athlete, the issue of inequality may be overcome through the affiliation of the researcher with the context, where participants may feel more comfortable in sharing information with someone who is within the situation (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 165).

As a further means of addressing race and culture bias in the research process, the researcher employed a conceptual framework of Critical Race Theory to more authentically understand the perspectives and experiences of participants in this study.

Central research questions. The following research questions about African American Male football and basketball student athletes provided the focus for and guide for this study:

- 1) What contextual factors (e.g., socialization, campus culture, peer group interactions) promote or deter degree completion?

- 2) What are AAMSA aspirations regarding their job future and undergraduate degree completion?
- 3) What are AAMSA expectations regarding their access to jobs as a result of completing an undergraduate degree?
- 4) What are the perceptual experiences of AAMSA's as they navigate athletics and academics on a Division I university campus?

Study Design. This study utilized a case study approach. “A case study is a detailed examination of one setting, a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event. A case study could focus on a bounded system wherein a student, teacher, principle, program; group such as a class, a school or specific policy could be the focus of the case study” (Merriam, 1998). This particular study is a multi-case study design relying principally upon focused in depth interviews with multiple participants in concert with a student-demographic inventory (SDI). Use of the SDI provides a means by which participant narratives can be cross-examined with wider literature on AAMSA degree attainment.

Data analysis. Through the use of open-ended interview sessions with subjects, the researcher sought to uncover meaningful and influential experiences that helped promote or deter degree completion among African American Male football and basketball players at a large Division I institution. Each interview session was transcribed and uploaded to Nvivo. Transcripts were then reviewed

for themes in each narrative and then coded in an effort to bring order, structure, and interpretation to a mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Study Participants. As discussed below, participants in the study were solicited from a large Division I institution in the Southwest. The following presents a brief discussion of where the study took place, and how each of the four participants was identified. The section concludes with a demographic overview of each of the four participants, including their grade in school, their student-status (first, second, third-generation college attendee), family unit (single, two-parent, other), and estimated family income.

Site selection. Participants were solicited from a Division I institution where the researcher had a past relationship with members of the athletic department, which broadened the field, and provided greater access to student-athletes (Creswell, 1998; Preacco, 2009). The site selected for the research is a large, public university located in a metropolitan area having an undergraduate population of approximately 35-to 45-thousand students. This institution is a NCAA member at the Division I level, is an FBS institution (a member of the PAC-10 conference), and is categorized as a PWI.

Participant selection. This study relied principally upon previous relationships with coaches, student-athlete academic advisors, and the FAR to identify students who met the criteria for participation:

- African American and male;
- Participating in the sport of basketball, football, or both;

- Entering their junior, senior or final year of athletic eligibility; and
- Completed their athletic eligibility, were still enrolled, and had not completed their undergraduate degree.

The researcher initially identified a potential pool of participants based on having spent two years as a learning specialist in the academic division of the institution. Following the identification of possible participants, a face-to-face meeting with the head of the academic department of the athletic institution set up an introduction to the study and its framework. This meeting established and narrowed the list of potential participants. This list compiled during this meeting included two individuals from men's basketball and 19 from football who met the study's criteria.

Following the initial meeting with the head of the academic division, emails were sent to each of the academic coaches assigned to men's basketball and football. These initial emails contained an introduction to the researcher, an overview of the research project (both in Appendix C), and a request for potential and available participants with whom the academic coach worked. Copies of this information (Appendix C), and Participant Rights and Informed Consent (Appendix D) were included as email attachments to familiarize each academic advisor with the research framework. Face-to-face meetings with each of the academic personnel who worked with potential participants were set up to go over the research plan and answer questions they might have. These meetings also

serviced the opportunity for the researcher to procure contact information for each of the possible participants.

A list of 7 possible participants was developed from these initial email inquiries and meetings (2 from basketball and 5 from football). Following the finalization of the potential participant list, the academic advisors for each sport contacted potential participants and advised them of impending researcher contact. The researcher first sent emails containing an introduction to the study and a request for initial face-to-face contact. The researcher used both phone and text message correspondence to follow up on receipt of emailed material as well as to set up initial meetings. From these contacts, four participants consented to participating in the study (one from basketball and three from football).

Prior to the interview process, the researcher had a basic relationship with each participant formed during the two years spent as a learning specialist in the academic division of their institution. While the researcher had not worked with any of the participants exclusively during this time, one participant was a former student in a class taught by the researcher in the summer prior to the commencement of the learning specialist position.

Although not explicitly requested by any participant, academic coach, or agent of the research project, sport coaches were not contacted regarding the participation of any athlete at any point during or after the research project was begun. Rather, by working closely with the head of the academic department and

necessary staff, participant rights and anonymity was preserved and insured the integrity of the information gathered.

Participant demographics. As was stated previously, a total of four athletes gave consent to participate in the research study: one from men's basketball, and three from football. A demographic overview of participants is presented in Table 1. The sole participant from basketball was the only basketball candidate that met the criteria for participation in the study. "William" was one of two upper classmen on the men's basketball team, and the only one who gave consent to participate. The presence of a single interview from the sport of men's basketball presents several limitations that are outlined in the corresponding section of this chapter.

"Christopher", "Marcus," and "Jameson" are the three remaining participants, each from football. All had one year of athletic eligibility remaining. Marcus will compete as a graduate student during his final year of eligibility. Both Christopher and Jameson are on schedule to graduate within their five years of athletic eligibility. Christopher will graduate with his undergraduate degree in the winter of his final season of eligibility, and Jameson will do so in the spring semester following his fifth and final season of athletic eligibility.

Table 1

Participant Demographics in Brief

Name	Sport	Year	Hometown	Household	Student Status	Person of Influence	Estimated Family Income
William	Basketball	Senior	In-state Urban	Single-parent Mother	First-generation	Mother	\$50,000 + per year
Christopher	Football	Junior	Out-of-state Urban	Two-parent Godparents	First-generation	Mother	\$25-\$50,000 per year
Marcus	Football	Graduate with eligibility	Out-of-state Rural	Two-parent Mother/Father	First-generation	Mother	\$25-\$50,000 per year
Jameson	Football	Junior	Out-of-state Rural	Two-parent Mother/Father	First-generation	Mother and Father	\$25-\$50,000 per year

Part 2 – Data Collection

Over the course of six months in the fall of 2010 and spring of 2011, four student-athletes from the sports of basketball and football met with the researcher. Participants submitted themselves for interviews a minimum of three times each to share their experiences in Division I football or basketball, and their perspectives on the value of degree attainment to their professional futures and access to jobs. Participants were also asked to discuss experiences that either helped or hindered their progress toward degree attainment.

Conducting the interviews. Approvals from the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the athletic department were obtained before starting participant interviews, which included obtaining a brief student demographic profile from each. The primary method of investigation used open-ended questions in several independent interview sessions with each participant. The use of open-ended questions and conversation allowed the interviewer to gather the data being sought without making the dialogue exchange inflexible and restrictive (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). A secondary data collection tool, a student-athlete inventory (Appendix E), was used to provide background and context for participant responses as well as support participant profiles obtained by the researcher.

First interview session. At the outset of the initial participant meetings, the researcher read aloud an overview of the research, including information on participant confidentiality and publication of materials (Appendix C). Following

this, each participant was asked to sign and date a copy of the research protocol and participant rights form acknowledging their understanding of the research, their participant rights, and intended use of materials (Appendix D). Both parties kept a copy of this document to refer to if necessary.

The student-athlete inventory consisted of 15 questions designed to provide general background information, including city and state of residence prior to attending college, relative size of hometown, their academic standing in school (junior, senior), most recently reported grade point average, collegiate sport, and financial-aid status (scholarship or non-scholarship status). Because the researcher was also interested in ascertaining participant aspirations and expectations regarding post-collegiate job opportunity and degree completion, participants were asked several questions about their immediate family members, such as the number of parents in household, their estimated family income, highest level of parental degree attainment and whether or not other members of their family had attended college. Once the inventory had been completed, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions or express concerns about the research, documents, or procedures.

Unstructured audio-recorded interviews were conducted in a private, quiet room located at the participant's university. Each initial interview lasted a minimum of 1 hour, and in most but not all cases, longer. Follow-up interviews were as short as 15 minutes to verify participant responses, but in some cases

lasted up to an hour-and-a-half. All told, the researcher spent approximately three hours with each participant, except one (Christopher - football).

The researcher made an effort to make the interviews as conversational and exploratory as possible, which allowed participants to be comfortable with expressing their perceptions, expectations, and values regarding their academic experiences.

To begin the first interview session, participants were prompted with the following central questions (a full set of questions is attached as Appendix A).

- Can you please describe where you grew up?
- Can you talk about the people who had the most influence on you growing up?
- How did people you grew up with talk about going to college?
- Was attending college a goal for you at a young age?

Note taking was an integral part of developing external areas of inquiry for the researcher by means of unstructured and in-the-moment notations tied to specific responses. As a matter of assurance of confidentiality and purpose, participants were told in advance that note taking would be a part of the interview process. Participants were also told that note taking was a means to physically highlight areas of interest in conversation. Completing the interaction, the researcher shared notes with each participant, in the moment, to assure each interviewee of the integrity of information exchange and to build trust and confidence that the researcher was not attempting to make written judgment of an

individual in any way. Following the interview session, audio recordings and notes were transcribed. Review of both notes and participant responses helped the researcher hone in on areas of interest for follow-up in subsequent interviews.

Second interview session. In the second and follow-up interviews participants were first read notes about areas of interest from the initial interview session. This allowed both the researcher and the participant to refresh their memory, clarify responses, place context, change verbiage, or edit responses accordingly. This process also served as a reminder to the participants of their autonomy of participation in the research.

Following the review of notes, participants were asked about their experiences with their coaches and academic support staff in athletics as well as the larger campus community. The questions included the following (the full set of follow up questions is attached as Appendix A):

- When did you commit to or decide, “I’m completing my degree while I am here?”
- What do you believe is the/a benefit of having a degree to your professional future?
- Did you associate a benefit with having a degree before coming to college?
- Can you please describe your professional goals before coming to college?
- Have these goals changed since coming here to college?

- Have these goals changed as a result of being so close to finishing your degree?
- Why is it that you have succeeded where so many others have failed and are projected to fail?
- What is it you have seen, heard or experienced that might help explain why black football/basketball athletes are not completing their degrees?

At the conclusion of all interviews, participants were given a copy of their transcribed interview sessions and provided the opportunity to clarify, redact, or change any of their statements. If a participant felt any aspect of their interview content needed revision, he so indicated and returned the transcript with the amended notations. Table 2 presents the actual number of interviews that took place and the total actual time spent with each participant.

Table 2

Participant Contact Sessions and Time Spent With Each

Participant Name	Total Sessions	Orientation	Inventory	Debrief	Interview Time - Total	Total Time
William	5	15 min.	10 min.	5 min.	2h 15 m 03s	2h 45m 03s
Christopher	1	15 min.	10 min.	7 min.	1h 6m 14s	1h 28m 02s
Marcus	5	15 min.	12 min.	10 min.	2h 2m 0s	2h 39m 0s
Jameson	4	15 min.	10 min.	10 min.	2h 29m 39s	3h 4m 39s

Notes: Hours - h
 Minutes - min., m
 Seconds -, s

Part 3 – Organizing the Data

This section describes how data for the study were organized by transcribing the interviews, digitally organized, and systemically analyzed through coding.

Transcribing the interviews. Organizing the data involved moving from field notes and recorded interviews to transcripts in order to discover concepts capturing the ideas or phenomena described by the interviews and notes (Martin & Turner, 1983). Transcribing was completed by the researcher and provided a depth and breadth of familiarity with each participant “voice” and subsequent themes that emerged. Transcribing the interviews created an accurate and precise account of both the subject’s responses and the research questions being asked.

The process involved transferring electronic audio files into transcripts using a computer program containing a word processing function that allowed the researcher to capture both a written and audio record of each interview (ExpressScribe, NCH Software, version 5.02). The program allowed the researcher to play back a recording, slow down or pause respondent interviews in the moment, and produce a typed record of each.

Digitally organizing the data. Once interviews had been transcribed and reviewed by participants, they were uploaded in to the qualitative data analysis program NVivo (QSR International, version 8). This program allowed the researcher to organize, sort, classify, code and analyze the unstructured datasets (interviews) for thematic content. The program allows the user to create separate

folders representing a single or multiple related categories, and subcategories within those folders called “nodes”, that represent individual coded subsets. Selected portions of text are placed in each researcher-determined category, “node”, or both, and the program creates what amounts to a bookmark within the dataset of origin allowing the researcher to move from original script to coded subsets with clarity and ease.

NVivo also provided the researcher the ability to compile reports aggregating code source and references allowing for easier and more organized identification of themes within in the data. Coding in NVivo also provided the researcher with a clear delineation of participant responses as well as a (aforementioned) bookmark in a given transcript highlighting both content and context of participant responses. These steps were important because they allowed the researcher to consistently and uniformly organize broad information sets.

As described in the next subsection, the process of categorizing information allowed the researcher to cluster information under broad terms (identified in the literature review) that described an action, incident, experience, or use of language within a transcribed data set. Some themes, categories and codes became evident at the outset of the interview process, such as parental influence on college aspiration and relationships of meaning (e.g., an academic advisor), while others were uncovered in subsequent interview sessions (e.g., implied coping mechanisms and unstructured mentoring).

Coding the data for themes and categories. Information gained through the study of AAMSAs in football and basketball was organized and analyzed to bring meaning to the data sets. The process of analyzing the data involved scrutinizing all the coded data to identify common themes or categories, and then thoroughly reviewing these to reveal patterns and relationships, and similarities and differences within the data.

Coding is primarily the process of applying a word or a short string of text to broad themes or concepts found in the data (Goodly, 2007). More specifically, coding involves examining the collected data for themes, ideas, and categories and assigning individual and distinct terms that give meaning to them. In this study, the grouping of passages of text under single uniform labels was important for the sake of easy retrieval at a later stage for comparison and analysis.

Assigning a “code” to each category or group of statements was particularly helpful because not everyone used the same language to describe the same experience. These labels, or codes, gave an indication of the idea or concept that underscored a given theme or category. The net result of this process was that coding made it easier to search through, make comparisons between, and among subject responses, and identify patterns within the data set for further investigation.

Using NVivo (described previously) made the process easier because it involved a sometimes non-linear process of reading and rereading each transcript multiple times looking for additional themes and categories to emerge that had not

already come out of each initial interview (Martin & Turner 1986). Rather than relying on preconceived themes or categories, the aim was to find themes or issues that occurred or were recurrent in the data (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003).

The experiences of student-athletes that were considered in developing interview questions and in coding the data were the social, familial, athletic, and academic environments of each participant. As a result, questions as well as themes were structured and directed at addressing these components specifically (Appendix A).

The student-demographic inventory (Appendix E) provided basic categories for the analysis of participant data compared to literature reviewed for this study. The inventory includes quantitative data (e.g., grade point average, family income, family composition, such as single, or two-parent households). The use of a small set of binary questions provided the researcher the opportunity to analyze participant responses across qualitative and quantitative data sets in the secondary literature review performed after the participant interview process.

Part 4 – Operational Elements of the Study

The three operational elements of the study that are discussed below include participant confidentiality, ethical considerations, and limitations. Also discussed is researcher privilege.

Confidentiality. Every effort was made to insure the confidentiality of the participant and interview content. Standards compliant with the IRB's criteria for

confidentiality were followed to make certain subject identity was protected. The exchange of information between the researcher and participants was transmitted strictly on a person-to-person basis. No personal information was transmitted via email or other electronic medium (twitter, text message, facebook, etc.).

Participant information and characteristics have been referred to in a manner such that no commentary could be referenced back to a particular participant either by name, age, station, or place of origin.

Ethical considerations. IRB approval was sought and obtained for this study. IRB guidelines were followed for the protection of human subjects. As the majority of the data collection consisted of interviews, issues of consent were addressed to insure participant rights and privacy considerations. Questions were sometimes personal in nature, but did not produce any significant emotional or psychological anguish associated with or as a result of the questions asked.

All participants were informed that only the researcher would have access to the data. Pseudonyms were assigned to each interviewee to protect participant identities. Additionally, participants had the right to read and review transcripts, notes, questions and responses both during and after each interview session. Each participant was provided a copy of the final transcript to review questions and responses, as well as to change, clarify or otherwise redact statements previously made.

Finally, all participants were reminded of their right to decline any interview question if they did not feel comfortable and their right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty or consequence.

Research Limitations. There were a few basic limitations associated with this study. These limitations provided a framework for the study and background and context for the research questions, as follows.

- The researcher acknowledges he is a 36-year-old, White Male doctoral student seeking out information from individuals with whom he shares common gender but not common race identity. To compensate for the latter, the researcher used Critical Race Theory as a lens to understand and appreciate participant statements throughout the data collection process.
- The researcher also acknowledges that there may be inevitable cultural differences that exist between researcher (as a White Male) and researched (African American Male) that can be a barrier to intersubjectivity (Clifford, 1988). Again, to compensate for the latter potential difference in personal and race cultures among others, the researcher used Critical Race Theory as a lens to understand and appreciate participant statements throughout the data collection process.
- A few of the interviewed subjects were familiar, to a certain degree, with the researcher due to past teacher-student relationships as a

learning specialist in the academic division of the research site. The researcher's male and athlete identity status however, are believed to have provided the researcher with a greater familiarity and credibility with participants, who may have subsequently had a greater willingness to be forthcoming in the interviews as a result.

- The small sample size means the study's outcomes may not be the entire set that could be identified within a larger population of AAMSAs in Division I football or basketball.
- There was only a single individual from the sport of men's basketball that met the criteria outlined for participation in this study. While his experience alone is not a substantial measure of a collective experience of AAMSAs in basketball at this institution or Division I institutions at large, neither are the experiences of the three football athletes who participated in this study a measure of the collective of AAMSAs in football at this institution or Division I institutions at large.
- Because of the small number of participants, this study may not be generalizable to other African American Male athletes in sports other than football and basketball at the home institution or other PWI's.
- This study may also not be generalizable to other PWI's due to geography, institutional mission and size and institutional demographics.

- This study sought to uncover the perceptions and experiences of “persisters” in college, and therefore, may not be generalizable to AAMSAs who have “stopped-out” or dropped out, or who are simply no longer attending college (e.g., professional athletes).
- This study focused only on the experiences of AAMSAs in the revenue generating sports of football and basketball. Nonrevenue sport athletes’ experiences, while profound in their own right, are different in several key aspects, such as visibility on and off campus, media attention, university prestige, and economic priority (Meggyesy, 1999; Melendez, 2008).

Chapter 4

UNDERSTANDING THE DATA

Chapter 4 is delivered in 5 parts. Part 1 of this chapter introduces each of the participants again, but includes a more thorough profile of each, including their parents level of education, grant-in-aid standing, time spent on academic- and athletic-related activities, and most recently reported grade point average.

Part 2 of this chapter includes summaries of emergent themes addressing the central questions of the study. These themes offer a window into participant experiences as AAMSAs in football or basketball at a PWI in a major Division I, athletic conference. Part 3 presents two themes that consistently reemerged across all participant narratives. Part 4 presents the researchers recommendations for future research as well as recommendations for the NCAA, IHE's and individual athletic departments. Part 5 concludes the chapter with three issues moving forward in collegiate athletic administration and the researchers parting thoughts.

Part 1 – Characterizing the Participants

This section provides semi-biographic sketches of each participant in this study, William, Christopher, Marcus, and Jameson. A basic introduction to the participants, their families, estimated family income, and the length and participation in higher and post-secondary education of family members are the essential elements used to characterize the participants. Also included are participant estimates of their time spent on academic and athletic related

activities, and descriptions of academic performance as measured by grade point average.

Participant a: “William” – basketball. William is a first-generation college student who grew up in a single-parent household in a suburb in southwestern United States. He moved homes and schools with his mother and sister over five times as a young child, and spoke of having to remake friendships as he went along. William reported his mother was the most influential person and family member he had, and that sport was for him a central means of both social access (friend and peer groups) and consistent activity. William has played basketball for 16 years beginning in elementary school, through high school, and on in college. He received athletic-related financial aid to attend the PWI involved in this study.

William spoke of focusing on basketball above other sports because he began to see and hear comments from high school and college coaches that basketball could be a means to attend college on scholarship. Although he reported his family income was approximately 50- to 100-thousand dollars per year, William also spoke of his focusing on basketball as a means to alleviate the financial pressure associated with college attendance, a burden he “knew” his mothers income could not support.

William’s most recently reported GPA is 2.80, and he reported having spent equal amounts of time on academic-related activities whether his sport was in season or out of season: approximately seven hours per week each (all of

William's courses were internet-based courses). William's time dedicated to athletic-related activities was higher in season (20 to 30 hours per week), than out of season (10 to 15 hours per week).

William recently completed his athletic eligibility and will have completed his undergraduate degree by the time of publication. William reported that his mother had completed a high school diploma but no other family members completed a college degree or participated in post-secondary education.

Participant b: "Christopher"- football. Christopher is currently a senior academically, has one year of athletic eligibility remaining, and was academically ineligible to play after his first year in college. It was this experience of being ineligible and what he felt was a lack of his college coaches' assistance or support that turned his attention to his academics. Understanding, in his words, "that football could be taken away at any time, but academics is something that I have control over and no one can ever take away from me." Christopher regained his athletic eligibility and his most recently reported GPA is 2.5. Christopher has played football for six years (high school and college) and is currently receiving athletic-related financial aid at the PWI involved in this study

Christopher did not grow up with his parents, but grew up in the care of "godparents" in a metropolitan city in the southeastern United States. Christopher considers his mother the most influential of his parenting adults. He is focusing on getting his college degree as a matter of personal pride because "I hate to see my mother work so hard. It would be a accomplishment for me to get my degree, but

I also want to make my mother proud, to show her that she raised a good child.”

Christopher reported that his mother had completed some college but he was unsure of his father’s level of education. Christopher reported his family’s income to be 25- to 50-thousand dollars per year.

Christopher reported spending approximately 10 to 15 hours per week on academic-related activities (class, homework, tutoring, or study hall) in and out of his sport’s competitive season. Conversely, he reported spending 25 to 30 hours per week on athletic-related activities in season and 20 to 25 hours per week out of season.

Lastly, Christopher reported having other family members (not a parent) that had attended and obtained a college degree. He also reported having family members, other than his parents, having competed in collegiate football.

Participant c: “Marcus”- football. Marcus is a red-shirt senior (participated in football but did not play his first year and is now playing in his fifth year of eligibility). Marcus will attain his undergraduate degree before his athletic eligibility expires and will begin graduate coursework in the fall while competing in his final year of athletic eligibility. Marcus grew up in a small town in the Southwest but moved to a larger more urban city when he was in elementary school. Marcus grew up in a two-parent home with an approximate family income of 25- to 50-thousand dollars per year.

Both of Marcus’ parents have completed some college, and he reported other family members have attended a two-year institution. No one in Marcus’s

family has completed a post-secondary degree. In describing his own path to college, Marcus was motivated by “not becoming a statistic – I can’t be just one of those guys that had everything, got a college scholarship, and when that’s finished doesn’t have a degree and is working a [menial job] back home.” One reason he cited for this was the influence of his mother on him. Marcus has played football for 12 years of his life, is the first to receive athletic-related financial aid to attend college, and will be the first in his family to complete a college degree. Although Marcus talked of being not being focused on attending college in high school, he also said attending college became a tangible reality when he began getting letters from college coaches, and finally signed his letter of intent his senior year.

Marcus’ most recently reported GPA is 2.3, and he reported spending approximately 10 to 15 hours per week on academic-related activities both in and out of football season. Marcus reported spending approximately 25 to 30 hours a week in season on athletic-related activities, and approximately 20 to 25 hours a week out of season.

Participant d: “Jameson”- football. Jameson is a first-generation college student who grew up in a two-parent household in a rural town in the southeastern United States. Both his parents completed high school degrees; only his father holds a job. Jameson reported both his parents had equal influence on him while growing up while being raised with the help of grandparents. Jameson described his upbringing as “truly the work of a village raising a young man.” He described

developing motivation early in life by seeing his father wake up early in the morning to drive two hours one way to work, while his mother stayed home with a physical malady.

Jameson has played football for seven years (high school and college), and is receiving athletic related financial-aid entering his senior and final year of eligibility. He has played each of the four years he has been eligible to compete since entering college. (He has never redshirted.)

Jameson's most recently reported GPA is 2.52, and he reported spending approximately 5 to 10 hours per week on academic-related activities in season and 10 to 15 hours per week out of season. Conversely, Jameson reported spending up to 40 hours a week on athletic-related activities in season and 25 to 30 hours a week out of season.

Jameson attributed his academic and athletic success early in his life, and later on in college, to a personal need to respond to challenges presented to him. One example was a description of a conversation with his mother. "She looked at me and said, 'no one is going to accept you into college with these grades, and no one is going to want to give you a job if you keep acting out in class like this.' I stood there and told her I was going to college that those grades didn't mean anything, and that was final. It still brings tears to her eyes when she talks about that conversation."

Jameson is on track to graduate in the spring semester following his senior year of eligibility, and will be the first in his family to graduate with a college

degree. He reported one other family member (not a parent) attending a two-year college and reported that his brother is currently playing football in community college.

Part 2 –Emerging Themes and the Research Questions

Part 2 presents several themes that emerged from the data collected during participant interviews. These themes are contained as subsets of the four research questions outlined at the beginning of the dissertation.

Addressing the study's broad interests to better understand contextual and factors promoting or deterring degree completion, and expectations and aspirations for degree attainment and job future, each participant spoke of the importance of personal and athletic-related relationships. Foremost was the role and importance of family in supporting student aspiration to attend college, academic engagement, and student commitment to degree attainment. Secondly, participants described athletic and academic relationships developed within the context of their high school and college experience. These relationships took place with coaches, peers, and academic advisors, and were supplemental to the importance of family support described by each participant.

Participants also described the importance and influence of several relationships that developed within the context of their participation in collegiate athletics. Principally participants spoke to the importance of interactions that occurred within the confines of their IHE's athletic department. Influential interactions occurred within in one of two settings: academic or athletic. These

interactions were mediated in one of two ways, structural and relational. Structurally delineated interactions refer to where an interaction took place (athletic or academic offices for example). Relational interactions refer to the people with whom participant interactions took place (e.g., coaches, academic advisors). These interactions and relationships with academic advisors, sport coaches, and peers, provided support and unstructured mentoring opportunities. In general, these interactions were described as being positive.

Participants also addressed the study's desire to better understand their aspirations and expectations regarding degree completion and future job prospects. All participants were committed to obtaining their degrees, and believed that a degree would provide access to better jobs. Each saw this as fulfillment of his personal, as well as his family's aspirations. However, none of the participants could answer, "How does having a degree help me?" in explicit terms.

On a perceptual level, participant experiences were informed by observations of behaviors and communication between people in the immediate environment (i.e., academic advisor-to-student, peer-to-peer, coach-to-athlete). Both positive and negative influences on participant decisions relative to academic or athletic engagement, degree completion, and future employment possibilities were identified due to sport coach, academic advisor, and peer behaviors.

Question #1: What contextual factors (e.g., socialization, campus culture, peer group interactions) promote or deter degree completion? For the purposes of this dissertation, contextual elements refer to non-physical, non-structural characteristics of where an interaction takes place. This distinction helps to understand the textures of interactions between actors in a given space (e.g., high school sport coach and athlete, high school guidance counselor and student, collegiate academic advisor and student-athlete, parent and child in the home).

Several contextual themes emerged from participant narratives:

Sport as an access vehicle to college. Sport as an access vehicle to college encompasses two primary objectives: access and financial gain. It is important to state that participants in this study did not report internalizing sport as a vehicle to college, or, for that matter, as a vehicle to financial gain, from parents, or as primary school adolescents. Rather, sport as a vehicle to college was reported as a perception that gained traction in the latter stages of participant's high school experience. Participants reported that the last two years of high school marked an important shift in their approach to academics, as well as a shift in the sources of support for academic achievement.

When asked directly, participants stated that college attendance became a concrete expectation during their junior year of high school when recruiting letters and coaches phone calls became a part of their every day. Along with letters and phone calls came a newfound sense of academic support from coaches

and guidance counselors in high school. This support, however, was directed at making sure their academic standing was high enough to allow them to accept a college scholarship, not for reasons of instilling in them the rigor of academic achievement or benefit of subsequent degree completion.

When asked further about the subject of “sport as vehicle to college attendance”, participants spoke about the intersection of athletic success, their high school experience, and the college recruiting process. At this point, sport as vehicle to financial gain began to take shape in the form of college athletic scholarships. These three contextual factors, coupled with newfound support from high school coaches and guidance counselors, changed the tenor of the conversation for each of the participants as they described the process of moving from a high school athlete to college athlete.

Fulfillment of individual and family aspirations. Two motivations appeared consistently in participant narratives as reasons they wanted to complete their degree: all participants desired to make their parents proud, and all wanted to set a precedent of graduating in the face of what they described as a perspective AAMSAs’ deficiency in this area. All the participants in this study were first-generation college students, and described the importance of completing a degree as a means of fulfilling not only their own goals, but also their parent’s aspirations for their child’s future financial and professional opportunities.

All participants described degree completion as a way to make their parents proud while achieving greater personal, social, and financial standing.

Jameson (football) relayed a conversation he had with his father wherein his father explicitly told him he should expect more than what his parents achieved, and that obtaining his college degree was the first step. William (basketball) expressed his goals of wanting to play professional basketball and complete his degree for his mother:

My dream of playing professionally has kinda come into reach for me, you know, I feel like I have a chance now, so that's another plus. I could play professionally whether I'm here or overseas, but at the end of the day, I'll still have the degree, and that's kind of what's made me the most proud: that I've stayed here all four years to be able to do that. And on top of that, you know, I told my mom that I would get one anyways...

A desire to debunk social stereotypes and “not be that guy” also came up in interviews. All participants in this study described feeling they would be viewed as a statistic of academic failure if they did not complete their degree. This point appeared less important than did degree attainment as a matter of personal and family pride. For William (basketball) and Christopher (football), in particular, degree attainment was driven explicitly by their hope to provide a better standard of living for their mother. Marcus (football) expressed a similar sentiment and extended his reach to siblings.

Academic and athletic staff influences. A few writers (Melendez, 2008; Tomlinson-Clarke, 1998; Young & Koplou, 1997) have pointed to various Socio-cultural factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, identity development, and social

support that play key roles in the ability or inability of students to adjust to college life. A consistent response during this study was the value participants placed on the support of their parents for their academic well-being, and their relationships with peers, coaches, and athletic department academic advisors. These two positive forces—parental support and relationships with sport coaches and academic advisors—appeared to be important in addressing two negative forces: persistent and negative stereotypes of AAMSA academic ability, and a lack of academic control.

When participants were asked if they were affected by perceptions of their academic inability, , and how such perceptions influenced them, all recognized the existence of stereotypes but none felt affected by them personally. The observations of persistent negative stereotypes of AAMSAs' inability fall in line with research presented by Highlen, Paulsen, Gwilliam, Vallo, and O'Bryant (1999). Participants also described their relationship with single or multiple academic advisors in the athletic department as a motivating factor in their commitment to academics, and as positively affecting their academic self-efficacy. Hancock and Betts (2002) and Lumpkin (2007) presented similar findings indicating that students' belief that their teacher cared about them had a positive impact on their academic performance (Verbeck, 2010).

More pointedly, research by Ishiyama (2007) and Terenzini et al. (1994) suggests that personal and “validating” experiences with faculty and staff may be particularly important to “at-risk” student groups (Verbeck, 2010). That none of

the participants felt affected by negative stereotypes stands in contrast to research suggesting that members of a population having a stigma regarding their academic competencies are potentially more susceptible to the influences of these perceptions (Jussim & Harber, 2005; McKnown & Weinstein, 2002; Richman & Leary, 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1997; Walton and Cohen, 2007).

It is important to recognize the duality of role and responsibility that sport coaches and academic advisors hold in collegiate athletics. Sport coaches and academic advisors are paid employees of the athletic department operating under the auspices of athletic department mission statements and NCAA mandates and measures of athletic eligibility. This places both coaches and academic advisors in athletics in a position as agents in a greater athletic eligibility machine, structured to maintain athlete participation in revenue generating sports at the expense of student academic well-being. Despite this, participants in this study described relationships with coaches as generally good, and described their athletic department academic advisor as kind, caring, and honest in their assessment of student need and ability.

Sport coaches, though recognized by participants as primarily concerned with an athlete's ability to play and contribute to winning, were also seen as occupying a tenuous position. Coaches were seen as having to negotiate student-athlete academic well-being, and their job, at the expense of wins and losses. This latter point is important because it appears academic advisors have successfully found ways to mediate student-athlete well-being and academic performance

within the narrower context of their relationships with student-athletes. As reported by participants, their relationship with an academic advisor in athletics raised their feelings of self worth absent their student-athlete identity. Participants felt valued for who they were, not what they were.

Participants described the accessibility of their academic advisors as being a positive in their academic experience. For instance, Christopher (football) said, “my academic coach) has helped a lot, he understands my situation and it’s easy for me to talk with him and communicate with him.” Jameson (football) said he felt able to walk through his advisor’s door and comfortable that whatever the conversation, he would be treated as an individual with individual needs and individual concerns. Jameson also said he felt confident the conversation would remain within the confines of the relationship.

When asked whether having coach or academic advisor of the same race or gender mattered (African American and male), Jameson responded that he was less concerned with having a Black-male advisor or a coach as long as he was being recognized as an individual and felt valued as such (note: Jameson’s academic advisor is White and female, and his sport coach is White and male). Christopher was asked the same question of the importance of race and gender in his relationships. Christopher felt it important that an advisor treat every student as a unique individual. He also felt valued as an individual. Christopher was hesitant however to say that race or gender had a significant role in creating that feeling, instead saying, “there are just some things that I can talk to [advisor A:

Black male] about. It's not that I can't talk to [advisor B: White female] but [advisor A] and I, we're from the same place, we speak the same language, and he understands a lot of what I've been through."

As was previously described in Chapter 4 (page 76), participants relayed the benefit of their enjoyable relationships with their academic advisors in the face of moderately uncomfortable to largely unsatisfactory interactions with one or more sport coaches. Christopher (football) talked explicitly about the role his academic advisor and the academic division as a whole in athletics had in his decision to remain in school. After a poor first year of college, Christopher was deemed academically ineligible to participate in football the following semester. Christopher said he felt the coaches took less interest in him because he could not play or contribute to winning on the field. Christopher also said he felt abandoned by the group he expected to receive the most support from: football coaches. Asked what if any effect this perceived neglect had on him, Christopher said, "if it weren't for my academic advisors here in athletics, I don't think I would be here. They treated me like I was just a student, not an athlete with an academic problem. I really don't think I'd be here without them."

Although some participants related unsatisfactory feelings stemming from a poor relationship, or lack of a relationship, with a sport coach, each participant described valuing the relationship they had with their academic advisor. Participants projected feelings of high self worth, and felt viewed as being capable and intelligent academics, first, and athletes, second.

Question #2: What are AAMSA aspirations regarding their job future and undergraduate degree completion?

For the purposes of this study, aspiration is defined as the strong desire to achieve something perceived as high or great by the individual, in this instance, completion of a college degree. To this end, participants all believed that completing their degree would provide access to better jobs after college. Further, each participant described being committed to attaining their degree during the four- or five-year period they expected to be in college. Degree attainment was also important to participants as it meant fulfilling individual and family aspirations, while creating the ability to provide for self and family.

Aspiration to attend college, and aspirations and expectations for degree attainment. All participants described their own aspiration to attend college and attain a degree as developing before their arrival in college. In every instance, participants pointed to the role of a parent in developing the goal of attending college as early as elementary school. The early influence of parents was also instrumental in establishing the sense of importance of attending college, completing a college degree, and the long-term benefits of degree completion. The significance of degree completion was tied to two motivations, pride (both personal and familial), and the desire to alleviate financial hardship of family members (parents in particular). All participants conveyed their pursuit, and completion, of an undergraduate degree as a matter of personal pride. Degree attainment was described as a personal achievement that also changed how one

might be perceived socially, as an athlete and as a Black male. Each participant also described a duty to family and community as a Black man, and as a model of “someone who took advantage of their opportunity to get their education paid for and got their degree (Marcus, football).”

When asked whether having an undergraduate degree would provide the ability to support immediate family members, none of the participants expected a college degree would allow them to do so completely. Participants nevertheless maintained a belief that a college degree would at the very least provide a better standard of living for themselves and their immediate family.

Another source of motivation was participant observations of parental experience in the workforce. William (basketball), spoke of his mother, a single parent, going to work every day to support him and his sister, then coming home to take on the role of baseball catcher, tutor, and caretaker. For Jameson, the aspiration to college and the benefit of degree attainment was supported verbally by his mother and father, and strengthened by the experience of seeing his father commute four hours roundtrip to work every day. His desire to alleviate financial stress, combined with his mother’s poor health and her concern that her children fare better financially and economically, also set a standard of achievement for Jameson.

“I know a degree will help me but I don’t know how.” Three of four respondents answered that a degree would benefit them by providing with “more opportunity” and “greater earning potential.” However, when asked expressly

how a degree could help them meet their goals, participants were unable to articulate a connection between completing a degree and reaching a concrete goal with respect to obtaining employment outside of athletics. As William (basketball) put it, “I knew I had to come here and get a degree. I knew that it was going to help me in whatever it was I wanted to do.” When asked pointedly how a degree would help him, William said, “honestly, at this point, I don't even know how it will benefit me, because I don't really know what I want to do. My degree now is in sociology, and I just don't even know after college what I'm going to be able to do with it... I feel like just having the degree is going to open the door, and that's the biggest thing.” Jameson (football) described his aspirations to become an athletic director at the collegiate level, and Marcus (football) spoke of working for or starting his own non-profit organization to provide health and wellness programs for youth.

Common to all respondents was a lack of clear non-athletic professional goals and goal setting, and a lack of understanding of how their degree would benefit them in a non-athletic career. Although not the focus of this study, a lack of career education and goals reflects a contemporary issue in college athletics, that of “major tracking.” This practice places students in majors that are less time intensive and seen as less academically rigorous by the wider campus and others (Fountain & Finley, 2009). These majors are seen more as a means to keep student-athletes eligible to compete, as opposed to providing meaningful long-term outcomes for the student.

Professional athlete versus private professional. Participants did not convey a determined focus on sport or professional athletic careers (e.g., in the National Football League [NFL]), although no one ruled out a professional sport career as an option. Throughout each of the interview sessions, there was an acute awareness of the immediate financial gain that a professional athletic career could provide. In every instance, participants described the financial leverage that could be created with large sums of money derived through professional sports. This was particularly true of participants from football. Marcus' (football) recognition of a long-term career and financial security that a degree might create for him was negated by his perception of the enormous monetary gain a professional sports career might present. "You can create opportunities for others with money from a degree, but you can create a lot more [opportunities for others] with NFL money."

More common over the course of each interview was the sentiment that sport was short lived with no guarantee of a professional career materializing.

For me coming into college, I originally wanted to be a sports agent, because I knew that basketball, or any sport for that matter, isn't guaranteed, you know, just because you play in college, you're not going to play professionally. (William - basketball)

Additionally, each participant acknowledged that sport was not an end in and of itself, but rather a means to an end. That end was the completion of their

undergraduate degree and their subsequent ability to create a better financial situation for themselves and their family.

Question #3: What are AAMSA expectations regarding their access to jobs as a result of completing an undergraduate degree? For the purposes of this study, expectation was defined as the belief that something will happen or is likely to happen. In this instance, students moved from a desire to achieve their degree to believing they would complete their degree, during or toward the end of their sophomore year, or beginning of their junior year. Reasons for this shift included receiving verbal support of the benefit of degree attainment from parents, peers, coaches, and academic advisors. Participants believed degree attainment meant greater earning potential after their college career, their athletic career, or both were concluded.

Access and earning power. The most consistent perception expressed by the participants was that having a degree provided greater access to jobs outside of professional athletics. All four participants believed and communicated a perception that having a degree would not only create future opportunity, but also open the door to these opportunities:

“I feel like just having the degree is going to open the door, and that’s the biggest thing. I feel like the hardest thing is to get your foot in the door.”

William (basketball)

“...having a college education helps you in the sense to give you that foot in the door that you need.” Christopher (football)

“...at the end of the day, you need a degree—you can't do [anything] without a degree nowadays.” Marcus (football)

“I would say it is a qualifier because I don't think you can get in the door without it.” Jameson (football)

Alongside getting a foot in the door as a result of completing their undergraduate degree, participants conveyed a sense that completing their degree meant that they could have a more comfortable long-term financial life. However, long-term financial security via degree attainment was weighed against the recognition of the immediacy and amount of money available due to a professional athletic career. Participants did not speak about professional goals other than a professional athletic career, nor did they convey an awareness of particular professional tracks associated with their particular major and degree choice.

Commitment to attain degree. All participants expressed the direct goal of attaining their undergraduate degree while in college. Participants were asked the question, “when did you decide concretely that you were going to get your degree while you are here?” Although responses varied, degree attainment became a concrete goal of most participants by the end of their sophomore year. or beginning of their junior year of college. For Christopher (football) academic difficulty and feelings of isolation from the coaching staff, versus feelings of support and encouragement from the academic staff, was enough to cement the goal of degree attainment. William (basketball) talked about degree attainment as

a goal he had when he entered college due to his foreseeable tenure as a student–athlete lasting four years. William recognized early on that, while his athletic talent might carry him to a professional basketball career, he would in all likelihood remain in school all four years he was eligible to play. Thus, William saw degree attainment as part and parcel of his athletic tenure. Jameson (football) described his goal of attaining his degree as one he had from a young age. Jameson went on to say that completing his degree in college became a concrete goal after he perceived a change in tone regarding his athletic future from his sport coach. Overall, the value of academics and degree attainment as both a goal and support mechanism for future goals was expressed throughout each participant’s interview.

Question #4: What are the perceptual experiences of AAMSA’s as the navigate athletics and academics on a Division I university campus?

Active experiential learning. Active experiential learning centers on student interactions that inform and develop coping mechanisms AAMSAs may bring with them or develop on campus. While it is not always the case, a good number of these students arrive from out-of-state, from under supported social, academic and financial conditions (Eitle & Eitle, 2002; Hawkins, 1999; Person & Lenoir, 1997; Robinson, 2004). Coping mechanisms are one way these young men navigate the environment of collegiate athletics. One common method of developing coping mechanisms, active experiential learning, was common in all participant narratives. Active experiential learning was described as directly

observing or interacting with peers, sport coaches, or academic advisors and internalizing the observed behaviors and language use.

This process of internalizing observed behaviors and language was described as “code-switching.” Jameson (football) proffered this basic definition of code-switching: “recognizing your environment and behaving according to the ‘rules’ of the environment in order to access the people and conversation in that space.” This process of evaluating a given environment to ascertain the rules of engagement is further discussed in the implications for future research section of this dissertation.

Observed behaviors. Participants also described indirect social observations of peer, coach, and academic advisor actions and behaviors. These were described as either progressive and helpful, or regressive and detrimental to their own success. This included inconsistent academic or athletic support from a sport coach, consistent and positive support from academic advisors, regardless of academic standing or athletic status, and observations of success or failure by peers or teammates.

Inconsistent support from coaches. Several different descriptions of inconsistent coaching support came up in interviews. Heard most often was the sentiment that coaches did not take an active role in supporting a student’s academic success unless directed by the academic division. This led to a feeling that coaches didn’t necessarily care about academics unless it jeopardized the ability of an athlete to contribute to a team winning. This also played into a

feeling that some athletes received greater attention from coaches specifically for their ability to affect wins and losses.

An interesting point of benefit of inconsistent support from coaches came in the form of late-term encouragement to attain a degree, from the coach to an athlete. When asked when this change in tone and direction was recognized, Jameson replied that midway through his junior year, and especially at the outset of his senior campaign, his coach expressed the desire to see him finish his career on a high academic note. This was noteworthy in light of lofty athletic expectations Jameson and his coaches had for him when he first entered university. In his own words, Jameson was expected by coaches to ascend to a starting position and perform as well, if not better, than the all-conference performer he would replace. After two years of carrying these expectations, Jameson described a discernable change in the way his position coach engaged him in conversation about both academics and athletics. The coach was a prominent voice of support of his athletic potential during his first two years. By the end of his junior year, the coach began to encourage Jameson to complete his degree and look to a future beyond and outside football. At the end of the conversation, Jameson conveyed a feeling that the trajectory of his athletic ability had not met his coach's expectations for him. At the same time, Jameson appeared to have reconciled any feelings of disappointment by focusing on academics bolstered by the support of athletic department staff and peers.

This narrative was consistent among the participants from football. Each expressed a change in their coach's approach to their athletic and academic careers. Their coach talked less about the importance of their participation on the field, and more about the importance of their degree attainment.

Equity of approach. Academic advisors in athletics were mentioned in several different ways as having a beneficial effect on student behavior and sense of well-being, some of which having been previously stated. Each participant spoke of a feeling that they were treated simply as a student regardless of sport, past success or failure on the field, or the student's perception of their own academic ability. Participants felt valued as unique individuals and reported wanting to work harder and produce higher academic output to match the effort and support of their academic advisors.

Success or failure of peers. Participants were asked about their academic success or failure, and what if anything helped or hindered their advancement to degree attainment. In some instances, seeing an injury to a teammate, or seeing a former teammate fail to persist in their sport at the professional level was enough to sway participant decisions toward academics and away from athletics. Participants also described seeing a change in the way peers or coaches treated teammates after injury or academic ineligibility. This appeared in several participant narratives (Christopher, Jameson and Marcus), and had the effect of focusing student efforts on academic output and success.

“Codeswitching.” Two participants (both from football) used the term “code-switching” - “the act of gaining footholds in academic environments” (Beaulieu, 2008) in reference to recognizing and understanding languages and behaviors within a given environment. Codeswitching implies recognition of unique language and behavior code(s) used by individuals in specific environments and contexts.

When asked further about what “code-switching” meant, participants acknowledged the practice as an attempt to gain access and opportunity within a given environment, in this case, the athletic environment. Access was made easier by recognizing the primary actors in the space and mimicking their language and behavior. Participants were in essence actively identifying and accessing local knowledge.

Self interest behaviors of athletic staff. Two perceptual elements described by participants in this study were interactions with a sport coach, and observations of the coach’s behaviors regarding other players. Of particular note were descriptions of coaching behaviors recognized as explicitly self-serving to the coach in the way of professional advancement and financial compensation.

Participants were asked two questions:

- Do you feel that your coach cares whether you get your degree?
- Do you feel that your coach supports you getting your degree?

Participants responded differently to both questions.

In answer to the first question, participants felt their coach did care that athletes attained their degrees, with the caveat that coaches have to care. Coaches have to care, participants said, not because it is important that students perform well academically or get a degree, but because athletes need to be eligible to play in order for the team to win and the coach to keep his job. Participants were reluctant to condemn the coach for the behavior because they considered the coaches concern for wins and losses a function of their job security.

In answer to the second question, participant responses varied. “The head coach doesn’t really come down to study hall or the academic area unless there is something you did really bad. Mostly it’s just the assistant coach” (William, basketball). More often stated, neither the head coach nor any assistant coaches made appearances in the academic unit unless they were told by the academic division to do so (Jameson and Marcus from football). Participants viewed a coach’s appearance in the academic area as support for academics only because of potential sanctions related to academic eligibility.

Academic standards, as they apply to student-athletes, encompass two goals: retention and academic eligibility. These are measured by a minimum grade point average and completion of a minimum number of course credits per academic session. Combinations of these areas must also count toward major and degree completion. Athletic eligibility is contingent upon meeting benchmarks for each in an academic calendar year. The ultimate goal is degree completion within a student’s 5-year window of athletic eligibility.

Because institutions are held responsible for the academic well-being of its student-athletes, the NCAA levies sanctions upon athletic departments and sports teams accordingly. Sanctions levied against teams and institutions are dependent on the severity of the infraction. Persistent failure to meet minimum eligibility requirements can carry a penalty of scholarship loss. This potentially affects wins and losses, thereby putting the coaches' job in jeopardy. Thus, participants perceived their coaches to support academic success and degree attainment because they feared NCAA and institutional sanctions.

Another perceptual experience of participants was the feeling that coaches are in the untenable situation where winning is the bottom line, and their treatment of athletes follows suit. Participants were asked if some teammates were treated differently than others based on their status as a starter or non-starter, or if they themselves had been treated differently from a teammate on the same grounds. Three observed coaching behaviors come out of this line of questioning:

- Athletes who are perceived to directly contribute to winning games are treated differently from those who are perceived not.
- Coaches are willing to overlook academic or behavior issues off the field at the expense of winning.
- Coaches are not willing to promote the athletic ability of an athlete at the expense of their coaching reputation.

Although coaching behaviors in specific were not the focus of this study, they clearly leave an impression upon AAMSAs, if only in this participant group

Part 3 – Two Consistent Themes Across the Narratives

Two themes were consistently described by participants in this study: The athletic department as a relationship center and the importance of family to each participant.

Athletic department as relationship center. Participants consistently described relationships that developed exclusively within the athletic department. Most consistent were relationships with academic advisors and sport coaches followed by relationships with peers, teammates.

Relationships with academic advisors. Participants described relationships with academic advisors in the athletic department and not academic advisors on the general campus. The distinction is an important one. Besides dealing with an athlete's academic standing as a function of athletic eligibility and progress toward degree completion, athletic department advisors are employed by, have an office in, and have responsibilities tied directly to athletic department initiatives. Campus academic advisors, however, do not principally deal with athletic department or NCAA rules for eligibility and participation but are tasked with advising students of course and major selection within a given academic college.

All participants specifically cited their academic advisor in athletics as having a meaningful presence in their life as students. Participants spoke of a measure of security and confidence in an open door policy with their academic advisor. Participants also spoke of the personal value of the ability to walk in and

put aside academic or athletic standing and speak freely about issues that affected them both positively and negatively in their everyday experience. Issues discussed within the interview sessions included academic uncertainties, degree completion and major selection, questions of potential futures as professional athletes, and access to non-athletic-based job opportunities.

Most importantly, participants perceived themselves to be valued by their athletic/academic advisors as individuals and not simply as athletes. Marcus, for example, described his relationship with his athletic/academic advisor as “always positive.” He described a positive attempt to get him “to the next level” academically, and establishing a clear path to realizing his ambitions past college. William expressed the same the positive relationship with his athletic/academic advisor. Regardless of what grade he received on a test or assignment, William’s advisor communicated a belief that “he was capable of more” and expressed the sentiment that “he was a bright and capable student.”

Christopher expressed a feeling that each of the advisors he had worked with, including the head of the academic division, had been concerned with his well-being and success in school. Marcus described his academic advisor’s effect on his academic engagement as, “The older I get, no matter what [the coaching staff] are doing as far as dogging me, not giving me reps, [the academic staff] showed me love. This group right here is really the group that has been keeping me going.”

Having an advisor of the same race or gender did not appear to have an immediate effect on the relationship that each participant described. When posed specifically, participant responses indicated that it was more important to them that they were valued as individuals first, instead of as athletes. Of particular importance in the relationship was an ability to talk openly about whatever was on their mind, without sanction or reprisal. Christopher summed up his relationship with his advisor saying they “just [relate] to each other having been through some of the same things.” Christopher said he felt an understanding on an individual level in terms of “where I’m coming from, and where he’s coming from.”

Sport coach relationships. In the initial interview, participants were asked if there were people in the athletic department they turned to for support or direction. Specifically, participants were asked if they turned to individuals outside peer associations and academic advisors. Each participant named one or more sport coaches (not head coaches) as sources of support and guidance. For Marcus and Jameson, their (football) position coach filled this role, while for Christopher it was a weight lifting coach. Christopher said he valued this relationship because the coach was a “positive person” who was easy to talk to and someone he felt he could lean on when needed. William (basketball) described his relationship with an assistant coach as important because “despite seeing him every day in meetings and practice and regardless of how well I am performing on the court, I can always talk to him about anything other than basketball.”

Peer relationships. Participants expressed a personal benefit derived of social relationships with student-athlete peers and teammates. These relationships were valued as a way to find a support system outside immediate family and friends from home. Christopher (football) spoke to his ability to relate to teammates “in a similar situation, from different parts of the country, who don’t have family or friends nearby.” Christopher considered this support network of great help saying, “we support each other to get through the hard times.”

Jameson (football), on the other hand, spoke of relationships with older teammates affecting the way he approached both his academic and athletic endeavors. Jameson said he appreciated learning from each person and applying their knowledge to his aspirations for degree attainment and professional football career. One teammate, in particular, who had struggled somewhat academically but ultimately graduated, spoke to Jameson about the “game” of balancing academics and athletics saying a student-athlete had to bring something to the table in the coaches’ eyes. The result of the interaction was Jameson strove to be the best athlete and academic he could be. “A degree will carry me past the field regardless of how good or how bad my athletic career ends up.”

Unstructured mentoring. Participants described some interactions with peers, teammates, and academic and sport coaches that were a form of mentoring, due to their depth and substance. These relationships, or unstructured mentoring opportunities, developed out of athletic department interactions,, and provided both a social and internal dialogue for participants regarding their experiences as

student-athletes. These engagements and associated introspections were described by participants as creating a feeling of being valued as a unique individual, independent of their athletic status.

These unstructured mentoring interactions were not actively sought out by any participant, but took place naturally as a part of the student-athlete experience. Participants described multiple short-term exchanges between themselves and a mentor. The exchanges took place within, and were a result of, common or immediate shared space. One example was Jameson's football coach discussing how he helped a young man reach his goal of becoming a professional football player. The essence of the conversation was that regardless of how good a football player a young man was, the coach was not willing to put his own professional credibility on the line to "sell" an athlete to a general manager or coach if he was a problem socially or academically. Jameson said the coach's narrative changed his academic and social behaviors for the better.

Importance of Family. Cooper (2009) reported the most prominent aspect of a strong support system for AAMSA is their family. In line with Cooper's findings, all four participants described family as the primary source of support in their academic and athletic success. Parental involvement and oversight of academic rigor was described as a fixture throughout primary and secondary schooling. These descriptions follow Harris and Duhon's (1999) study. Their study found that among their Black student participants, Black student-athletes and non-student-athletes alike identified family as the single most significant

factor in their college success. Further, despite variances in participant's family makeup, parental oversight and support of academic engagement was described as an early and constant presence.

Aspiration to attend college. In each case, a parent was cited as the primary source fomenting the aspiration to attend college. Participants described these conversations as beginning at a very early age, and continuing throughout primary and secondary school. No participant spoke of a parent equating sport to college attendance at an early age. Notions of sport as a vehicle to college access were reported as taking place only when participants reached high school. In this latter instance, parents were still described as continually stressing a focus on academics as opposed to athletics as a means of gaining entry to college.

When asked if participants received other sources of support for college attendance, high school sport coaches, and in some instances, high school friends were reported as sources of support. In these instances, however, aspiration to attend college was positioned as a means to pursue sport only. High school academic advisors were also described as a source of student academic support, but were described as placing value upon academics only as a means of securing athletic scholarships. When asked further about academic advising behaviors in high school, no participant described academic advisors as providing support solely for their academic performance. Instead, participants described their advisor participation and interest in their academic success when it became clear that college athletic scholarships were a possibility. These sources of support were

described as becoming more prominent during the fall of a participant's junior year (William and Christopher) or senior year of high school (Jameson and Marcus). Participant relationships developing within the confines of the athletic department. Relationships with athletic-department academic advisors, sport coaches, and peers were intertwined with their standing as both student and athlete. They were described as being a positive aspect of the student-athlete experience. One reason for the development of these relationships is the physical layout of the participants athletic department, which places both the athletic and academic environments under the same roof. This means a student moves between spaces negotiating interactions in a building dedicated to the operations of sport.

Although participants in this study all had a separate academic advisor on campus, no participant reported spending significant time or developing a relationship of any kind with them. The latter point is in part explained by the self reported time commitments of the participants. Athletic- and academic-related activities outside of practice and competition (weight lifting, physical therapy, film sessions, coaching meetings, study sessions, study hall, academic advising meetings) generally all take place in the same building. It is therefore not surprising that participants described a high number of relationships developing with members of the athletic department itself.

Academic Engagement: Questions of engagement were asked as a means of gaining insight in to student academic motivations. In some instances (William,

basketball, and Jameson, football), academics and school were generally described as a source of pride, as well as something that “came easy.” Jameson described sources of engagement in high school and college coming from his interactions with peers and the challenge to exceed his teacher’s expectations of his academic ability.

In general, participants in this study reported being academically engaged at an early age. This included support from parents regardless of a participant’s family demographic makeup (e.g., single, two-parent). In every instance, parents were described actively participating in and supporting student academic achievement throughout primary and secondary school. These findings are similar to those described by Boyd-Franklin (2003) regarding a common message in the Black community of the importance of maintaining a focus on school.

Commitment to degree attainment. Participant reasons for completing their degree involved varying personal, professional and family motivations. In the instance of William (basketball), a college degree was seen as a means of getting a foot in the door to a wider professional network. For Christopher (football), completing his degree was both a personal goal as well as a way to show his mother “that she raised a good child.” For Marcus (football), completing his degree was seen as a means of avoiding being described as “a guy who had his education paid for, but never got his degree.”

Part 4 – Recommendations and Limitations

Literature produced over the past twenty years has consistently reported a low commitment to degree attainment, and a high commitment to sports by many AAMSAs in the sports of football and basketball (Associated Press, December, 2009; Burnsed, March, 2010; Edwards, 1992; Harper, 2006; Kincey, 2007; Lang, Dunham & Alpert, 1988; Lapchick, 2011a, 2012; NCAA, 2011c; Person & Lenoir, 1997). This study was undertaken under the broad premise that AAMSAs have low commitment to degree attainment because of a lack of visible membership of other African-American males in administrative and coaching positions. This perspective is given traction when it appears that a degree does not grant African-American men access to these positions historically, or in the recent past. In layman's terms, "If having a degree hasn't helped other black men get a job here, why would I believe the outcome would be any different for me?"

Specifically, this study had two premises. The first premise was AAMSAs graduate at a lower rate than their White counterparts. Data collected by the NCAA (2011c) and The Institute for Diversity in Sport (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012) confirm this premise. Although AAMSAs make up a large percentage of college athletes, a small percentage actually complete their undergraduate degrees (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012; NCAA, 2011c).

The second premise was that AAMSAs do not correlate degree completion with long-term economic gain or stability. In other words, AAMSAs don't perceive there to be a tangible value in obtaining their undergraduate degree.

Statistics show that AAMSAs graduate at a higher average rate than their African-American peers in the general college student population (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012; NCAA, 2011c). However, even as the number of AAMSAs entering Division I institutions continues to increase (see Appendix A), these athletes continue to perform worse academically than their female cohorts and their White male peers (Suggs, 1999). This study sought to fill a gap in the literature addressing the second premise that AAMSAs do not correlate degree completion with long-term economic gain or stability.

Recommendations for future research. The following sections present recommendations for future research, based on the interviews conducted for this study. The recommendations concern the topics of parent participation in participant experiences, participant experiences navigating unfamiliar social and academic confines, and consequences of participant decisions regarding persistence. The recommendations are aimed at filling in gaps in existing literature on AAMSA academic outcomes that makes only passing reference to each at this time.

“Parental dislocation.” The term parental dislocation did not appear in any literature reviewed by the researcher prior to, or during, this study. The term ‘parental dislocation’ is one created by the researcher to describe diminished parental involvement in a student’s behavior for fear of opportunity loss. William (basketball), said he felt his mother exercised less oversight and discipline regarding his academic work beginning in his junior year of high school. This

diminished participation, he felt, came out of fear that his removal from a sport by her for academic shortcomings might result in a loss of athletic scholarship opportunity.

Parents occupy perhaps the single most present voice of support of academic engagement and aspiration to attend college for young Black men (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Each of the four participants recounted the importance of their parents support in their academic lives up to and through the first two years of high school. Changes in student commitment to academics were described as taking place once students began garnering local and national attention for their athletic talent. Once college coaches began courting their son's athletic talent, parents either opted for, or were relegated to, the status of bystander.

For example, by his own account, William was academically engaged and academically successful throughout elementary, junior high, and through the first two years of high school. Although by his own account he was never in academic trouble, William did admit he "slacked off" after his junior year when he began to garner local and national attention from college basketball coaches:

There was never really any discipline in high school from my mom, if I was eligible. She really didn't feel like she could hold me out of a sport if the school and the state rules say I'm okay to play in the sport, so it was kinda like, ...I feel like her hands were tied at that point. That was when I had college scholarships. I feel like, she almost felt if she were to do like

she did when I was younger and hold me out, then you know, that's a college scholarship.

William further described his focus on athletics over academics when he spoke about the promise of college attendance via sport leveraged against his family's financial condition:

We were never financially well off you know,... there were times when it was a struggle. it would be a real struggle, so... [my mom] always wanted the best for me, for me to go to college.... [my mom] didn't go to college, so you know, that was the way it was gonna happen.

William's aspiration to attend college developed at an early age as it did for the other participants in this study. At a certain point however, the expectation of college attendance became one based on their athletic ability and not their academic ability. When asked the question directly: "When did college become a tangible expectation for you?" each participant voiced the same experience. The expectation of attending college became concrete during their junior year in high school when they began receiving recruiting letters from college coaches.

The expectation of sport as a vehicle to college is not new in the literature (Cargill, 2009; Edwards, 1992; Robinson, 2004) but it has not as yet appeared linked to parental dislocation in research reviewed by the researcher to date. Future research should seek to uncover the effects if any of collegiate recruiting on academic outcomes in high school and college.

“Code-switching.” Two participants (both from football) used the term “code-switching” in reference to recognizing and understanding the language and behaviors within a given environment. “The act of gaining footholds in academic environments” (Beaulieu, October, 2008). Code-switching implies recognition of unique language and behavior code(s) used by individuals in specific environments and contexts.

When asked further about what “code-switching” meant, participants acknowledged the practice as an attempt to gain access and opportunity within a given environment, in this case, the athletic environment. Access was made easier by recognizing the primary actors in the space and mimicking their language and behavior. Participants were in essence actively identifying and accessing local knowledge. This is an important narrative to explore because, in the context of this study, access is being sought to a largely White male environment. This narrative describes ways in which students of color recognize and respond to real or invisible barriers in the course of navigating their higher education experience at PWIs. The ability to recognize when people are “talking in code” and subsequently decipher and communicate in coded terms appears to be a crucial coping mechanism for a few participants in this study.

A “Provider” identity. Over the course of the final two interviews there emerged a narrative that degree attainment through sport could provide an avenue to financial security for a participants family. In specific, some participants voiced the expectation that they would in some way shape or form be in a position to

provide financial support for their immediate family. When asked the question directly, “Did you feel when you entered college that you then also had an opportunity to provide for family?” William (basketball) said, “I don't know if I would have seen it as a way to support - to have my mom stop working and my sister just go to school and do whatever and I just pay for all their stuff - but I did see it as a way to be able to make enough money to be able to supplement them.” William went on to say: “because I have my scholarship check and my government funds, I do definitely use that if my mom needs something like her car fixed or if my sister needs something. Then out of that money I definitely do that even now. It might be more of the same but I can see it escalating though, as I go through a professional career.”

Future research should seek to uncover realities that effect student decisions regarding academic engagement and degree completion.

Consequences of “stopping out.” The term “stopping out” is used here to describe a student who removes themselves voluntarily from participation in their sport. These students have decided to stop participating in college athletics to pursue other academic or professional development opportunities. Christopher (football) participated in only one interview session for this study for reasons later revealed that he was contemplating “stopping out.” As a matter of follow-up; at the time of publication of this dissertation, Christopher will have graduated with his undergraduate degree. Follow-up by the researcher found that Christopher also had his scholarship honored through the terminus of what would be his five-year

window of athletic eligibility, despite no longer participating as a football student-athlete. So despite no longer contributing to the football team on the field, Christopher was able to complete his undergraduate degree free of cost. This might not always be the case however.

Future research should seek to uncover the experiences that precipitate stopping-out and academic outcomes and degree attainment by students who choose to stop-out of sport.

Study limitations and their implications on future research. A major limitation of this study was the small sample size (N=4). In particular, having only a single eligible participant from men's basketball limits the generalizability of this study to AAMSAs on other campuses. The fact that there was only one eligible participant from basketball, William, and that his experiences in some cases were similar to football participants in this study, potentially moves the discussion from a sport-based analysis to one based more generally on race and gender.

Additionally, access to a broader student-athlete participant pool was mediated by academic staff in charge of each participant's academic standing. Moreover, ultimate availability of any participant had to be cleared with the head of the academic division. While the participant pool yielded representatives from football and basketball, there may have been other student-athletes unable to participate in this study for reasons of academic redress. These participants could possibly have provided other narratives and perspectives.

Future research should include a significantly larger sample size and include participants from different institutions. Additionally, future inquiry should seek to determine if any of the contextual variables outlined in this study have an impact on AAMSAs in Division I Football and Basketball commitment to degree attainment.

Policy recommendations. The following policy recommendations have been developed with the aim of increasing the probability that AAMSAs on Division I campuses attain their undergraduate degree. The recommendations are directed at three administrative bodies in collegiate athletics: the National Collegiate Athletic Association, Institutions of Higher Education, and individual athletic departments. Each policy recommendation is constructed to promote development opportunities for student-athletes within different contexts of their collegiate and athletic experiences.

Policy recommendations for the NCAA. Commitment to student-athlete well-being begins with a commitment to sustained financial, academic, and social support. Underwood (1984) emphasized the significance of a strong support system for student-athletes saying, “If the NCAA is really serious about increasing the academic achievement of student-athletes, it should mandate that all its member institutions of higher education be required to implement and develop systematic comprehensive support programs for student-athletes” (Underwood, 1984, p. 26-27). Following Underwood’s (1984) idea, provided

below are two policy recommendations for the NCAA, one regarding coaches, and one regarding student-athletes.

Create active and ongoing opportunities for coach participation in academic-development activities. At present there is no NCAA mandate that head coaches or coaching staff participate in or play a role in direct oversight of student-athlete academic-related activities. The responsibility of developing campus partnerships, identifying student need, and addressing student-wellbeing is left to academic divisions and academic staff within athletics. Successfully governing academic-related activities for student-athlete cohorts, which in some cases are numerous, could be assisted by coaches committing as little as two hours a week to supervising structured study hall sessions or learning cohorts. For example, a Division I football staff of ten committing only two hours per week each to proctoring a structured study hall would contribute 20 hours per week to academic development opportunities. Further, with the generally high visibility of head coaches and staff, active and ongoing interactions with campus presidents, university and student services representatives could potentially be strengthened. The benefits of said participation would be multifold:

- Coaches could cast themselves in a different light and role than that of simply head coach of a sports team.
- Student-athletes would see the physical presence of a sport coach in a different context than simply sport.

- Campus and university officials would see the physical presence of a sport coach in a different context than simply sport.
- The expense of hiring additional academic staff for athletics could possibly be diminished with the identification and recruitment of campus entities by sport coaches to participate in student-development opportunities.
- Academic staff in athletics could allocate their time more efficiently to address department and institutional initiatives.
- Academic staff in athletics would have greater availability to assist students in need of more focused attention.
- All student-athletes might have greater access to and make greater use of campus services and developmental opportunities outside of athletics.
- Campus and athletic entities would appear more committed to the overall development of student-athletes.
- Student-athletes might engage campus services on a more regular basis potentially strengthening the student's commitment to the institution.
- Institutional commitment to students likely increases student commitment to the institution, which as discussed previously, has been shown to increase the likelihood of degree attainment.

Moreover, actively engaging and pursuing conversations at an NCAA level regarding coach participation in academic development, could give backbone to efforts at the institutional level to include sport coaches in student-athlete academic reform initiatives, both physically and perhaps even contractually.

Require, and ease restrictions on, student-athlete participation in professional-development opportunities. The practice is currently only recommended through various life-skills workshops detailed on the NCAA website (NCAA, 2011b), but should be required. Professional development opportunities already exist on campus in the form of work-study programs alongside federal financial aid programs. These programs operate as both a means of diminishing student debt, but also as a means of developing the student's professional portfolio. The NCAA should work with individual institutions and athletic departments via the FAR, to identify and cultivate professional development and working wage opportunities for student-athletes.

To address oversight and management of internship and work opportunities, the NCAA has very specific regulations involving participation and compensation for student-athletes pursuing professional-development opportunities. These restrictions determine where and how students participate in employment and internship positions, and cap the amount of money students can be compensated. These restrictions should be eased because they potentially undermine student willingness to pursue professional-development opportunities.

Students likely perceive a low financial incentive to participate given the generally entry level positions made available to students, and secondly they likely perceive a low likelihood of having the time and availability outside of their athletic and academic obligations. Regardless of the likelihood of either perception, professional development opportunities for student-athletes on campus remain largely out of reach in this researcher's experience. Again, the NCAA should work with IHE's and individual athletic departments to identify and cultivate these opportunities if for no other reason to give visibility to the development opportunity they provide.

Policy Recommendations for IHEs. Athletic department and campus mission statements should be aligned more closely, and developed in partnership with respect to student academic well-being and professional advancement. Therefore, three policy recommendations for IHEs are provided regarding: mission statements, interactions between professors and student-athletes, and the formation of a faculty–athletic senate., as discussed below.

Underscore cooperative education initiatives within mission statements. It is not without cause that, within athletic departments and IHE's, individual units develop mission statements to advance their position and responsibilities on campus. However, there should be consensus that all units service the goal of an educated student body regardless of focus or vocation. A lack of unified vision and commitment promotes a lack of interaction, leaving room for value judgments of 'otherness.' The presence of negative stereotypes of the athletic community in

the academic community is well documented. So too are the potential negative effects of these stereotypes on engagement, commitment to degree attainment, and institutional commitment. In an effort to bridge the academic and athletic communities, mission statements the universities and athletic departments should be aligned to underscore an education-first agenda across disciplines.

Provide greater support for student-athlete and academic-staff interactions. A sometimes-adversarial relationship exists between student-athletes and professors. Partnerships between athletic departments and academic departments should be developed and supported. This cooperation cannot simply come from academic departments but must also come from the athletic department. Moreover, it should not be the task of academic divisions within athletics alone to find bridge experiences for athletes. Academic units within athletic departments dedicate much of their time to ensuring the academic progress of student-athletes, making sure students have access to services on campus, or setting up structured study sessions. Finding time within the workday to search and contact academic department entities should also have priority.

Academic and athletic department entities as a whole should work together to identify and cultivate engagement opportunities for student-athletes. These opportunities should assist students in developing experience in their field or major. For example, campus and athletic marketing, business divisions, operations and facilities management, health science, strength and conditioning, and student affairs (among the many) could support a unified goal of providing

academic and professional development opportunities both on campus and within the athletic department.

Establish a faculty–athletic senate. At present, a single person, the FAR, is designated to address NCAA, institutional, and collegiate athletic concerns. Institutions should establish a group of faculty, staff, and administrators to share concerns across the academic and athletic spectrum. This body should have yearly rotating appointments, and should meet at regular and consistent points throughout the year. The faculty-athletic senate should include members of student government, student-athletes, and members of a student-athlete advisory committee (SAAC), if one exists.

The faculty-athletic senate should work to engage various perspectives across academic and administrative groups. In particular, they should work to establish a dialogue between students, faculty, and administration, and help develop more educational opportunities for students and student-athletes across disciplines.

Policy recommendations for Division I athletic departments. As a result of this study, and to address issues identified in the introduction of this dissertation, the following six recommendations are directed toward Division I athletic departments:

- Guarantee full-term scholarships
- Establish professional development curriculum
- Develop education-first mission statements

- Establish academic orientation programs for parents of athletes
- Cultivate academic leadership throughout the athletic department
- Re-imagine success as it is applied to student-athlete academic ability.

Guarantee full-term scholarships. At present athletic scholarships are renewed on a yearly basis. Division I athletic departments should guarantee athletic related financial aid for the full five years of athletic eligibility. Guaranteed financial aid could help reduce fiscal concerns among student-athletes and their families, if they are confident of institutional commitment to them financially. This could also benefit NCAA efforts to curb student-athletes accepting external financial benefits.

The cost associated with guaranteed scholarships is an immediate concern to address, perhaps more pressing for smaller colleges and universities in Division I. As a general statement, many colleges and universities derive measurable if not substantial economic gain from their athletic programs. For its part the NCAA already views collegiate sport as an immediate and sustainable avenue of revenue generation. In his state of the association address in 2006, then president of the NCAA Miles Brand addressed his constituency as such:

“It is the obligation of the NCAA to maximize revenues for its members, provided of course that that business activity is informed by the values of higher education. Athletics directors and conference commissioners are fully aware of this NCAA obligation, and work to support it. For they

know that it takes revenue to run a successful athletics program. We should not be ambivalent about doing the business of college sports. We should do it well, but always in conformity with the principles of higher education.”

Cost for guaranteed scholarships could be alleviated in a number of ways:

- 1) The recruitment and establishment of endowed scholarships through fundraising efforts with alumni and external constituents.
- 2) Naming rights to stadiums and coliseums could include contractual allocation of certain monies to endowed scholarships.
- 3) Television contracts with individual schools or conferences could include the same stipulation for allocation of monies to scholarship endowments.
- 4) Some conferences (Pacific 12, Big 10) are revenue-sharing conferences. This means individual schools that bring in extra revenue derived of participation in post-season bowl games and championships share those monies with the remaining of conference members.

Establish professional development curriculum. From the researcher’s own experience of leaving college without a professional portfolio (e.g., a resume and cover letter) students are also sometimes left without much in the way of work experience upon graduation (Steege, et al., 2008). Again, much of the responsibility of developing campus partnerships, identifying student need, and addressing student-wellbeing is left to academic divisions and academic staff

within athletics. Programs to develop student and student-athlete professional development opportunities and experience could utilize existing administrative and professional capital to provide development opportunities for student-athletes both on campus and in-house. At almost every level of campus and athletic department activity, there exist opportunities to expose students to academic foci through structured mentoring opportunities across disciplines.

For example: student affairs administrators, directors of academic colleges and athletic directors could provide public and organizational policy experience; accounting and marketing offices on campus and in athletics could cater to business and finance majors; strength and conditioning staff on campus and in athletic training facilities could provide education, recreation management, and kinesiology students with practical hands-on experience; and operations and facilities can introduce students to event management and capital investment experiences.

These experiences could provide a number of different outcomes for both students on campus and student-athletes alike. Additionally, as was cited earlier (p. 129), athletic departments might realize greater cost-savings returns for cultivating and maintaining relationships with campus:

- The expense of hiring additional academic staff for athletics could possibly be diminished with the identification and recruitment of campus entities to create student-development opportunities.

- Academic staff in athletics could allocate their time more efficiently to address department and institutional initiatives.
- Academic staff in athletics would have greater availability to assist students in need of more focused attention.
- Students and student-athletes alike might have greater access to and make greater use of campus services and developmental opportunities.
- Campus and athletic entities would appear more committed to the overall development of students and student-athletes.
- Students and student-athletes might engage campus services on a more regular basis potentially strengthening the student's commitment to the institution.
- Institutional commitment to students likely increases student commitment to the institution, which as discussed previously, has been shown to increase the likelihood of degree attainment.

Identifying and cultivating professional development opportunities is only one part of the overall programming effort. At a minimum, professional development curriculum should cover the following.

- 1) Writing and skill proficiencies that equip students and student-athletes with a basic professional portfolio. This portfolio should help individuals understand how their skills apply to responsibilities in the workplace

- 2) The portfolio should include at a minimum:
 - a. a resume, cover letter, professional reference and job search resources in the student's field of study or major; and
 - b. the student's career goals, including:
 1. a plan of how they are going to meet their career goals, and
 2. a list of personal and academic references to assist in meeting their career goals.
- 3) Develop peer-to peer or student-staff mentoring opportunities. In the vein of a senior thesis project or internship, students in their final year of coursework could enroll in a course for credit that involves a mentoring and development program. Curriculum could include workshops for both peer-to-peer, and student-staff mentors and mentees, that support leadership development, academic and professional portfolio development, and introduce campus resources, networks, and associations.

Develop education-first mission statements. Athletic department mission statements should reflect a dedicated focus to student learning and academic progress. Mission statements must place student-athlete academic support initiatives at the forefront. Support initiatives also should include programs and services to address the social, spiritual, psychological, and professional well-being (among others) of student-athletes. Support initiatives should also include

ongoing education and development opportunities for athletic department staff as well. Moreover, athletic department mission statements must position and affirm personnel roles and behaviors in line with the development of the student-athlete as a whole and unique person.

Education mandates, at a minimum, should include the following.

- 1) A “development” mandate in student support strategies addressing: academic development, social development, spiritual development, and professional development.
- 2) Cross-sectional assessment of student-athlete support needs in cognitive, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic areas, answering the questions of what aspects of the student identity are unique and available, or not available, within the limits of the institutional setting, and for what aspects of student-need must outside assistance be sought (for example, from international student office, culture-specific local dining, personal care professionals (hair care, specifically), spiritual and religious centers of practice among others).
- 3) Establish a program to make student support strategies visible, involving the following:
 - a. Publish and update informational pamphlets each academic term as part of recruiting packets
 - b. Place student support services cards in academic offices,;

- c. Create bulletin boards specific to student-athlete needs and development opportunities; and
 - d. Provide twitter feeds, and smart phone applications, with links to department personnel, campus entities, and services
- 4) Establish a departmental position serving as the athletic department liaison between the campus and athletic learning communities. This person would be tasked with cultivating and coordinating student support networks on campus, and establishing and updating a directory for student reference.

Establish academic orientation programs for parents. This recommendation is directly tied to the notion of parental dislocation outlined previously in this dissertation. Participants in this study spoke of the direct and unequivocal voice of discipline and support they received from parents. However, as was also reported by some participants, the parental role in their academic engagement and support structure diminished upon junior year of high school when it became clear that athletic, and not academic, process would provide a means of attending college. The orientation programs should, at a minimum:

- 1) outline the initial and ongoing benchmarks for fulfillment of progress toward degree requirements;
- 2) provide parents with an understanding of their son's degree, or degree choices if they have not yet declared a major; and

- 3) provide parents with information on campus entities that address and support cognitive or academic testing needs, and their contact information.

The net result of these initiatives would be the active reengagement of parents in their sons academic lives where they have previously been removed in some cases (or removed themselves). The benefit would be multi-fold. First, student academic engagement could be increased or at the very least supported from a source that participants in this study cited as most prominent and most enduring. Secondly, academic divisions and coaching staff could be alleviated at least by some measure of academic oversight, thereby potentially increasing the sense of student academic control and reallocating personnel and support resources elsewhere. Third and most importantly, providing parents with the necessary information could close the gap in parental reach, potentially reversing and “relocating” the role of parent in student-engagement and degree attainment.

Cultivate academic leadership throughout the athletic department. At the core, athletic departments cannot perpetuate a perspective that says, “coaches coach, players play, administrators administrate.” In the researcher’s experience, this perspective exists, and is sanctioned primarily through the verbal and behavioral actions of coaches and staff.

As was previously stated, student engagement is increased when it is perceived by students that staff and institutions are invested in, and care about, their well-being (academic, social, spiritual, athletic, etc.) (Braxton, 2003;

Hurtado et al., 1999; Rendon, Jalamo & Nora, 2000; Tierney, 1992; Tinto, 1993).

Sport coaches occupy a unique position of influence within the student-athlete experience as these individuals determine to a large extent the athletic trajectory (in terms of sport participation) of student-athletes.

Coaches and administrators alike could participate in unstructured mentoring opportunities, such as acting as tutors, mentors, or proctors for structured study hall sessions. Not only could this provide a means for staff and administrators to engage students, and vice versa, but also the time and financial cost associated with providing these services might be partially off set.

Re-imagine success as it is applied to student-athlete academic ability.

“Could Denzel Washington play Woody Guthrie in a movie? In my dimension of reality he could”

- Bob Dylan, Chronicles: Volume 1

Administrators and coaches cannot give themselves over to a wider belief that student-athletes or (in the context of this study) AAMSAs are of a single mind or pursuit of professional sports careers over academic engagement or degree attainment. Doing so only relegates their position and behavior to that of a deficiency perspective.

College athletics must make a commitment to support these athletes on both an academic and socio-developmental level. Commitment is a two-way street however. The institution must provide an environment that is welcoming to the student, and the student must be willing to enter that environment (Hyatt,

2001; Roper & McKenzie, 1988). Universities, and athletic departments as a whole should visibly celebrate student success, including, but not limited to, academic and athletic achievements. These could include: contributions to wider student, campus, and athlete communities; participation in campus and athletic organizations and events; contributions to the development interests of others; as well as testimonials from academic advisors, coaches, teammates, and teachers regarding student success.

Part 5 – Implications and Conclusion

This section begins with a summary of the study and outcomes followed by a discussion of two areas in particular of CRT, interest convergence, and “Whiteness” as commodity, or station of high merit and value. AAMSA experiences with sport coaches and the wider campus community in this study are explored thereafter. A brief discussion of head coaches of color in Division I football and basketball is included.

Summary of the study and outcomes. This investigation sought a greater understanding of the contextual experiences of African American male football and basketball players. This study also sought to gain a better understanding of AAMSA aspirations regarding their job futures and degree completion, AAMSA expectations regarding access to jobs as a result of completing an undergraduate degree, and AAMSA perceptual experiences navigating athletic departments and higher education institutions. The perceptual and contextual experiences of participants within the confines of Division I athletics and researched foundations

provided the central impetus for the researcher's line of inquiry. Part of the result of this study is the development of a set of recommendations directed at helping the NCAA, collegiate athletics and IHEs increase the number of AAMSAs who attain a degree.

Over the course of fifteen interviews with four participants, an overarching theme emerged: environment matters. More importantly, the people in the environment matter, as do their behaviors. Coping mechanisms help AAMSA's navigate the contexts of collegiate athletics and academic institutions in which they are in many cases a minority. Relationships with peers, coaches, and academic advisors serve as support networks, unstructured mentoring opportunities, and a means by which students develop or supplement coping skills.

Participants in this study spoke of a number of perceptual realities with both negative and positive connotations attached. Among them were observations of coach's interactions with other athletes, relationships with peers, teammates and academic staff, and in some cases, unstructured mentoring relationships that developed with a sport coach or academic advisor.

AAMSA experiences and CRT. The following section reintroduces CRT as both a practice and framework for understanding participant narratives. CRT is generally positioned as a means of giving voice to underrepresented groups by providing a means to interrogate racist practices in contemporary settings. Although none of the participants in this study spoke of observing or being the

subject of racist practices, several points regarding coaching behaviors were illuminated. CRT is here provided as a means to better understanding participant observations.

CRT re-introduced. CRT is an interdisciplinary framework incorporating scholarly perspectives from law, sociology, history, and ethnic and women's studies to advance and give voice to the ongoing quest for racial justice (Bell, 1987; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT provides a lens through which to question, critique, and challenge the history of racism and racist ideologies that have undermined policy efforts meant to aid African American participation in higher education. According to Donnor (2005), CRT offers an especially useful lens through which one can:

better recognize and more fully understand the forces that have constructed a system in which African American male athletes are cheered on the field by wealthy alumni and powerful fans while at the same time denied opportunities to earn the degree that could lead to wealth and power of their own. (p. 63)

CRT also takes into account the role of institutions in denying these opportunities by drawing on the experiences and perspectives of those groups affected by racism (Agyemang & Delorme, 2010; Hylton, 2008).

The Black male athlete in American higher education has a long and rich history going as far back as Fritz Pollard (Brown University, class of 1917), Paul Robeson (Rutgers University, class of 1919), and Bill Russell (University of San

Francisco, class of 1956). These athlete-scholars however represent a small number of African American men who gained access to PWIs prior to *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*.

Significant change in the civil rights of Black Americans, and access to the promise of a college education, took a significant step forward in 1954 with the desegregation of K-12 schools via *Brown et al vs. Board of Education of Topeka et al.*, 347 U.S. 483. However it took subsequent government action in the form of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Pub. L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241, July 2, 1964) and Executive Order 11375 (1967) to reinforce efforts to recruit, admit, retain, and graduate underrepresented groups in higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Kincey, 2007; Terrell & Wright, 1988).

CRT and AAMSA experiences in this study. This study sought to better understand AAMSA experiences that helped or hindered their path to degree attainment. CRT was used here to understand participant narratives regarding their experiences.

Despite increased visibility, and despite an increase in membership within coaching, professorial, and administrative roles, AAMSA participation in NCAA Division I athletics outweighs their membership in academe (Astin, 1975; Harper, 2006; Himelhoch et al, 1997). Agyemang, DeLorme and Singer (2010) posit that AAMSAs today do not face the same forms of overt racism (e.g., physical and verbal abuse, outright denial of access to resources and opportunities) compared to their AAMSA counterparts from the Civil Rights era. While this might be true,

alternate research suggests that, currently, Black athletes contend with less obvious forms of racism. For example, Black female athletes are marginalized and silenced by the media, athletic administrators, coaches, and other athletes (Bruening, 2005; Bruening et al., 2005; Agyemang, DeLorme & Singer, 2010).

Directly from this study, Marcus (football) described what he felt to be a focused and intense gaze directed upon him from campus. His description fit most closely with what Cornel West (2001) described in his book, *Race Matters*, as “the White normative gaze.” Marcus expressed feeling subject to a standard of social, athletic, and academic performance, based on a racial profile of what it meant to be African American and male. Basically stated, Marcus’ success would be judged, not on the merit of his output, but on the merit of the color of his skin.

In his words:

I feel like up here (in the athletic department), I’m just a student-athlete who happens to be black (not subject to a race binary), but on campus I’m viewed as a Black guy who plays football and goes to school. So if I fail here (in college), it’s like I become a (race) statistic—just another black guy (that failed).

Germane to this study and Marcus’s description in particular, is the view that there is a cultural “bar” by which all other races are judged and critiqued to see how they measure up to White ideals and White culture. Devos and Banaji’s (2005) findings bolster the idea that Whiteness is a desirable property in

American society and one that Black citizens are forever prohibited from because of the impermeable boundaries of the color of their skin and ties to Black culture.

Concluding Thoughts

Each of the four interview sessions revealed interesting perspectives and insight in to the experience of AAMSAs on the campus of a large Division I PWI. In particular, each of the participants in this study conveyed a strong sense of academic engagement and a commitment to degree attainment before arriving on the college campus. Each participant spoke of both personal pride and a desire to make their parents proud as factors in their commitment to degree attainment. Financial strain was also described as a part of making their parents proud, as each participant spoke candidly of their families expressed inability to pay for college in lieu of an athletic scholarship. Of particular poignancy were participant observations of, and appreciation for, their parents' work ethic and a desire to alleviate financial hardship.

Of primary interest were participant interactions with academic staff and athletic coaches. These interactions were described many times as positive, unstructured mentoring relationships. These experiential and perceptual engagements with athletic department staff appeared to be beneficial with respect to participant behaviors needed to navigate the student-athlete experience. Negative interactions with sport coaches were also described, and in these instances it was the relationship with the athletic/academic advisor that kept a participant resolute and committed to finishing a degree. More importantly, these

interactions with athletic department staff members appeared to strengthen the degree to which the participants felt supported and valued as African American men independent of their student-athlete identities.

These interactions within the confines of athletics produced the most meaningful commentary within the interviews. Relationships with staff and academic advisors, in particular, were repeatedly described as beneficial to raising an individual's feelings of personal and academic self-worth. Although participants in this study identified strongly as athletes, they also identified as intelligent, independent African American men. Each participant felt valued as unique individuals by their academic advisors. These narratives are important given the large amount of time allocated to student-athlete related activities (e.g., practice, weight lifting, film study, structured study hall, meetings with academic advisors etc.) and the relatively small amount of time spent engaging in personal and professional development interests (e.g., Greek life, student government, internships).

Three issues moving forward. This section presents three major issues in the current state of collegiate athletics for discussion. These points deal with diversity in Division I athletics, the widening gap in degree attainment, and career education and career goal setting of AAMSAs. Three issues explored in participant interviews appeared in existing literature: Diversity within athletic department demographics, degree attainment in the context of race and gender,

and career education. Each is presented on its own here with examples in current literature.

Athletic department demographics. As was reported in the introduction of this dissertation, AAMSAs participate in athletics in higher numbers than their membership in either academe or Division I coaching or administrative ranks (Lapchick, 2011c; NCAA, 2011a). This raises a number of experiential and developmental discussions regarding their ability to find examples of African American male access, African American male mentor opportunities and African American male models of success within athletic departments.

Broadly addressing all three, participants were asked the question directly if they preferred a mentor or advisor who was African American and male, and whether they felt it easier to approach a coach, administrator or academic advisor if they were or were not African American and male. In general participants were hesitant to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ on either count. Participants instead focused on higher self-efficacy as a result of feeling they were treated as unique individuals independent of race, gender, academic ability or sport.

These reflections are somewhat divergent to Rhoden (2006, p. 193) who summarized the need for African American mentors and role models thusly: “The fact that so many of the athletes’ closest advisors are not African American means that they are never around [African American] models of leadership, a situation that undermines their own ability to become leaders, rather than pampered, passive followers.” “In the case of college sports, White coaches, faculty, and

administrators may be blind to their own privilege and unable to see and understand the experience of the black student-athletes they lead” (Estler & Nelson, 2005, p. 66).

That same race/gender mentors or role models were less available was not an obstacle reported by participants in this study. This does not mean other potential participants would feel the same way. Faison (1996) underscored potential dissonance in shared identity when he observed that AAMSAs are seldom able to find someone to help them effectively mediate the culture of their predominantly White setting. Participant responses in this study were consistent with variable literature on the subject of mentoring that describes both ends of the race/gender spectrum with regard to mentor-mentee demographics (Lee, 1999). Citing Maryann Jacobi’s work, getting at the actual mentoring *experience* of African American’s is difficult because there is an absence of a widely accepted operational definition of mentoring. The literature offers numerous definitions (Blackwell, 1989; Fagenson, 1989; Kogler-Hill et al., 1989; Lester & Johnson, 1981; Noe, 1988; Olian et al., 1988; Speizer, 1981) so that empirical research about mentoring subsumes several distinct kinds of interpersonal relationships. The result of definitional vagueness is a continued lack of clarity about the antecedents, outcomes, characteristics, and mediators of mentoring relationships, despite agreement among the professional literature, popular press, and students themselves that mentoring is a critical component of effective undergraduate

education (Jacobi, 1991). Put simply, there is a lack of uniformity in how mentoring programs are situated within the academic environment.

Wynetta Lee's (1999) study at NC State University was the only study found that directly addressed the experience of African American's in mentoring programs explicitly. According to Lee (1999), the mentor guides the development of the junior person, thus enhancing the chances that the junior person will succeed (the senior partner in the relationships determined by age, experience, position, or education, and takes on a teaching and nurturing role to the junior partner) (p. 32).

Lee conducted discussion groups of 7 students each, at three points during the school year (fall, summer, and spring) with a total of 120 students. Her study found among other things that despite several authors point that of the importance of matching mentor-protégé characteristics (Leon et al., 1997; Sloan, 1996; Williams, 1997), students felt that having an African American faculty mentor was less important than having a mentor in their career field. Students reasoned that they could get the cultural connection they needed outside the university (Lee, 1999). Students expected a faculty mentor to help them gain insights to the dominant culture and to help them succeed both in attaining their degree and securing employment in their career field. When given the choice of having an African American faculty mentor in a different field or having a White faculty mentor within their academic field, students consistently preferred having a mentor relationship match on academic career (Lee, 1999).

Again, that participants did not say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the question of whether race was a factor for them in their preference of mentor or relationships of importance, does not diminish race as a factor for other AAMSA’s. That participants described higher self-efficacy as a result of feeling they were treated as unique individuals independent of race, gender, academic ability or sport, is perhaps a step toward reducing the visibility and prevalence of negative stereotypes in collegiate athletics and academics as a whole.

Hiring practices in collegiate athletics. As was previously discussed here in Chapter 4, participants in this study recognized coaches directly influencing their prospects of a professional athletic career. Participants also recognized coaching longevity as dependent upon winning or losing. In some cases, coaches overlook certain athlete behaviors in the short-term, at the expense of winning in the long-term. At the same time, participants observed the same coach would not offer support to talent at the expense of their own professional standing or advancement.

Taken together, an African American male coach is potentially placed in a position of promoting or deterring the athletic and professional advancement of an AAMSA who might also become a candidate to enter the coaching ranks at a later date. This exists within a largely White male dominated framework of Division I collegiate athletics, where AAMSAs represent approximately 45.8% of Division I football athletes and 60.9% of Division I basketball athletes (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012). In contrast, NCAA (2011a) data show African American men representing

a low percentage of Division I football and basketball head coaches (15% and 21%, respectfully). Against a backdrop where large sums of money are attached to wins and losses, decisions regarding sport participation and professional advancement carry potentially significant weight.

CRT and the tenets of interest convergence and “Whiteness as property interest” are also important in understanding and discussing opportunities in head coaching vacancies. When more African American men, or men of color, are hired as head coaches, there are fewer positions open to White males. Statistically, White men have consistently represented a near majority of presidents, athletic directors, and head coaches in Division I athletics, which involves 120-football and 300-plus basketball programs. Thus, advancing membership of African American men in head coaching roles with so few opportunities available does not have an immediate benefit to other White men who might otherwise occupy the same position.

That so many Division I athletic programs are led by White male presidents and athletic directors (93.3% and 82.5%, respectively) confirms a binary of ability and access whereby “Whiteness” [is] deemed a property interest (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Harris, 1993). In this regard, being White has major privileges because Whiteness is the optimal status criterion by which all other racial groups are judged and evaluated in American society (DeLorme & Singer, 2010). The existence of, and reliance upon, a White binary of ability and access

has implications for the promotion of African American men to head coaching or other administrative positions within collegiate athletics.

Despite a record number of Division I head football coaching positions being occupied by African American men at the start of the 2010-2011 season (11), there continues to be a dearth of Black men at the university president and athletic director position in Division I athletics. Additionally, a lack of membership within higher education administration, and Division I athletics, hinders the promotion of African American men within the administrative and coaching pipeline.

With little visible or active presence within these ranks, there is also low visibility of African American male role models of success to supplant negative stereotypes or deficiency perspectives of their credentials or ability. This also limits the exposure of AAMSAs to other African American male role models of success in college athletics. That so few African American men have been granted access to administrative or coaching positions in Division I allows a White male binary to persist, and thereby determine their access and upward mobility therein.

The historical and widening gap in AAMSA degree attainment. While the rate of degree completion for AAMSAs in football and basketball continues to rise (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012; NCAA, 2011c), the gap between their rate of completion and that of their White counterparts continues to increase (Lapchick, 2011a, 2012). Moreover, students may still not correlate degree attainment with access and opportunity because there is a dearth of physical evidence i.e. black

men in coaching and administrative positions within collegiate athletics, to reflect access and opportunity at the hands of degree completion. The low visibility of African American male models of success underscores this perspective. Although participants in this study unanimously felt a degree beneficial to their long-term career success, none of them could articulate a clear understanding of how their degree could be applied to a job once they graduated and stopped competing in athletics. That there appears to exist a lack of career education and planning might explain the gap in understanding of benefit and application of degree post-athletics.

Career education and degree attainment. Career education and degree attainment are important to the long-term professional success of all student-athletes, but in particular, AAMSAs. A 1986 report authored by Shirley Smith and published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics titled, *Worklife Estimates: Effects of Race and Education* estimated that men would work almost 39 years over the course of their lifetime. Germane to this study and more directly applicable to policy makers in athletics and education, the same report said:

[T]he impact of education would be seen not only in occupational choice, but also in the total length of time spent in the labor force. Although remaining in school might delay career entry, those who studied longest would also spend the most years being economically active.

Smith basically makes the case for the importance of degree attainment and long-term economic stability.

This is important because, although AAMSAs graduate at higher rates than their counterparts on campus, they still graduate at an increasingly lower rate than their peers in all other sports across race and gender. If what Smith posits is true, then AAMSA football and basketball athletes, a large number of who are first-generation college students, would have likely witnessed lower economic productivity and financial gain by immediate family members who did not obtain degrees. Smith's position underscores an attraction to perceived large sums of money available via a professional sports career. Attraction to sport is due in part to the inflated salaries of professional athletes, routinely exhibited on television and various other media outlets. This creates a natural attraction for many young people in college football and basketball, not least which for the researcher during his college football tenure.

Student-athletes need to see role models of non-athletic related success (e.g., in the form of mentors, business, and community leaders) alongside realistic representations of the shelf-life and potential earnings and of both professional athletes and college graduates. For example, citing NFL and NFL Players Association statistics, a Bloomberg Businessweek article (Associated Press, January 2011) stated that the average playing career in the NFL is 3.5 years. Dave Bryan (July 21, 2011), citing the recently passed collective bargaining agreement between NFL team owners and the NFL Players Association (NFLPA) on the NFL Labor website (www.nflcommunications.com, July 2011), stated that football players drafted from college to the NFL would be given contracts for the

length of 4 years. Those football players that were not drafted from college to the NFL, but signed as undrafted free agents, would be given contracts with a three-year term.

According to Bryan (July 23, 2011) the NFL rookie pay scale for 2011, increases for each of the first four years a player is under contract. Table 3 below presents the income both a drafted and undrafted college football player would expect to for each of the initial 4 years under contract.

Table 3
2011 NFL Escalated Minimum Pay Scale for Rookies, Year One through Four

Year	Rookie (2011)	2 nd Year (2012)	3 rd Year (2013)	4 th year (2014)
Base Salary	\$375,000	\$450,000	\$600,000	\$685,000

Source: National Football League Players Association, 2011

Citing research investigating major choice by college football players, Fountain & Finley (2009), Lederman (2003), and Schneider (2010) found five college majors common among football players in Division I football: Social Sciences, Communication, Business Management, Justice Studies, and Liberal Arts. Table 4 below presents the average yearly salaries for occupations in the 5 concentrations listed above as cited by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010).

Table 4
Average Annual Wages for Five Professional Degree Sectors

Degree	Business Management	Communications	Criminal Justice	Liberal Arts	Social Sciences
Average Annual Earnings	\$105,440	\$50,490	\$55,620	\$52,290	\$66,390

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010.

Having presented the above statistics regarding compensation and average annual salary for professional degree holders, Table 5 presents the total amount of compensation for individuals over the course of the average working life of a professional football player versus a private professional.

Table 5
Estimate of Total Earnings of the Average NFL Career (3-year minimum) Versus the Estimated Lifetime Earnings of the Average American Worker (40-year minimum)

Occupation	Avg. Yearly Income	Avg. Length of Career	Total Financial Gain
NFL Player	\$505,000	3.5 years	\$1,767,500
Business Management	\$105,440	38.5 years	\$4,059,440
Communication	\$50,490	38.5 years	\$1,943,865
Justice Studies	\$55,620	38.5 years	\$2,141,370
Liberal Arts	\$52,290	38.5 years	\$2,013,165
Social Sciences	\$66,390	38.5 years	\$2,556,015

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010.

The above model is predicated on several assumptions including that the NFL athlete is signed to the opening day roster of 52 athletes, competes for three years, remains uninjured, and receives the total salary of each contract year.

While the above comparisons do not take in to account state or federal taxes, one can clearly see the lifetime earnings of degree earners are substantially more than the average NFL football career of three years.

Parting thoughts. That a graduation rate gap exists between AAMSAs in football and basketball and their White counterparts, is not surprising when so little in the way of athletic department functions are directed solely at student-athlete well-being and academic success. Take the words of Jameson (football), “...take a look at this building: you have seven floors, and from top to bottom only half of one floor and six office spaces are dedicated to academics? What are you supposed to think when that’s what you see.”

The parties that govern collegiate athletics are entrusted with the care and well-being of young men and women from every corner of the United States. However, those men who continue to participate in the two largest revenue-producing sports of basketball and football, in the greatest number, continue to go underserved. It is true AAMSAs graduate at higher rates than their campus counterparts. That should not be the barometer for academic achievement and degree attainment for athletic institutions or institutions of higher education. These athletes still graduate at the lowest rates of all student-athletes combined, and the gap is only growing between African American male athletes and their White male counterparts in athletics.

Athletic department personnel must position and affirm their roles and behaviors in line with the positive development of the student-athlete as a whole

and unique person. These students sometimes arrive from adverse backgrounds and circumstances, but they do not return to those backgrounds or places when practice or class ends. They remain on or near campus within earshot of academic and athletic facilities. Collegiate athletics cannot turn its back on its responsibility to these student-athletes and responsibility for the quality of the environment into which they are brought.

The NCAA Division I colleges and universities, and athletic departments that enact policy to govern the practices and behaviors of staff and students, must begin to look past the bottom line of dollars and cents when it comes to the value of higher education in the collegiate athletics experience. If athletic department administrators truly aspire to develop tomorrow's leaders, they must prepare those leaders for life past the field of play. In particular, AAMSAs must be exposed to African American male role models of success that affirm their personhood and membership as college graduates.

Based on interviews conducted for this study, there appears to be a lack of knowledge of the realistic earning power of a professional athlete and that of a college graduate. Alongside perceptions of professional athletic careers, participants in this study consistently spoke of and referred to "the business of college athletics" as they saw and experienced it. To each, administration and coaches most directly respond to what affects the bottom line. Winning and losing affects revenue streams, so administrators necessarily concern themselves with winning and losing as well.

That AAMSAs are, in large part, at the center of producing wins and losses, which puts them at the center of the entire enterprise; they are, in fact, the enterprise. It is therefore not surprising that some authors, Edwards (1989) and Zirin (2005), have described collegiate athletics as a system of slavery, at the heart of which lie AAMSA interests and personage. The irony here is that coaches across the board, more particularly coaches of color and very pointedly African American coaches are placed in a position of potentially having to make decisions directly effecting AAMSA interests based on valuing wins, losses and the bottom line. Regardless of race, color or creed, that a coach feels pressure to make decisions based on wins and losses does nothing to advance an agenda that places academics ahead of athletics.

When looking at Division I football and basketball specifically through the lens of CRT, and primarily the tenet of interest convergence, AAMSA participants observed several coaching behaviors and associated outcomes. Participants saw coaches in a position of having to make choices based on wins and losses in the interest of job security, and recognized coaches make decisions that advance or preserve their own professional station. Herein lies a potential coach's dilemma with regard to academic support and advancement, recognized and discussed by participants in this study: coaches might actually care about student academic well-being but they have to care more about winning and losing because their jobs depend on it. In fact, participants in this study expressed a feeling that coaches did in fact care whether they were successful academically

and athletically, but felt under-supported when it came to their academic advancement because coaches necessarily prioritized winning and losing ahead of student academic success.

This potentially creates an adversarial relationship between AAMSAs and their coaches, regardless of race, creed or color. In order to win, a team must have its best athletes on the field. In order to participate, those athletes have to be academically eligible, and therefore one might assume coaches should necessarily care about the academic behaviors of their student-athletes. Participants did not feel that their coach supported their academic interests above their athletic availability. AAMSAs felt their interests were being negotiated at the expense of the coach's desires, and in some cases, the coach's decisions compromised the academic advancement opportunities of other AAMSAs.

This latter point is particularly troubling in the context of efforts aimed at advancing the potential coaching aspirations of young candidates of color, in particular other African American men. First and foremost it is not the position of the researcher that Black coaches bear a greater burden for identifying, mentoring, and developing future African American coaches and administrators. On the contrary, it is the researchers position that all coaches regardless of race or ethnicity should take responsibility for identifying and advancing the career aspirations of all interested candidates regardless of demographic. However, as it stands in 2012 only nineteen out of one hundred-twenty Division I head football coaches is a person of color – seventeen are African American and Male

(Lapchick, 2011c; NCAA, 2011a). As such, coaches are potentially placed in the position of deliberating self-preservation via wins and losses versus the professional coaching aspirations of student-athletes. Rather than advancing an imperative of integrating coaching ranks, or advancing black men to degree attainment, coaches of all colors, races and creeds must instead concern themselves with keeping their job while making decisions potentially injurious to other young Black men and persons of color. As a result, there is less energy dedicated to identifying, cultivating, and nurturing candidates of color, and more time wasted perpetuating social norms born of racist and oppressive practices.

In closing, there were many times in the course of conducting this study that the researcher was asked by young Black men the impetus for yet another line of inquiry into the academic outcomes of AAMSAs. Much of the literature reviewed for this study (Agyemang, DeLorme & Singer, 2010; Associated Press, December, 2009; Burnsed, March, 2010; Bruening, 2005; Bruening et al., 2005; Donnor, 2005; Harper, 2006; Hawkins, 1999; Kinsey, 2007; Lapchick, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2012; NCAA, 2011a, 2011c) and participant narratives contained within this study, are consistent with the perspectives of Singer (2010): Race remains a texture in the folds of AAMSA experiences in college and college athletics.

A principle reason to conduct this study was an effort to address a persistent and negative message that football athletes seem to consistently recognize: Athletics first, academics second. The researcher had only to raise his

right hand and recite the words, “always remember: academics is number one (extending his middle and index fingers aloft), and athletics is number two (switching to a single extended index finger).” These exchanges invariably concluded with a halfhearted smile and a chuckle accompanied by the unsettling recognition that the message of athletics over academics was real and persistent. Moreover, the message remained significant some fifteen years after the researcher had left his student-athlete experience behind. Perhaps this revelation, more than any other, gave participants in this study a reason to share their experiences as AAMSAs at a Division I university.

As reflected in both the interviews conducted in this study and the researcher’s own experience, the prevailing attitude of most coaches is “coaches coach, players play, teachers teach, administrators administrate.” Coaches are hired to coach athletes and win games, not teach classes, maintain eligibility or graduate student-athletes. That is the job of the student, campus professors, campus administration and the academic division of athletics. So long as campus and athletic administrations do not push back against this mindset, coaches will continue to concern themselves with “X’s and O’s” and not “A’s and B’s.”

Finally, at the time of publication, William, Marcus, Christopher and Jameson will have moved beyond their college experience as students and athletes, having attained their undergraduate degrees.

Their stories are contained herein.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions are related to the following environments and their support or lack of support for you as you try to complete your degree:

1. family environment - people, influences, support
2. social environment - people, influences, support
3. sport environment – people, influences, support
4. coach and Institutional/Organizational interaction – people, influences, support?

Have your experiences in any of the above settings effected your aspiration or expectation to complete your degree

Have your experiences in any of the above settings effected your aspiration or expectation for your own subsequent personal/social/occupational/financial gain?

1. Can you please tell me about where you grew up?
2. Please describe the people who influenced you most?
 - a. How did those people talk about college?
3. Describe how attending college developed for you?
 - a. How did you feel about college before coming here?
 - b. Was going to college a goal of yours?
4. Can you describe the people that have had an influence on you during your time in college?
5. Can you describe any experiences that have (positively or negatively) affected your progress toward completing your college degree?
6. Are you going to complete your degree in the time you are here?
7. When did you DECIDE/when did you KNOW that you were going to complete your degree?
 - a. Describe what was going on around this time/decision?
8. Do you feel that completing your college degree will help you in the future?

9. Why is it that you have succeeded where so many others have failed and are projected to fail?
 - a. What is it you have seen, heard or experienced that might help explain why black football/basketball athletes are not completing their degrees?

Follow-Up Questions for Interviews 2 and 3

1. Coaching Staff and Institutional support of degree completion
2. How do you feel you are viewed by members of the athletic department? (eg. Coaching staff, administration, or academic division).
3. When did you decide – “done deal, I’m completing my degree here at State?”
4. What do you believe is the/a benefit of having a degree to your professional future?
 - a. Did you associate a benefit with having a degree before coming to college?
5. Can you please describe your professional goals before coming to college?
 - a. Have these goals changed since coming here?
 - b. Have these goals changed as a result of being so close to finishing your degree?
6. Do you feel that completing your degree will allow you to be more successful after college?
 - a. In what way(s)?
7. Can you talk a bit about how you define success?
8. How has your definition of success been shaped?
9. Is there anything that researchers or administrators, tutors or heads of academic divisions need to be mindful of, or pay attention to that we might not even know we ignore, with students like yourself?

APPENDIX B

ATHLETICS LEADERSHIP PROFILES BY RACE AND GENDER

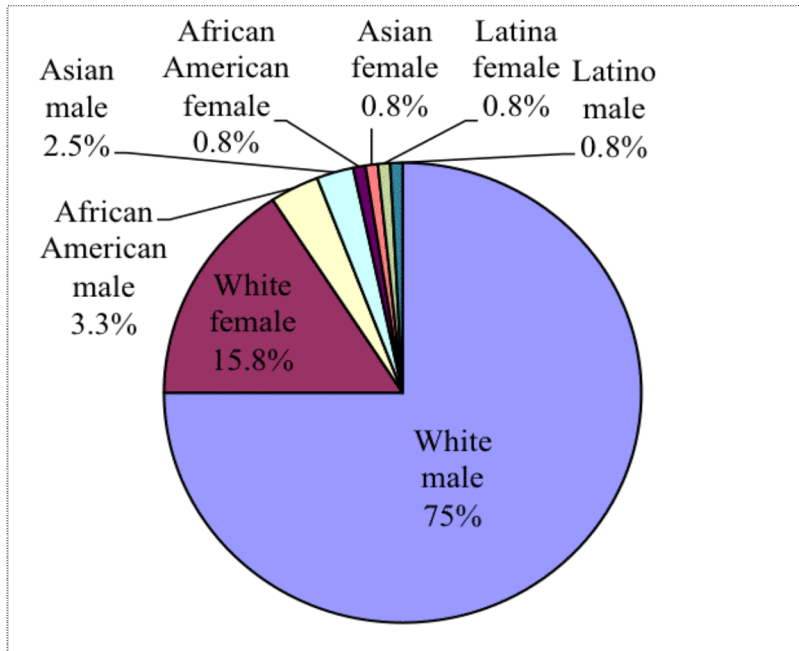


Figure 1. 2010-2011 FBS, Division I College Presidents by Race and Gender (data source: Lapchick, 2011).

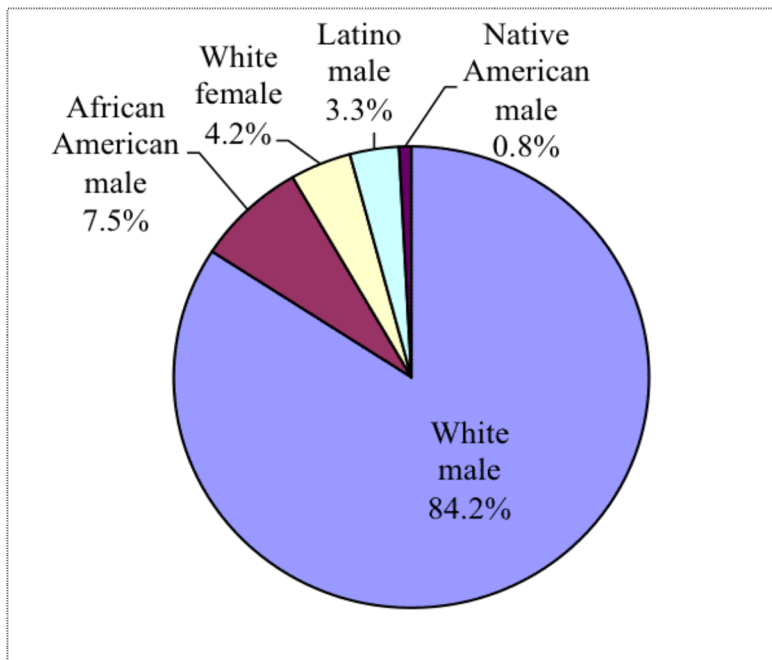


Figure 2. 2010-2011 FBS, Division I Athletic Directors by Race and Gender (data source: Lapchick, 2011).

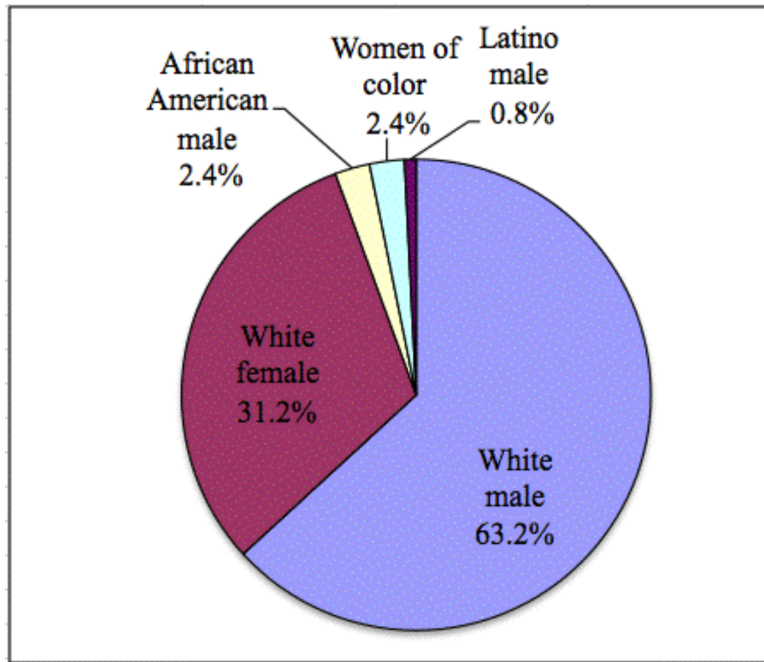


Figure 3. 2010-2011 FBS, Division I Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) by Race and Gender (data source: Lapchick, 2011).

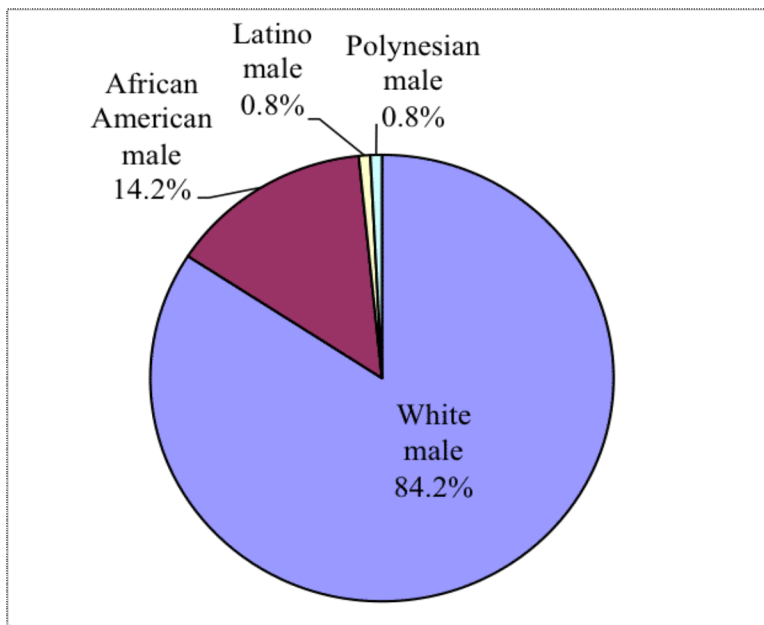


Figure 4. 2010-2011 FBS Division 1 Head Football Coaches by Race and Gender (data source: Lapchick, 2011).

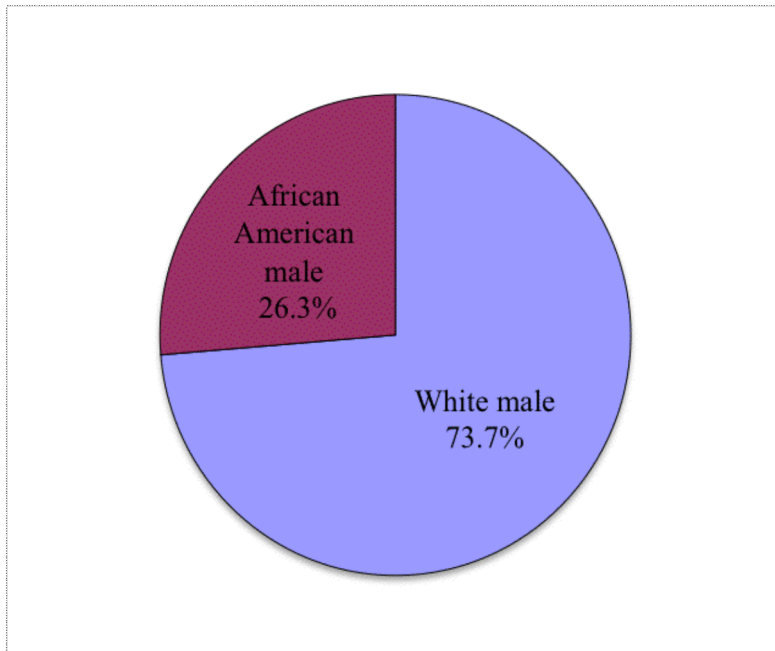


Figure 5. 2010-2011 Division 1 Men's Basketball Head Coaches by Race and Gender (data source: Lapchick, 2011).

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

June 22, 2010

Dear _____;

My name is Seanan Kelly. I am a graduate student in the College of Education pursuing a Doctor of Education degree, under the leadership of Dr. Leonard Valverde, professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Arizona State University.

I am conducting a research study of degree completion by African American Male football and basketball student-athletes in Division 1 athletics.

As part of the study, I will be meeting with students individually to talk about some of the experiences that have helped, or have stood in the way of you completing a degree (for example: people or groups you feel comfortable with on campus, how you view your place on your campus).

I am requesting your participation in my study, which will include a 5-minute survey followed by at least one individual interview in the fall 2010 semester. Each individual interview will last approximately 1 to 2 hours and may be followed up with a second interview later in the semester.

If you have any questions regarding my study please feel free to contact me at (602) 228-7084. Thank you for taking time to consider participating in my study.

Sincerely,

Seanan Kelly

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in a research study about the experiences, aspirations, expectations, attitudes, and self-perceptions of African-American male football and basketball players in Division I athletics. The questionnaire you will be asked to complete, includes questions based on your thoughts, feelings, and views on you academic and athletic experience. The personal information section includes only a basic questions intended to provide the researcher with general background information about you. The questionnaire will be handed out and collected by your site coordinator. You will be asked to complete the questionnaire to the best of your ability. There are no right or wrong answers to each question and all information will be kept confidential and used only for analysis purposes, whereafter it will be shredded and disposed of in its entirety. Your participation and experience is highly valued and greatly appreciated.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits to you the individual from your participation in this study, however you may encounter negative feelings as you think over your experiences as a student-athlete.

PAYMENTS: You will receive no compensation for your participation in this study.

DATA STORAGE AND CONFIDENTIALITY: All information collected for this study will remain confidential. Names of people as well as information collection sites will be changed in the retelling of personal experiences. Information will be kept locked in a file cabinet in the office of the researchers home. All data and consent forms will be kept in a separate secure office for a period of 2 years after information collection and completion of the study. Thereafter all data and consent forms will be destroyed. Any and all personal information associated with study will remain separate from any of your student files kept at your home institution.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Total time commitment for participation in this study will be approximately 50 minutes. You will be asked to sign the informed consent agreement (approx. 5 minutes), and then asked to complete a questionnaire (approx. 35 to 45 minutes).

HOW YOUR ANSWERS WILL BE USED IN THE STUDY: Your answers will be used in the completion of a doctoral dissertation in the department of Organizational Leadership and Policy Studies at Arizona State University. This research and dissertation may be used in future presentations at conferences, published in journal articles, used for information purposes on television, radio, and mainstream print media outlets, as well as to inform future research for

educational purposes. An overview of the studies findings will also be sent to your institutions Athletic Director (AD). This summary sent to the AD will NOT include any personal information that you provide in order to ensure the anonymity of participants. You may also contact the researcher or your home institutions athletic office for access to the summary report sent to the AD. Participants must be 18 years or older.

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS AND INFORMED CONSENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Seanan Tristan Kelly

RESEARCH TITLE: An Examination of the Attitudes and Perceptions of Organizational Construct and Environment that Contribute to or Inhibit Degree Completion for African American Male Athletes.

Please Check off as you Read Each:

- I have read the Research Description provided on the previous page.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary.
- I understand I may refuse to participate in the study.
- I understand I may withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to my student status, athletic or academic based financial aid, future medical care, employment, or other entitlement.
- I understand the researcher may withdraw me from the research at his/her professional discretion.
- I understand that the researcher will notify me, if during the course of the study, significant new information outside this study develops which may effect my willingness to participate.
- I understand that any information derived from this research study that personally identifies me will not be disclosed or released without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- I understand if at any time I have questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the investigator at seanan.Kelly@gmail.com or the investigators advisor Dr. Leonard Valverde at (480) 965-9011 and they will answer my questions.
- I understand if at any time I have questions, comments, or concerns regarding the research project or my rights as a research subject, that I can and should contact the Mary Lou Fulton College of Education at Arizona State University, Institutional Review Board (IRB).
 - Ph: (480) 965-9011
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study and I understand what is being asked of me.
- I am at least 18 years of age
- I agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name:

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E
STUDENT-ATHLETE DEMOGRAPHIC INVENTORY

PARTICIPANT ID: _____

1. Year of birth: _____
2. Current Student/Academic standing (circle one)
Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Alum
3. What institutions have you attended (circle as many as apply)?
Jr. College 2 Yr. 4-yr (public) 4-yr. (private) HBCU
4. Are you receiving any type of athletic related financial aid?
a. Yes b. No
5. Are you receiving any type of academic related financial aid?
a. Yes b. No
6. What is (was) your GPA (based on a 4.0 scale): _____
7. How do you describe the area in which you grew up: _____
 - a. metropolitan (city),
 - b. urban
 - c. suburban
 - d. rural
 - e. other (please write): _____
8. Please describe the home on which you lived before going to college.
 - a. Single Parent b. Two Parent
 - c. Other (please write): _____
9. Whom do you consider most influential?
 - a. Mother b. Father c. Both
 - d. Other (please write): _____
10. What is the highest level of education attainment of your parents?
 - 10a. Mother: _____
 - 10b. Father: _____
 - a. Did not complete High School
 - b. High School Diploma
 - c. Associates or Technical degree (Junior College or Technical school)
 - d. Some College
 - e. Bachelor's degree
 - f. Master's degree

- g. Professional degree (MD, JD, MBA, DDS, etc.)
 - h. Doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed. D., etc.)
 - i. Don't know
 - j. Not sure
11. What is your family's approximate income?
- a. less than \$25,000/year.
 - b. \$25,000 to \$50,000/year
 - c. \$50,000 to \$100,000/year
 - d. \$100,000 to \$200,000/year
 - e. more than \$200,000/year
 - f. Not sure
 - g. Don't know
12. What sport do you participate in?
- a. Football
 - b. Basketball
 - c. Both
 - d. Other: _____
13. Approximately how many years have you played this sport?
- _____

Please use the scale below to answer the following questions

- a. 5-10 hours/week
 - b. 10-15 hours/week
 - c. 15-20 hours/week
 - d. 20-25 hours/week
 - e. 25-30 hours/week
 - f. 30-40 hours/week
 - g. More than 40 hours
14. Approximately how many hours a week (**7 day week**) are you involved in sport related activities (weights, physical therapy, practice, taping, video, meetings etc.)?
- In season? _____ Out-of season? _____

15. Approximately how many hours a week (**7 day week**) are you involved in sport related activities (weights, physical therapy, practice, taping, video, meetings etc.)?

In season? _____ Out-of season? _____

16. Approximately how many hours a week (**7 day week**) are you involved in academic related activities (class, homework, tutoring, study hall etc.)?

In season? _____ Out-of season? _____

17. Have any family members (not your parents) attended college?

a. Junior College b. 2-year college c. 4-year

18. Have any family members (not your parents) graduated from college?

19. Have any family members (not your parents) participated in athletics while they were in college? If so, what sport did they participate in?

APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL FORM

To: Leonard Valverde
ED

From: Mark Roosa, Chair *SR*
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 08/16/2010

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 08/16/2010

IRB Protocol #: 1007005356

Study Title: African-American Male College Student-Athletes in Division I Sports: Expectations and Aspirations f
Degree Attainment

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.