REVIEWING THE PLAY: A MIXED METHODS EXPLORATION OF ATHLETIC IDENTITY IN THE LIVES OF BLACK MALE STUDENT-ATHLETES

A Dissertation

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by

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Dissertation Abstract

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The contributions of Black male student-athletes in revenue-generating sports add culture, achievement, pride, and immense financial gain to historically White institutions. But for all that these student-athletes contribute, more research is needed regarding their own wellbeing. A growing body of research specifically examines the role of athletic identity in the lived experiences and trajectories of Black male student-athletes. This dissertation, which utilized Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework, extends the literature through three separate studies. Paper 1 of the dissertation, an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the lived experiences of eight high school student-athletes of color, elucidated specific benefits (e.g., relational connection, hope) and liabilities (e.g., identity foreclosure) indicated by the participants as characterizing their athletic involvement. Paper 2, a scoping review of the extant literature on the psychological wellbeing of Black male student-athletes, addressed the unique stressors faced by Black male student-athletes that can impact mental health, while also identifying gaps in the literature and future directions for research. Paper 3, a regression analysis of data from the 2006 NCAA GOALS study, indicated differences across race in student-athlete self-reported degree of athletic identity and career aspirations, with African American racial identity being more strongly associated with higher levels of reported athletic identity and higher odds of believing in the likelihood of attaining a career in

professional sports after graduation. Implications for student-athletes, athletics departments, and universities are discussed.

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APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, ("Reviewing the Play: A Mixed Methods Exploration of Athletic Identity in the Lives of Black Male Student-Athletes"), has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dedication

To the brilliant and strong Black male student-athletes of football and men's basketball. You hold up institutions of learning, impact lives, and create culture.

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And finally, there are individuals in my life who have not only been there for me through this dissertation process, but who have journeyed with me throughout my life. Their love has sustained me in this chapter, and in countless others. I here refer to my spouse, Daniel, and my son, Max. They are my world, my heart walking outside my body. I also wish to thank my parents and brothers, without whom I would not be who I am. And above all, I give thanks to my Creator, the truest of friends and mightiest of rocks.

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Conceptual Overview

Today, more than 460,000 college students participate in intercollegiate athletics through the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.). Among this population, Black male student-athletes comprise a considerable subgroup and make up a large percentage of football and men's basketball teams (Harper, 2016). An ever-growing body of research has examined the experience of Black male student-athletes given the demands of athletics and the unique experience of being a Black male student-athlete within historically White contexts (Beamon, 2008; Bimper & Harrison, 2011; Harper, 2016; e.g., Hawkins, Carter-Francique, & Cooper, 2016). While they contribute incalculably to universities' and other stakeholders' financial bottom line, they do not receive compensation and also face racism in myriad forms, such as exploitation, classroom discrimination, negative stereotypes, and the reality of existing in a system where Black men are not similarly represented in positions of power (Beamon, 2008; Harper, 2016; Lapchick, 2018b, 2018a; Perlmutter, 2003; Rhoden, 2010), to name a few examples. Such factors, as well as the reality that student-athletes' have a relative lack of power within athletics departments and may feel cloistered from other aspects of campus life due to the demands and structure of athletics programs, mean that there are important reasons for continued attention to the needs of Black student-athletes. Furthermore, ongoing concussion and chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) research (see e.g., Mez

et al., 2017), and the potential consequences of discontinuing sport or not attaining a professional athletic career (see e.g., Beamon, 2012; Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013)—factors that arguably affect Black male athletes disproportionately given their overrepresentation in revenue sports—also weigh in favor of prioritizing continued research about the experiences of Black male student-athletes.

Critical Race Theory

The theoretical lens for this dissertation is Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Beamon, 2008; Harper, 2016; Lapchick, 2018b, 2018c; Perlmutter, 2003; Rhoden, 2010). More than an organizing framework and explanatory tool, CRT is a counter-conceptualization of racism that is inherently activist in nature: "The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). Because this dissertation examines the experiences of Black male student-athletes who live within the context of an immense, lucrative enterprise operated by historically White institutions, CRT is a helpful framework for examining the identities, interests, and concerns of these student-athletes—considerations that are often overlooked. Specifically, CRT provides several guiding tenets, (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), one of which is the recognition of the pervasive, endemic nature of racism. CRT asserts that racism is not an anomaly nor an aberration, but rather an entrenched and far-reaching norm—so much so that it is invisible to many in its various permutations. CRT theorists, therefore, challenge modern notions of colorblindness, meritocracy, and post-racial society. CRT also challenges liberalism, pointing out that

Civil Rights-era reforms were insufficient to redress fully "the problem of the color-line," (Du Bois, 1904, p. vii) and that the slow, incremental pace of change does not do justice to the need for sweeping reforms. Furthermore, CRT prioritizes storytelling as a means for uplifting counter-narratives that challenge what has been widely regarded as truth and science, providing validation to oppressed people, and persuading hearers through compelling accounts (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT has origins in legal scholarship (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) but has since been applied to diverse fields, including education (Harper, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Patton & Bondi, 2015; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000) and collegiate athletics (Donnor, 2005; Hawkins et al., 2016).

Athletic Identity

A theme throughout this dissertation is the construct of athletic identity as experienced by Black male student-athletes. Athletic identity is defined in the literature as the extent to which an individual identifies with the athlete role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). This construct, as measured by the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (Brewer et al., 1993) includes self-perception of athletic identity, others' perceptions, and the extent to which one's goals, friendships, thoughts, and mood are tied to the athletic identity. Research suggests that having an athletic identity in and of itself may not be problematic (Brewer et al., 1993; C. Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000); however, athletic identity coupled with identity foreclosure is cause for concern (C. Brown et al., 2000; Lally & Kerr, 2005; Roccas, 2003; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Thus, positive development should include a certain amount of identity exploration, as opposed to premature adoption of a dominant identity (Marcia, 1966; Petitpas, 1978).

Related to this, development of a complex identity is protective against the distress associated with threat to any one identity (Roccas, 2003; Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

The extant literature on athletic identity suggests that Black male student-athletes disproportionately endorse strong athletic identity in comparison with their non-Black peers (Beamon, 2008, 2012; G. T. Brown, Hainline, Kroshus, & Wilfert, 2014; Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Given the negative correlates of over-identifying with athletics without also developing other identities and interests, this is cause for further research. Black athletes who identify with the athlete role to the exclusion of other possible selves risk experiencing psychological sequelae associated with threats to athletic identity. Among these include feelings of isolation, loneliness, depression, and anxiety upon injury or retirement from sport (Beamon, 2008, 2012; G. T. Brown et al., 2014; Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013; Watson & Kissinger, 2007), which can lead to maladaptive coping strategies (Grove, Lavallee, & Gordon, 1997; Taylor, 2014). In addition, Black student-athletes face the threat of racism and its corollaries. The threatened or realized effects of racism are pervasive and manifest in sport, academic, and social settings alike (J. Cooper & Hawkins, 2015; Harper, 2016; Hawkins, 2013; Rhoden, 2010).

Paper 1: "Football is All My Life"

In view of the above considerations, the aim for the first manuscript was to gain a voice-centered perspective of the lived experiences of eight high school student-athletes of color who had participated in a group counseling experience called Men Passionately Pursuing Purpose (MP3). This study addressed some precursor issues faced by

intercollegiate athletes. Specifically, given the number of Black male high school students who aspire to intercollegiate and professional sport careers, it was important to gain a clearer understanding of the meaning these students attached to athletic involvement. As such, this study focused on high school students who had been referred for participation in MP3 based on the observation of school counselors or other school staff that they may be over-identifying with their role as athlete to the detriment of development in other areas, such as academics. Seven of the students were in the ninth grade and one was in the tenth grade. Following the eight-week program, each student participated in one-on-one interviews with research staff. Interviews were transcribed by graduate researchers, and the resulting transcripts were coded and analyzed by the first author.

Results affirmed that the participants identified strongly with their athletic roles. The findings also extended the literature by providing insight into why athletics were so important. Through the interviews, participants made clear that sports were about more than playing a game. Much more than this, athletic involvement provided an indirect way to cope with life stressors, relational connection with teammates and family members, a sense of efficacy through athletic achievement, and hope for making it to college and a professional sports career. Coinciding with these advantages, however, were a number of risks. Among these were a tendency to neglect development of interests and competencies in other areas due to overly focusing on sports. In addition, participants whose strong athletic identity was accompanied by identity foreclosure communicated more anxiety about their futures, particularly if they did not attain a career

in college and professional athletics. Participants who had a backup plan in case their aspirations for an athletic career did not materialize were noticeably less worried in comparison. Instead, they expressed less concern about their futures and spoke affirmatively about the importance of having a backup plan. In line with prior research, these findings suggest that having an athletic identity in and of itself may not be detrimental (Brewer et al., 1993). When it is accompanied by identity foreclosure, however, there may be negative consequences.

Paper 2: Full Court Stress

There is some research suggesting that Black male student-athletes may disproportionately endorse strong athletic identity in comparison with their non-Black peers (J. N. Cooper, Davis, & Dougherty, 2017). Relevant to this subject are the potential negative consequences attending strong athletic identity when coupled with identity foreclosure, as well as the race-based stressors facing these athletes (Beamon, 2008, 2012; G. T. Brown et al., 2014; Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). The aim of the second manuscript was to gain a better understanding of what the literature says about the psychological wellbeing of Black male student-athletes. In light of the paucity of research that squarely studies wellbeing of these athletes, the second manuscript took the form of a scoping review of research findings that have logical implications for the mental health of this group. The findings from the review suggested that there were specific realities experienced by Black male student-athletes, above and beyond those experienced by their non-Black teammates, which in turn created risk for mental health concerns. Racism and stereotype threat in their varied forms emerged as

potent stressors. Another theme that emerged was the disproportionate risk these athletes faced for developing mental health concerns related to the ending of their athletic careers (e.g., injury, retirement) given that Black male athletes may tend to endorse high athletic identity more than non-Black athletes. This paper also highlighted a number of gaps in the extant research relevant to the mental health of Black athletes. This includes the need for more research on the incidence of and contributors to common mental health problems, and the factors affecting utilization of services. Some additional gaps included the following: (a) the need for more research on the intersection of race, masculine norms, sexual identity, and gender identity as they relate to student-athletes' lived experience; (b) attention to the role of coaches and other athletics staff in student-athletes' experiences of mental health concerns; and (c) exploration of cultural considerations in the presentation of mental health issues.

Paper 3: Identity and Future Aspirations of Black Male College Student-Athletes

The third and final manuscript of this dissertation further elucidates the relationship between race, athletic identity, and career sport aspirations. The study included the revenue-generating sports of football and men's basketball across the three divisions of the NCAA. In light of the distinctive opportunities and stressors inherent in college sports, and the need for more research on the experiences of Black male football and basketball athletes, this study examined three core research aims: (1) to explore whether there was an association between student-athlete race and degree of athletic identity among football and men's basketball players; (2) to determine whether there were differences in self-reported career sport aspirations across race for this same group

of student-athletes; and (3) to ascertain whether athletic identity was associated with differences in self-reported career aspirations for this population. The study utilized data from the 2006 NCAA GOALS study (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006)—the most recently available data at the time of this study—and regression analyses were conducted in order to determine whether there were relationships between student-athlete race, athletic identity, and career aspirations. The primary contribution of this study was the discovery of race-based differences among student-athletes with regard to degree of athletic identity and belief in the likelihood of going pro, with Black student-athletes as a whole indicating a stronger association with higher levels of athletic identity than their peers who identified as White or Other. Regarding, self-reported beliefs about the likelihood of going pro, Black student-athletes were at greater odds of reporting this belief than their White- and Other-identified peers. And concerning the third and final aim, higher athletic identity was also associated with higher odds of believing in the likelihood of going pro. However, student-athlete race—particularly, self-identifying as African American—was associated with higher odds of endorsing this belief.

Implications

Taken together, these three papers add to the research on the experiences of Black male student-athletes and may be of interest to several groups. For Black male-identified student-athletes, the findings of this study may provide validation, support, and tools for self-advocacy. For faculty and administrators, this study may contribute insights necessary for increased advocacy in collaboration with and on behalf of student-athletes in order to promote their wellbeing, academic achievement, and career success. In

addition, these findings may aid athletics personnel, such as coaches, athletic trainers, directors, and other staff, by raising awareness about the unique stressors these student-athletes face and how these stressors might be mitigated. This research is also relevant to mental health professionals, such as those who work in sports psychology and university counseling centers providing direct services to student-athletes. For these clinicians, the findings could help further culturally responsive services and outreach. In addition to the examples mentioned above, these findings might be leveraged in other innovative ways to support and empower Black male student-athletes during their academic years and beyond.

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PAPER ONE

"Football is All My Life": An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of Athletic Identity among High School Male Student-Athletes of Color

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Author note

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Abstract

The term "student-athlete" can be a misnomer. For myriad reasons, the latter half of the term sometimes predominates, whether this is due to the demands of an athletic program, a student's own over-identification with sports, perceptions of peers and professors, or other factors. This is not without consequence. Overemphasis of the athletic role, when coupled with insufficient opportunities to pursue broader interests, may result in diminished academic and career preparedness for students who participate in sports. Given the developmental importance of adolescence, more research is needed on this topic as it relates to high school students. And among high school student-athletes, further research is needed regarding students of color in particular. With some of the extant literature suggesting that Black student-athletes may be more likely to overemphasize athletic identity, for instance, further studies are important for understanding contributing factors and implications. The present study adds to the literature on this subject by exploring the experiences of high school student-athletes of color who participated in a group counseling experience called Men Passionately Pursuing Purpose. Semi-structured interview data and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis were used to explore participants' lived experiences and sense of athletic-identity. Findings indicate that athletic identity was associated with risk and protective factors alike. Implications for identity development, education, and career-readiness are addressed.

"Football is All My Life": An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of Athletic Identity among High School Male Student-Athletes of Color

The term "student-athlete" may call to mind images of a school's athletes wearing their institution's athletic gear, as well as images of tailgates, fans, and marching bands. But how often does the term evoke images related to the word in front of the hyphen: "student"? And how often is the term associated with an identity apart from athletics? The purpose of the current study was to explore the experience of athletic identity and its correlates among a group of high school student-athletes. Particular attention was given to the meaning participants derived from their athletic roles and the implications of their athlete identification for their future trajectories. Given the paucity of research on athletic identity among high school student-athletes, the following review of the literature draws heavily from studies conducted among college students.

Identity Foreclosure and Identity Complexity

A variety of factors likely inform whether the "athlete" side of the hyphen predominates a student's experience as a student-athlete. One such factor is the intense demands of sport that can make it difficult to carve out time for studies, particularly in college sports (Singer, 2008), but arguably in high school athletics as well. Adding to the tension between sport and studies are the mixed messages some student-athletes receive from athletics staff who preach the importance of schoolwork, but in practice, overemphasize athletic performance (Beamon, 2008). Moreover, student-athletes carry a significant extracurricular commitment relative to non-athlete peers—a commitment that exacts substantial time and physical and emotional energy—and this commitment may

limit the personal resources left to dedicate to school. Yes, student-athletes may reap benefits from sports involvement (e.g., travel to new places, scholarships for college), but they also face unique difficulties (Singer, 2008).

Another factor related to why the second half of the term student-athlete sometimes predominates is rooted in identity development. Identity has been conceptualized in the literature as "one's personally held beliefs about the self in relation to social groups (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation) and the ways one expresses that relationship" (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009, p. 577). An individual develops these beliefs about the self and ways of expressing them through interactions with their social context (e.g., family, neighborhood, school, spiritual community); and thus it can be said that identity is socially constructed (Torres et al., 2009). In some cases, an individual may prematurely commit to an identity without adequate exploration of other possible selves. In the literature, this is termed *identity foreclosure* (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017). In the experience of student-athletes, premature commitment to the athlete role before further exploration of other possible selves may occur for a number of reasons, which are sometimes conceptualized as psychological or situational foreclosure (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017; Petitpas & France, 2010). Some student-athletes may experience psychological foreclosure when they hone into sport participation as the required way for obtaining parental or social approval and avoiding a crisis of identity. Situational foreclosure, on the other hand, occurs when outside factors (e.g., time demands of athletic programs, cloistering off of student-athletes from school community, limited access to other activities) prevent the student-athlete from exploring other

identities. A student-athlete may experience identity foreclosure as the result of both psychological and situational factors; and thus have the experience of feeling more like an athlete than a student.

The literature suggests that students benefit from opportunities to explore other possible identities in addition to athletic identity, rather than foreclosing other options (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000; Lally & Kerr, 2005). The notion of *identity complexity*, that is, the extent to which an individual's social groups overlap or share similarities (Roccas & Brewer, 2002), holds important considerations for this discussion. Identifying with diverse social groups is protective in the case that an individual's status in any one of the social groups comes under threat (Roccas, 2003; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). The absence of identity complexity, by contrast, can leave a person vulnerable in many ways (e.g., psychologically, occupationally, socially, financially) in the event of threat to the main, central identity. In the case of student-athletes who have the experience of identifying almost exclusively with the athletic role—whether due to psychological or situational factors, or a combination of both—threats to their status as an athlete can be devastating. For high school student athletes, such threats may come in the form of injury, ineligibility to compete, or not being recruited to collegiate athletics, among others. In such cases, students who have not been supported in developing a more robust and holistic sense of self in relation to other social groups, may risk struggling with the various consequences of losing their sense of self. Students with greater degrees of identity complexity, however, could be more resilient to a threat to their athlete status.

Though there are ways in which development of athletic identity and identity foreclosure overlap, research suggests that they are separate and distinct phenomena (Brown et al., 2000; Singer, 2008). The findings are mixed regarding whether athletic identity in and of itself is a threat to career maturity (see e.g., Singer, 2008). Some research indicates that both athletic identity and identity foreclosure are inversely related to career maturity, while other research suggests that only identity foreclosure is. Brown, Glastetter-Fender, and Shelton (2000) indicate that student-athletes are less effective at career decision-making when they are so committed to their athletic role that they fail to consider alternative vocations. Athletic identity, by itself, however, may be less likely to impinge upon career opportunities if athletes do not hold exclusively to their athlete role but consider alternative career goals outside of athletics. The example given is the circumstance where a student-athlete identifies with their athlete role, yet considers non-athlete careers as the result of ruling out career athletics as a viable career goal.

Several studies affirm that student-athletes who solely aspire to a career in professional sports, to the exclusion of other non-athlete career options, may experience less effective career decision-making (Brown et al., 2000; Singer, 2008). The decisive issue seems to be the presence or absence of flexibility in thinking about alternative paths (Brown et al., 2000; Lally & Kerr, 2005). Understanding the long odds of attaining a professional athlete career may redirect a myopic focus on sports (Brown et al., 2000; Lally & Kerr, 2005). Lally and Kerr (2005) hypothesize that greater engagement with academic materials could help students envision additional career possibilities. This

expanded emphasis could precipitate peer group shifts that could, in turn, influence student's career aspirations and conceptions of possible selves.

Race, Athletic Identity, and Identity Foreclosure

Some of the extant literature on this subject suggests potential for racial differences in the incidence of strong athletic identity coupled with identity foreclosure. With regard to athletic identity itself, some studies with college football players reported that Black football players in these studies identified more with the athlete role than did their White teammates (Beamon & Bell, 2002; Harrison, Sailes, Rotich, & Bimper, 2011). In a study involving NCAA Division 1 football student-athletes, Harrison, Sailes, Rotich and Bimper (2011) also found significant differences across race on three individual items of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993): "I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else"; "other people see me mainly as an athlete"; and "sport is the only important thing in my life." In each case, analyses of variance indicated that Black athletes reported "significantly higher scores" than their White teammates (Harrison et al., 2011, pp. 95–96). Similarly, Beamon and Bell (2002) found that Black college football players believed more strongly than White teammates that they would attain a career as a professional athlete. Moreover, they found that beliefs about going pro were negatively correlated with amount of time spent studying. The study further reported that Black football players who believed they would make it professionally and that professional sports offered the best financial opportunity, were more likely to experience academic probation and suspension, in addition to other negative outcomes. Harrison and

colleagues (2011) note that even if the college athlete comes to realize at the end of college that a professional sport career is unlikely, such realization may have occurred after the student-athlete has already forgone other academic and professional opportunities. Despite having contributed to the campus community in significant ways, their hard work is virtually without compensation, and they may have honed skills that are not transferrable to other jobs.

Similar to the above studies involving college students, a qualitative study of Black male former college athletes also spoke to the defining role of athletic identity in their lives—before and after their college experience (Beamon, 2012). Participants in the study indicated that the athlete role was a major part of their self-concept, starting from an early age. They further observed that others in their lives (e.g., co-workers, friends, and family members) mainly viewed them as athletes. Another theme of the study was participants' experience of over-identifying with their athlete role to the point that this eclipsed exploration of other possible selves. Even after retirement from sports, participants reportedly struggled to "redefine" themselves and noted that the people in their lives continued to reinforce their athletic identity, which inhibited identity reconstruction (Beamon, 2012, p. 205; see Torres et al., 2009).

Bimper, Harrison, and Clark's (2012) qualitative study of academically and athletically accomplished college student-athletes illustrates the value of identity complexity, social support, and using education as a means for upward mobility. For these study participants, the athletic role was not their primary identity. They drew support from others (e.g., academic supports for athletes, individuals who cared about

their success, likeminded teammates), and viewed academic success as a way of countering negative stereotypes and creating opportunities beyond college.

The potential for race-based differences in intensity of athletic identity, particularly when coupled with identity foreclosure, warrants further investigation and should be studied with attention to important contextual factors in mind (see Harper, 2012). As noted before, identity is socially constructed as individuals form beliefs about themselves in relation to social groups. Ecological conceptions of identity highlight the critical role of environmental factors in this process (Torres et al., 2009). For historically marginalized groups, such as Black students, this environment includes the pervasive, pernicious influence of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). With this in mind, "the role that culture and dominance play in personal and societal beliefs about identity is critical to understanding socially constructed identities" (Torres et al., 2009, p. 583). Relevant to this inquiry is to examine topics such as who benefits most from Black student-athletes identifying with the athlete role, ways in which strong and exclusive athletic identity is reinforced, barriers to developing other identities, and ways athletic identity may serve as a coping mechanism for harsh realities of school, neighborhood, and society. It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the causes of potential racial disparities in self-report of strong and exclusive athletic identity. However, it is important at the outset to name the reality of privilege and oppression within which identity development occurs.

The Present Study

The limited extant research on the subject of athletic identity and identity foreclosure among Black male student-athletes almost exclusively involves college athletes. However, there is even less research on these identity issues as they relate to high school student-athletes of color. Since identity development is a key task, and since early interventions to foster identity complexity may help students diversify their interests and better prepare for their future, more research on this subject is warranted.

The focus of the present study is the lived experience of high school student-athletes who participated in a school-based group counseling experience called Men Passionately Pursuing Purpose (MP3). MP3 was created with the purpose of promoting college and career readiness for Black male high school student-athletes. Group counseling as a therapeutic model provides participants with the opportunity for interpersonal learning (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Through relationships with other group members, the corrective experiences such relationships afford, and lessons learned through the group as a social microcosm, group counseling is a potentially potent catalyst for change (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). MP3's regular meetings provide a safe place for students to discuss issues of importance to their personal, athletic, and academic lives, while also seeking to foster a sense of brotherhood among peers. MP3 is a new program, and thus warrants further evaluation. For this particular research project, I have chosen to focus on participants' lived experience as student-athletes and their sense of athletic identity. Using a phenomenological interpretative approach (Smith, 2004), the study illuminates participants varied experiences of athletic identity and the different ways they

wrestle with the question of who they are—or might be—when not on the field or on the court.

Method

The present study was part of a larger effort by the research team to evaluate the effectiveness of MP3. The focus of this particular paper is on the participants' experience of athletic identity. Given the need for more research on athletic identity among Black male student-athletes and its implications for identity development, academic achievement, and career readiness, the present study is positioned to fill an important gap in the literature. In addition, this research was informed by the view that the voice of the adolescent participants themselves was an essential part of the conversation (see e.g., Way, 2001). Although their perspectives are not always elicited, this study aimed to amplify them.

This research utilized a qualitative methodology called interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005; Smith, 2004), which is used for qualitative research in psychology and is appropriate when the aim of research is an inductive exploration of participants' lived experiences. It does not involve the testing of a hypothesis, as investigation does not begin with predictions or expectations. Rather, IPA seeks to understand the phenomenon from the ground up. Here, participants were treated as the experts and insiders on the phenomenon, and our research team sought to understand their experiences (phenomenology) and interpret them in order to shed light on the research questions. IPA is intended for research involving just a few participants

(e.g., 6) (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). As is common with this approach, semi-structured interviews were used for gathering data.

Participants

The participants included eight high school male athletes in the ninth grade who had just completed MP3's eight-week group counseling experience. Seven participants were Black male students and one participant identified as multiracial. The recruitment process for MP3 began in Fall 2015, at which time, the group's founder and director, Dr. Paul Harris, a Black male university professor and former high school student-athlete, oversaw the process of selecting students for the program. He conferred with the director of school counseling at the high school that hosts the group, and the latter was asked to pinpoint student-athletes who over-identified with their athletic role to the detriment of their academic identity, and particularly, student-athletes of color. The director of school counseling identified these students through consultation with teachers, administrators, and other school counselors. Once a list was compiled, the Counselor Education graduate student responsible for facilitating MP3 that year met with prospective participants in small groups for a second screening. At this time, he introduced them to the purpose and plans for the group and asked them to reflect on several topics relevant to their experience as student-athletes. After this, students were asked to have their parents sign a permission form so they could participate in the group and be interviewed afterward for a study. The group began meeting in January 2016, and met for eight successive weeks. The program was based at a high school in the Southeastern United States and is a stand-alone intervention that occurs in school during the school day.

Procedure

The adolescent participants were interviewed in May 2016, shortly after the end of the program. Dr. Harris and I, along with a Counselor Education graduate student, conducted semi-structured interviews in-person at the high school over the course of two days. We used a script, which was developed through an iterative process that relied on relevant literature, consultation with qualitative researchers, and deliberations between Dr. Harris and myself. Interviews focused on students' reflections on their MP3 experience, their experiences as Black male student-athletes, and their ideas about their future selves. They were audio-recorded by the interviewers and then transcribed by graduate students in a Counselor Education program. Following transcription, the interview transcripts were each deidentified for use with analysis.

The approach to analysis was grounded in IPA methods (see Smith et al., 2009) and utilized additional strategies characteristic of grounded theory. We first read the transcripts and conducted a line-by-line analysis. During this process, we recorded exploratory notes on hard copies of the transcripts. The notes included *prima facie*, linguistic, and conceptual comments. This phase was followed by emergent coding, which involved combing through the transcripts again line-by-line, revisiting exploratory comments, and attaching codes that captured the content of the line(s) of transcript under review (e.g., "athletic identity," "identity without the ball," "family influences").

After each transcript was coded, all emergent codes for a given interview were collected in a Word document and grouped together according to similarity. Through abstraction and subsumption (Smith et al., 2009), we named the overarching themes that

encapsulated each cluster of codes. We then created separate Word documents for each theme and gathered all applicable interview excerpts in those documents. For themes that were common across interviews, we gathered excerpts from various interviews in the same document so they could be compared.

Throughout the above-described process, we recorded memos and consulted with a post-doctoral researcher who specialized in qualitative methods. In addition, a third-party auditor was recruited to review the process. The research team discussed interpretations of the data in order to confirm that the conclusions were consonant with the program director's in-depth knowledge of the program and its participants.

Results

All interviews began with some version of the prompt, "So tell me about yourself." The majority of participants responded by describing themselves in terms of the sports they played. Their sports affiliations are summarized in Table 1. Football was the most common, followed next by basketball. Lacrosse and track and field were also represented. Five of the eight participants played more than one sport.

Early and frequent reference to sports involvement was not unexpected since the interviews were about their time in MP3, a group counseling experience specifically designed for high school athletes. What was remarkable, however, were the things they did not say. With rare exception, initial self-descriptions went no further than the sport they played, family members, school, and grade. Phil was the only one to speak of his personality traits without being prompted, though he did not do so in detail: "Umm I'm

pretty quiet usually…. I like being funny, though, like laughing." For other participants, like Darren, sports affiliation was a central descriptor for the self-introduction:

Darren:	"I play football, I do… track and field."
Interviewer:	"What positions do you play?"
Darren:	"Football, I play nose guard and left tackle. And track and field, I do shot put and disc."
Interviewer:	"Other than the sports that you play at [your high school], do you do anything outside of school or have any other hobbies?
Darren:	"Nah not really, just take care of my little sister."
Interviewer:	"What grade are you in?"
Darren:	"Ninth grade."
….	
Interviewer:	"Is there anything else that you'd like to share about yourself?"
Darren:	"Nah."

For Darren, his most salient facts revolved around his athletic role. He and other members did not volunteer information about their personalities, values, relationships, or future aspirations, which spoke to the centrality of sports to their self-concept and the absence of similarly developed alternative identities. When prompted to list five words to describe themselves, participants were able to identify non-sport related descriptors (e.g., smart, funny, handsome), though most also named "athletic" as one of their words. Interestingly, "smart" (or "intelligent") and "athletic" were named with equal frequency, used by five out of the eight participants.

The participants' strong sense of athletic identity serves important functions in their lives, and yet it is also associated with risk and vulnerability. The results that follow will reflect this, and in so doing, give voice to each participant's own complicated relationship to their sport. Results are organized by themes developed through the coding process described above. Taken together, they elucidate commonalities and nuanced

differences in the participants' identity development, the significance they derive from sports, and their hopeful yet precarious aspirations for the future.

Early Socialization and Continued Reinforcement of Athletic Identity

In all cases, family members—especially male relatives—were an important part of participants' athletic experience. Family affirmed their involvement in several ways, such as by introducing them to sports, providing opportunities to play, giving advice, and serving as role models. For Victor, the example of his older brother and his brother's teammates sparked his early interest in sports:

> Um yeah my big brother...he was doing good doing them sports—I wanted to do that too. Like, he influenced me playing football because, like, when I was like 5—4—and I seen his team running sprints and stuff, I tried run with them because, like, they influenced me to play football. Like, I wanna be with—they bigger, they having fun. So the older teammates, my older teammates and stuff influenced me. And my brother did, too, with sports.

Like Victor, AJ's interest with sports began early and family members played an important role.

> I started… the city league when I was little, and I just kept playing. And parents—my family—taught me how to like shoot and dribble and stuff. I just went up the stairs for my level and kept practicing…just played sports…. Well my dad…he used to play football. He was a running back and umm, look, my brother—oh…he like, he nineteen now—no twenty I meant—and he used came here and played football. I guess just want to be like him and stuff. And he used to play like basketball, too, but he stopped so I just be been different is play all my sports that I like to do.

As AJ describes above, he was surrounded by athletic family members who themselves had played sports. They gave him advice and training, and he listened to their stories. While he looked up to his older brother and sought to emulate him, he also sought to distinguish himself. Other participants shared similar stories of family influence.

Roderick's older brother, male cousin, and older sister played college sports and also challenged him, gave advice, and played sports with him. Similarly, Phil's father introduced him to sports, took him on lacrosse trips, and regularly picked him up from practice. Darren's father started him out playing flag football when he was six years old, and his aunt now sends him to football camps. "She knows a lot of people, she gets me to a lot of football camps…. And like a lot of D1 colleges camps are looking at me right now for football." Family members also showed support by attending games, giving encouragement, and cheering athletic performance.

An Identity without the Ball

The extensive effort that participants dedicated to their sports, reinforced by family, led to the development of advanced athletic ability. Both Victor and Terrance played football for the high school junior varsity team when still in middle school, and early into Darren's high school career, college football programs were already recruiting him. These accomplishments have not been without a cost, though. Specifically, over-identification with the role of athlete has hindered exploration of other identities.

Brandon: What happens in the group we like, like the first time we didn't really know what we were going to talk about and when they asked us who we were without the ball, it was hard for all of us to answer because we didn't really know, so the group helped us find out who we were without the ball.

….

Interviewer: What made the questions so hard to answer?

Brandon: Because you like—most of the time never really focused on things outside of what you love so it was hard to process—feel like you know what the answer was.

Participants wrestled with this question in different ways. Here, Brandon observes that his love for what he was doing on the field and on the court eclipsed the process of thinking about who he was apart from that.

Victor similarly wrestled with this question as he contemplated the potential for injury to sideline his future career in football. "I didn't want to talk about because like I don't wanna like think about getting hurt or nothing. But I mean…it's real life stuff…like things could not go your way and you gotta switch up." Victor's distress arose from a sense of feeling lost should he be deprived of his defining pursuit. "Sometimes like your friends or coaches influence you to do better," Brandon noted, "because they always like tell you stories about people they know who only did sports and dropped out of school and had nothing to fall back on." Darren recalled a similar warning from his father, who had lived the experience that Brandon's friends and coaches warned him about: "He didn't want me to follow his footsteps because when he was in high school. He kind of messed up; he just quit."

Barriers to developing an academic identity. The above reflections illustrate some of the challenges participants faced in developing a sense of self outside of sports. These reflections also speak to the perceived need for academic development and a back-up plan in case their sports aspirations did not materialize. Several participants spoke in further detail about the role and value of education. "Sports has to come second," Roderick explained. "And school has to come first." However, it was not always easy to make this a reality. "It's not hard to choose," Marcus explained. "You just lose focus on school and just wanna play the sport." Marcus and others got at an important tension.

This tension had to do with the challenge of balancing their passion for sports, which sometimes competed with their belief in the primacy of education. While they believed education was vital, at least in theory, there were practical challenges to making this a priority in their lived experience.

Other reasons participants cited for lacking school engagement were the seemingly boring and irrelevant nature of coursework. Victor explained that school was sometimes a thing to be tolerated in order to play sports:

> Football motivate me a lot cuz I be in class thinking like, like this is dumb. But then I think about football. Like, I think about my dream like going to the NFL so I know what I gotta do to get the work done so I just—like on days like where I feel like I don't feel like doing it, I just do it because I think about football . . . my dream and stuff; like it make me do it.

The attendance requirement for eligibility had the positive effect of motivating Victor to attend school even when he did not want to go. However, his experience of school as unappealing and "dumb" was an obstacle to deeper engagement and development of academic identity. When asked whether he felt differently at MP3 meetings than during the rest of school, Brandon responded, "Real life. It was way different from what you were talking about in my class, in my class meetings. You actually get a chance to say what you want to say and how you feel about things and what things mean to you." Whereas classes felt disconnected from real life and like a place where he could not express himself, for Brandon, MP3 was both relevant and a place where he could share authentically.

Another obstacle to academic engagement was some participants' experience of school staff as disinterested in connecting with them on a personal level. "I feel like I'd

rather come to the adults in MP3 and talk about stuff than the adults in the school, like counselors," Brandon explained, "Because of the connection that we had with the adults and MP3." Phil shared similar sentiments. "For the teachers in the building, you know I don't really know any of them really so they just giving me a grade on paper so you know," he explained. "I don't…they don't care about me as much as [the MP3 group facilitator]…so for obvious reasons…I don't care about them as much." Rapport mattered. The perceived lack of personal investment on the part of teachers prevented some participants from having a more positive experience in class. In so doing, it widened the gap between beliefs in the benefits of education and actual realization of those benefits through deeper engagement.

More than a Game

Going back to the primacy placed on sports, in order to rightly understand the sense of concern and even loss associated with the possibility of not realizing one's athletic dreams, it is important to understand that for these student-athletes, football, basketball, and lacrosse are much more than casual pastimes. It was clear early on that there was much more to playing sports than having fun. Yes, the participants enjoyed the recreational aspect. But for them, it went beyond just playing a game. This was evident as Victor looked down at his hands, fidgeting as he anxiously shared his fear that injury might preclude him from playing football in the future. It was also observed as Terrance smiled to himself as he recounted the time his mother came into his room exclaiming that he was in the news. For these young men, playing sports was about esteem, recognition, friendship, family bonding, coping, and hope. Not all participants mentioned the same

reasons for valuing sports but their answers coalesced around the theme that sports involvement served a number of valuable functions.

Coping. "I express all my feelings on the court," Marcus reflected. "Like, I feel better playing basketball if like anything is going on or something. It's like a stress reliever." He gave an example to further explain:

> Like one time I had got like mad. I don't remember what I was mad about, but I was mad and then I just went out the house and just started playing basketball and then I just started to feel better…. Took some time out…. I was just like thinking a lot about stuff and then I was just—there's no reason to be mad and I just felt better.

During their interviews, Marcus and fellow group members did not seem to speak about their emotions in detail. It is significant, however, that Marcus said he expresses all his feelings on the basketball court. It was his way of coping with distress. Others similarly identified sports as "calming," relaxing, and a way of managing life stresses. "It was fun, I met new people, I got to learn new things and…it's a good stress reliever," Roderick explained. "If I was mad about something or stressed from taking a test or something, I just…go play basketball, keep my mind out of it, listen to music." Sports relieved stress through physical activity, by providing a break from ruminating on problems, and through facilitating a situation where troubles could be processed more easily.

Self-esteem.

Interviewer: How do you feel about football?
Terrance: It's fun, a lot of people watching me.
Interviewer: How does it make you feel about yourself?
Terrance: It makes me feel like I'm nice, like yeah, it makes me feel like I'm nice.

Interviewer: This is going to…sound like a dumb question, but when you say it makes you feel nice, what do you mean by that?
Terrance: It feels like no one can stop me.

Terrance's last statement is a striking one. It conveys a sense of exceptionality, enjoyment, and power, that are entirely foreign to his class experience. Football provides a space where he feels recognized for his value. It is on the field where he feels gifted and talented, not in school. School is a much different experience. "It's like too much stuff to keep up with," Terrance says. "I don't feel like school is for me sometimes. My grades aren't good."

For eight hours a day, five days a week, Terrance endures an environment that he experiences as highly unrewarding. Despite past resolutions to work harder and to get tutoring, he feels stuck. Academic success seems out of reach.

> I want to like to show people I can make it. And I am not going to lie; a lot of people want to help me—like teachers and a lot of my family. But it just go out the ear. I listen to 'em, agree with it, and just forget about. I don't really forget about it, it's just hard to do it.

Nevertheless, he explains, "When I don't want to go to school, I just think about football and I'll be like, 'Nah, I gotta go.'" Against this backdrop, football validates his sense of efficacy. Other participants spoke to this idea of feeling special in the context of their sport, whether it had to do with being the strongest on the team, being recruited by scouts, or having "high Lacrosse IQ." The experience of feeling exceptional seemed highly validating and reinforcing.

Relational connection. Another important role of sports for MP3 participants was the close bonds it facilitated with other teammates and family members. "When you bond with your coaches and your teammates, like…you trust them more," Victor

reflected. "Like when you, like, get to know them and stuff and they open up to you, you open up to them; it's just a good experience." In a similar vein, Darren referred to his teammates as his "football family." "I got people that I call family but they're not really family. But like people I call my family I play sports with, and like we really know each other well." Darren likens his bond with teammates to a blood relationship. "It's a family sport," Terrance echoed in his own interview. "You become really close with people…. I used to get mad and yell at them [other players] and I realized that ain't good for the teammates….You all need to be on the same page." Terrance's choice to describe football as a family highlights the experience of learning to work through difficulties with those you care about. It also highlights his value of filial-like closeness and the perspective-taking and compassion he learned to exercise for the good of teammates.

Sports also afforded MP3 participants the opportunity to connect with relatives, especially male family members. Some of the student-athletes were first introduced to their sport through family members, such as fathers and older brothers. They also received advice and encouragement. Phil's father was responsible for introducing him to lacrosse and would pick him up from practice and accompany him on trips. "I want to be like my dad."

Family members also served as examples and athletic role models, such as Roderick's brother, sister, and cousin, who all went on to play collegiate sports. AJ also came from a family that had a significant history of sports participation. Both his father and older brother played football, and his mother played high school basketball. "Like even though she stopped with her sports once I was born, she just kept teaching me like

what to do and what not to do." In addition, family members were responsible for encouraging participants to push through disappointment, providing the opportunity to participate in a sports camp, and in Darren's case, even counseling against over involvement at the expense of schoolwork. "My dad, he told me a lot of stuff like, "If you don't do good in school then you will be good at sports and you won't make it to college." Because he didn't want me to follow his footsteps because when he was in high school he kind of messed up he just quit."

Motivation in school. Because school attendance was a prerequisite for participating in sports, sports provided a powerful incentive to stay engaged. Hopes of playing collegiate sports also spurred academic commitment. Several of the participants expressed their value of education apart from the added incentive of sports eligibility and college athletics; however, sports helped some to push themselves to do more than they might have otherwise.

> Sports are making me a better player—not a better player, but also a better student, cuz at first I didn't care about school. But when I got to middle school and high school, my life just changed by playing sports and stuff like that. I think when colleges had started emailing me, I think that's when I got to stay and focus on school.

Darren's aunt had secured him spots in summer football camps, and by his freshmen year of high school, he had a number of scouts watching him. All of this was bringing his dream of collegiate athletics within reach, which in turn motivated him to stay on top of schoolwork so that grades would not create a roadblock to this rare opportunity.

Other MP3 participants were similarly motivated. "I know if you don't maintain your grades then you can't play sports, so the sport influences you to keep your grades

high…. Sometimes you might…do the average so you can still play," Brandon explained. "But sometimes…your friends or coaches influence you to do better because they always like tell you stories about people they know who only did sports and dropped out of school and had nothing to fall back on so." Terrance, though pessimistic about his chances of playing collegiate football due to poor academic performance, was still sufficiently motivated by high school sports to attend school. "I feel like if I wasn't playing football, I'll probably, I probably missed a lot of days of school and all that cuz I hate school to be honest." When internal motivation for school engagement was lacking, sports proved a powerful incentive.

Hope.

Interviewer: So you said you really wanna make it?
Terrance: I feel like football is the only way out.
Interviewer: What do you mean?
Terrance: It's the only way I can make this money. (Laughs) I feel like I am not good at nothing else.
Interviewer: Really? Why do you think that?
Terrance: I don't know. Sports is really the only thing for me.

Sports involvement had deep meaning for MP3 participants. It served a variety of important functions, such as providing a way to make close friends, a source of self-esteem, an outlet for coping, and motivation to apply themselves in school. In addition to this, an important role of sports was that it instilled hope—hope for future significance, a good quality of life, and the ability to provide for loved ones. It was seen by most as the preferred option—and in some cases, the only option—for success. Compounding this issue was the reality that most participants did not have well-developed interests outside of sports. Some did not realize that there were indeed many other future possibilities to

hope in—that there were a number of rewarding ways to "make it" in life. In contrast, it is likely that many of their non-athlete peers placed their future aspirations in professional paths that did not have the same long odds, such as college, a vocational school, or the military.

Dreams of "Making It"

Consistent with their strong sense of athletic identity and the high priority they placed on sports involvement, almost all of the participants saw sports as being central to their future ambitions. Table 2 summarizes the future goals they identified when interviewed. All but Phil expressed aspirations to play college sports, and most of them also hoped for a career in professional sports, either in the NFL or NBA. Several participants referenced NCAA Division when describing the type of college, they hoped to attend, specifically wanting to attend a Division 1 school. In so doing, they indicated that a primary criterion for selecting colleges was the stature of the athletic program, as opposed to other factors, such as location, academic ranking, or liberal arts education. Moreover, college appeared to be viewed by some as a means to an end, as an opportunity to play sports as opposed to sports providing an opportunity to pursue higher education.

Some participants acknowledged the possibility they might not make it all the way to a professional career in sports. Roderick, Marcus, and Brandon, spoke of this prospect casually, readily entertaining a back-up plan. Brandon, in particular, had an experience while attending a college class for an MP3 field trip that caused him to think more seriously about a non-athletic career.

> When we went to…[the college] class it like since I want to go—to go to school for education or something, it was really nice seeing how you talk so it like influenced me on what I want to do for my career…. It felt kind of good like some of the questions that were asked I felt like I could answer but like I didn't raise my hand because I didn't know if I could raise my hand I was allowed to answer or not but it seemed like cool just being in a college class with college students and see what they—what they experience in the class.

For Brandon, exposure to the college experience encouraged a new conception of his future self. He saw first-hand what the classroom experience was like, sat in the company of students, and realized he was able to contribute to classroom discussion. This one event prompted deeper consideration of education as a career path, which is reflected in his definitive statement to the interviewer about wanting to study education. It was a positive experience that further opened the door to exploration of a non-athletic identity.

Terrance and Victor, on the other hand, were more trepidatious about the potential of not attaining to a future in sports. Like others, both acknowledged the possibility that their professional sport aspirations would not come to pass. However, neither had seriously considered a non-athletic alternative and had invested their hopes in the precariously fragile dream of "making it." With no other interests to fall back on, and with this potential threat to their athletic identity, there was a sense of vulnerability such as those that were evident in Victor's anxious reflections:

> So yeah I do got another worry, actually. Umm, like I was saying, if like I don't like go to college like, like if something happen to where like say if I got hurt—I don't wanna get hurt or nothing but like, I don't really know what to do other than football because like, like football is all my life like that's what I've been playing since I was little and like that's everybody dream when they play football, they wanna go to the NFL. But I don't

> really know what to like, like if I get hurt or something, I don't know what to do after that. Like what am I going to do 'cause all I know is football?

Victor and Terrance had a lot at stake. With so much invested in football despite the odds against them—the improbability of a professional career in sports, the potential for career-ending injury, the lack of other interests to fall back on—their worry is justifiable. To find greater security would likely require an initially painful shift of focus toward other options and the development of other identities.

Phil was the only participant who did not speak of any aspirations to play college or professional sports. His interests were more diversified and included a drive to do well academically.

> I really love sports but, uh, school is obviously more important since I'm not going to NBA straight out of high school… so… I gotta do well in school to really do anything in the future. So yeah, sports is pretty huge in my life, but school's gotta be bigger. Family and school is pretty huge.

Phil clearly loved playing sports, evening touting his "high lacrosse IQ." But whereas athletic identity was central to others' sense of self and ideas of their future selves, for Phil, it was not defining. Sports were something he loved but not something he *was*, which may have made it easier for him to visualize a future without sports. In addition, Phil made several references to algebra class and wanting to do well in school. He frequently described himself as very intelligent, and he was the only participant to complain that MP3 meetings conflicted with math class, which he compensated for by consulting supplemental resources to catch up on the concepts he missed. Phil also happened to be the only non-Black participant, and in the broader context of the United States, his racial identity is arguably not typically associated with athletic prowess in

football and basketball. The above factors may partly explain why he was not dejected about the hard prospect of making a career out of sports. Phil, with his strong sense of academic identity, did not exhibit the same anxiety about future athletic aspirations as did Victor and Terrance.

Discussion

The participants in this study spoke to the central role that sports play in their lives and their strong sense of athletic identity. This was consistent with the referral criteria for MP3, which sought out student-athletes who tended to over-identify with their sports role to the exclusion of developing other identities. Almost all saw themselves primarily in their role as athlete. Their love for sports developed at an early age, with family members playing a key part in socializing them into their athletic roles. It was apparent that, for most, their athletic participation was among their highest priorities (second only to family), and as such, consumed much of their energy and time. Terrance was perhaps the most extreme, saying, “I think about football everything football.”

The intense focus on sports had some drawbacks. Most of the participants did not exhibit a well-developed sense of who they were apart from sports. Similarly, their social experiences outside of the team were limited, as were their conceptions of their possible future selves. However, participants spoke of the many benefits they derived from participation, which cautions against advising similarly situated student-athletes to drop their sports involvement altogether. Sports provided important positive benefits for these student-athletes, such as a means for bonding with family members; developing close friendships with teammates; learning life lessons about perseverance, leadership, and

teamwork; and coping. Sports participation also incentivized school attendance—even if for eligibility purposes—and provided a positive after-school option.

The participants in this study represented a range of perspectives about future aspirations of an athletic career. Reflections ranged from "NFL or bust" to no expectation of career athletics and then hopes for an athletic career that were qualified by a back-up plan in case things did not work out. Most of them hoped for a career in college and professional sports. In view of the research on identity foreclosure—in this case, exclusive commitment to athletics to the neglect of alternative future vocations (see e.g., Brown et al., 2000; Lally & Kerr, 2005)–students' unrealistic dreams of playing for the NBA or NFL should invite supportive but frank feedback from caring adults (e.g., parents, school counselors, coaches) about the low probability of such plans coming to fruition and the need for a backup plan. This need may be complicated by the reality that some of the adults in these students' lives (e.g., family, coaches, recruiters) might also benefit from their athletic success, underscoring the point that even caring adults are balancing conflicting norms, demands, and aspirations.

Identity complexity research (see e.g., Roccas, 2003; Roccas & Brewer, 2002) reinforces the importance of encouraging student-athletes to broaden their social networks, as well as extracurricular and educational interests, in case their athletic identity comes under threat (e.g., injury or disappointment of NFL aspirations). This is not to say they should be discouraged from sports participation altogether, though. Athletic identity in and of itself might not necessarily be harmful (Brown et al., 2000);

but it should be balanced with a harmonious development in other areas. Collaboration between high school student-athletes and the adults in their lives can help facilitate this.

An important identity for student-athletes to cultivate is their academic identity. Participants in this study simultaneously endorsed a value for education while also suggesting a lack of school belonging and engagement. This is consistent with Booker's (2006) review of the literature on school belonging among African American adolescents, in which research elucidates that, generally speaking, school achievement is directly related to the "perception of teacher support, encouragement, and warmth" (Booker, 2006, p. 2). And in some cases, students believe in the importance of education but do not achieve at a level consistent with this belief because they do not experience a sense of belonging. This was seen in participants' reflections on their school experience, indicating the importance of teachers, school counselors, and other staff members making efforts to reach out to students and to ensure that school is being experienced as a safe place where students of color feel heard, supported, efficacious, and respected.

The present study is not without limitations. Though the study provides a deeper, nuanced view of the participants' experiences of athletic identity, the small sample size and research design do not allow for conclusions about causality. In addition, this study began with the intent to elucidate the relationship processes experienced by the participants in MP3 but changed course as the more prevalent and salient themes surrounding athletic identity emerged. An earlier focus on the latter subject could have further informed the interview process to gather more detailed information about participants' identity experience. Future studies may investigate the effectiveness of

interventions like MP3 that encourage exploration of non-athletic identity in order to examine their impact on future academic and career trajectories.

The MP3 students in this study provided important perspective into their lived experiences as student-athletes of color. The qualitative, voice-centered approach of this paper is consistent with a Critical Race Theory priority on counternarratives and amplifying the voices of individuals with marginalized identities. Here, the participants' personal accounts challenge researchers and practitioners alike to understand more deeply the positives, pitfalls, and implications of strong athletic identity in adolescents of color. In addition, their stories necessitate an interrogation of the systemic and institutional barriers to cultivating stronger academic identity.

An additional limitation of this study, notwithstanding participants' generosity in sharing an important part of their lives with the researchers, is that their self-report may not fully capture their lived experience of athletic identity. This may be for a number of reasons such as the lack of a pre-existing relationship with interviewers such as could facilitate increased comfort with sharing. In addition, level of personal insight given developmental considerations during adolescence as well as internalized pressures and norms (e.g., of masculinity) could also have played a role. These and other factors could have impacted the extent to which participants felt comfortable talking about their experiences.

Taken together, the findings of this study suggest that athletic identity may be associated with important risk and protective factors alike. The participants we interviewed spoke to several valuable functions that sports can serve—advantages that

might go unrecognized or be underestimated. Those who work with high school student-athletes should consider how to leverage students' athletic involvement to meet developmental needs for belonging, skill-building, and self-efficacy. At the same time, this study addressed serious risks associated with athletic identity foreclosure. The findings speak to the importance of collaborating with student-athletes to diversify their interests, broaden their self-concept, and develop goals for the future that are both realistic and sufficiently authentic to keep them engaged. Teachers and school staff play an important role in creating an atmosphere where student-athletes feel they matter and that welcomes further development of academic identity.

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Table 1.

Participants' Sports Involvement

Participant Name	Sport			
	Football	Basketball	Lacrosse	Track & Field
AJ	X	X		X
Brandon	X	X	X	
Darren	X			X
Phil	X		X	
Marcus		X		
Roderick	X	X		
Victor	X			
Terrance	X			

Table 2.

Participants' Future Goals

Participant Name	Future Goals				
	College	College Sports	Professional Sports	Back-up Plan	No Pro Sport Aspirations
AJ	X	X	X		
Brandon	X	X	X	X	
Darren	X	X	X		
Phil	X				X
Marcus	X	X	X	X	
Roderick	X	X	X	X	
Victor	X	X	X		
Terrance	X	X	X		

PAPER TWO

Full Court Stress: Why Black Male College Athletes Face Unique Threats for Mental Health Concerns

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Abstract

A paradox of the student-athlete experience, as far as mental health is concerned, is that student-athletes experience equivalent or added psychological pressures in comparison with non-athletes; yet on average, they tend to underutilize mental health services. There has been considerable research on the topic of student-athlete mental health. However, when it comes to the mental health of Black male student-athletes in particular, the extant literature is limited. Nevertheless, the overrepresentation of Black male athletes in college sports, particularly in the revenue-generating sports of football and men's basketball, recommends in favor of focused investigation into their lived experiences and wellbeing. The aim of this scoping review of the literature was to explore existing research addressing the unique psychological stressors faced by Black male student-athletes and the barriers they face for receiving support. The extant literature suggests that Black male student-athletes are confronted with numerous and complex threats to their mental health, and that there exist diverse systemic and institutional barriers to accessing help. Future directions for research and practice are addressed.

Full Court Stress:

Why Black Male College-Athletes Face Unique Threats for Mental Health Concerns

Over 460,000 college students participate in NCAA athletic programs (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.d). They compete in a range of revenue-generating and Olympic sports, from football to lacrosse, from baseball to tennis, from basketball to track and field, from golf to swimming and diving, and a host of other sports. The college experience for student-athletes is characterized by unique opportunities and challenges alike. With regard to the former, there are opportunities to develop bonds with teammates, to form lasting memories, and to gain important skills for overcoming life challenges (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.a; Singer, 2008). In addition, athletics may facilitate access to college for students who otherwise would not attend, and provide the chance to travel and expand one's social network (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2014). These are significant benefits that can alter the trajectory of students' lives in profound and positive ways.

Along with these advantages, however, coexist a number of challenges. Indeed, college athletes grapple with a number of stressors that are distinctive to their experience—stressors that their non-athlete peers do not generally face (Davoren & Hwang, 2014; Pinkerton, Hinz, & Barrow, 1989). In addition to shouldering the academic demands and developmental tasks characteristic of the college experience, they also carry the load of being student-athletes. This often includes intense training regimens, mercurial coaches, significant time demands, injury, frequent travel for competitions, performance pressure, and isolation from the campus community (Adler &

Adler, 1991; Kroshus, 2014). The myriad demands of college athletics can make sports feel more like a business than recreation, lessening the athlete's enjoyment of their sport (see also Adler & Adler, 1991).

For high profile athletes and athletes in major revenue-generating sports, the pressures can be even greater. This may be due to higher visibility both on and off campus, media attention, and increased performance pressure, among other factors. The added stress of these high profile and revenue-sport athletes may also be exacerbated by the experience of exploitation (Nocera & Strauss, 2015). Researchers, practitioners, and various organizations alike (e.g., College Athlete Players Association, National College Players Association, the College Athletes Rights and Empowerment Faculty Coalition) have brought attention to the inequities suffered by student-athletes in revenue-generating sports. Some examples include insufficient medical coverage, inadequate scholarship funding to cover basic needs, commercial use of athletes' likenesses without consent or compensation, the claim of amateurism, and other forms of disenfranchisement (Gurney, Lopiano, & Zimbalist, 2017; Huma & Staurowsky, 2012; Nocera & Strauss, 2015).

Without proper support, these unique pressures can create risk for student-athletes' mental health. The extant literature addresses a number of risk factors and presenting concerns experienced by student-athletes, such as identity conflict, social isolation, performance issues (e.g., poor performance, fear of success), academic issues, injury, and retirement from sport (G. T. Brown, Hainline, Kroshus, & Wilfert, 2014; Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013; Pinkerton et al., 1989; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). These and

other factors may contribute to incidence of depression, anxiety, burnout, eating disorders, substance use issues, and other problems.

The above considerations speak to the importance of mental health services to support the wellbeing of student-athletes. However, student-athletes may face a number of barriers to accessing these resources (Moreland, Coxe, & Yang, 2017; Putukian, 2016). For example, some research suggests that male-identified athletes, and notably those who strongly adhere to masculine norms, report less openness to mental health services than athletes who identify as female (Barnard, 2016; Moreland et al., 2017). The extant literature also speaks to the influential role of athletics stakeholders (e.g., coaches, athletic trainers, administrators, teammates, parents). Research indicates that stakeholders' attitudes toward mental health issues (e.g., stigma) can hinder or facilitate access (Moreland et al., 2017; Pinkerton et al., 1989). Other obstacles to mental health access may include student-athlete discomfort with vulnerability, limited numbers of sport psychologists on staff, and conflicts of interest between athletes and stakeholders. Pinkerton, Hinz, and Barrow (1989) note the paradox of this predicament: that a population with the same or more pressures than other university students may be at risk for underutilizing psychological services (see also Davoren & Hwang, 2014).

In the conversation about student-athlete wellbeing, those who identify as Black male student-athletes in revenue-generating sports deserve focused support and advocacy. Black male student-athletes make up a significant proportion of many athletic programs, and they are often overrepresented in the revenue-producing sports of football and men's basketball (Harper, 2016; R. Sellers & Damas, 1996). As such, their contributions are

substantial. College athletics is a billion-dollar industry, bringing in money from ticket sales, football bowls and basketball tournaments, student fees, alumni giving, and distributions from athletic conferences for television contracts (Clotfelter, 2011). But despite their overrepresentation in the labor force that makes possible this astronomical revenue, and notwithstanding the sacrifice of their bodies to exacting physical conditioning and even permanent injury, Black male student-athletes reap comparatively little when juxtaposed with the advantages gained by universities and other parties (Beamon, 2008; Gurney et al., 2017; Nocera & Strauss, 2015; Sperber, 1990). A common rationale is that Black male student-athletes, along with other student-athletes, receive a college degree in exchange for their years of labor. However, recent reports challenge this explanation, indicating that Black male student-athletes in revenue sports are graduated at lower rates than the overall student-athlete and undergraduate populations at their institutions (Harper, 2016) and at lower rates than White male student-athletes in their respective revenue sports (Lapchick, 2018b, 2018a). And lest these disparities be rationalized as evidence of underachievement or a comparative lack of ability, it is important to take into account the role of racism and systemic barriers faced by Black male student-athletes, and the impact these obstacles have on their achievement. In the words of Dr. Kirsten Benson, "We know how academically inadequate we have judged them to be, but we do not know how they experience school" (Benson, 2000, p. 225). Dr. Shaun Harper further noted:

> Racism and routine encounters with racial stereotypes are among many factors that undermine Black students' persistence rates and sense of belonging on predominantly white campuses. . . . Any effort to improve rates of completion and academic success among Black male student-

> athletes must include some emphasis on their confrontations with low expectations and stereotypes in classrooms and elsewhere on campus. Provosts, deans, and department chairs should engage faculty colleagues in substantive conversations and developmental exercises that raise consciousness about implicit biases and racist/sexist stereotypes they possess about students of color and student-athletes in general, and Black men in particular.

(Harper, 2016, p. 17). In sport and in the classroom, Black student-athletes must also face the realities of racism in its varied forms, and the isolation, inequity, and psychological stress this brings (Hawkins, 2013; Kroshus, 2014; Williams, 2014).

The aim of this review is to further examine the unique factors experienced by Black male student-athletes for the purpose of better understanding the potential risks posed to their mental health. By highlighting the extant literature on this subject, this review is intended to raise awareness about specific risk factors and gaps in the research, as well as provide direction for future research and policy.

Method

Given the limited attention that Black student-athlete mental health has received in the literature, the aim of this review is to provide a launching point for future, more detailed study by addressing existing relevant research and by identifying gaps in the literature for future investigation. The research questions for this review are two-fold: (a) What unique risks to Black student-athlete mental health have emerged in the extant literature? and; (b) What are the existing gaps in the literature that merit further research? This study relies on Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT originally emerged from legal scholarship as a critique of liberalism, positivism, and Civil Rights Era legislation. Certain tenets of CRT are

particularly applicable to the present review. The first such tenet is that racism is, and always has been, a normal, pervasive, entrenched, reality—not a mere exception to an ideal state. Second, CRT elevates the importance of voice-centeredness and storytelling in contradiction of the positivist tradition. A third relevant tenet is CRT's critique of liberalism, including self-congratulatory attitudes toward changes that are far too slow and incremental for a society that espouses justice.

The application of CRT has extended beyond the legal field and has been used in research of the Black student-athlete experience (Bimper, Harrison, & Clark, 2012; J. Cooper & Hawkins, 2015; Singer, 2005). It is particularly relevant to this subject given the diverse forms of racism that many of these student-athletes face, whether in the form of structural barriers, personal affronts, or the athlete's own concerns about discrimination and violence. CRT as a framework for inquiry compels close scrutiny to the power dynamics between Black athletes and sports management, and the conflicts of interest between these parties. It also compels examination of the social forces giving rise to the overrepresentation of Black men in revenue sports, and calls attention to the disparate distribution of profits gained from their efforts (Clotfelter, 2011; Gurney et al., 2017; Harper, 2016; Nocera & Strauss, 2015). It requires that ostensible benefits of athletic participation be held in tension with co-existing risks and inequities. CRT urges careful consideration of these and myriad other issues of race, including bias that is implicit and unwitting. This framework further requires that exploration of these themes include voice-centered research that amplifies the perspectives and lived experiences of Black male student-athletes themselves.

This CRT-informed investigation takes the form of a scoping review of the literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Grant & Booth, 2009) which is different from other review types (e.g., systematic review, mapping review) as being an examination of recent literature presented in narrative form. We selected a scoping review format because this is an early endeavor to survey and summarize relevant literature and because one of the aims of this review is to identify existing gaps in the knowledge base (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Grant & Booth, 2009).

Consistent with the framework for scoping reviews outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), we followed the following five-stage approach: (a) identification of a research question; (b) identification of relevant studies; (c) selection of studies; (d) charting of data; and (e) collation, summary, and reporting of results. The authors note that this process is not linear, but iterative. In the present review, the first step involved selecting a research question that was sufficiently broad to include the scope of relevant studies across disciplines, especially since very few studies directly addressed psychological wellbeing of Black college athletes. Next followed an in-depth search of the literature that utilized PsycINFO, Google Scholar, EBSCO host, and ProQuest research databases. Additional sources were gleaned through reference lists of articles already obtained and through consultation with other researchers in the field. Studies and reviews that were selected for inclusion focused on Black college athletes and addressed stressors that could have an impact on the psychological wellbeing of this population. Not all literature made the direct link between the identified stressor and wellbeing, but those that addressed factors that had mental health consequences were kept for inclusion.

The studies culled through this process were organized and collated through a charting system created with a Microsoft Excel database. In this chart were documented the background information for each publication (e.g., author, title, publication year), along with methods used, key findings, and implications for policy and practice. The resulting list of articles was organized thematically. This categorizing of the data into themes facilitated the identification of gaps in the literature. The above described process was iterative in nature. Increasing familiarity with the literature facilitated refinements to the research questions and search criteria. In addition, the iterative process allowed for new articles to be gleaned from the reference lists of articles already obtained.

Results

Through the process described above, a number of stressors emerged as being salient for Black athletes. As noted earlier, there are specific stressors that student-athletes face, regardless of race, that are categorically different from those experienced by other students (Moreland et al., 2017; Pinkerton et al., 1989; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). But among this group, Black male college athletes encounter another layer of concerns in connection with their racial identity (Williams, 2014). These stressors can vary in nature and degree of impact given intersectionality, personal lived experience, and other diversity factors. Athletes may have a combination of characteristics that make their individual situations unique (e.g., NCAA division level, sport-type, sexual orientation, gender identity, social class, ethnicity, phenotypic traits). Given the limited breadth of the relevant existing literature, however, Black male student-athletes as a whole are

contemplated. Future research should examine the role of intersecting identities and other within-group differences, though.

Several themes emerged across the studies reviewed. Specifically, the literature suggests that Black athletes may be disproportionately impacted by the consequences of over-identifying with the athlete role and that they must also carry the weight of racism and stereotype threat. Each theme is addressed in the sections below.

Race and Athletic Identity

Athletic identity, as defined in the literature, is the extent to which an individual identifies with the athlete role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). Athletic identity has been measured using the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) (Brewer et al., 1993). The AIMS assesses for exclusivity and strength of individuals' identification with the athlete role. It uses a Likert scale and contains items such as "I have many goals related to sport"; "I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else"; and "Other people see me mainly as an athlete" (Brewer et al., 1993, p. 243).

Implications of over-identifying as an athlete. Athletic identity itself may not be problematic in that it seems possible for college students to identify with the athlete role while also identifying with the student role; the two do not have to be mutually exclusive (C. Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000). However, over-identification with sports, that is, having a "strong and exclusive" identity as an athlete, can be problematic (Grove, Lavallee, & Gordon, 1997, p. 199). Some studies have addressed the consequences of identifying too strongly with the athlete role to the exclusion of other identities. One such problem identified in the literature is difficulty transitioning after

retirement from sport. Research suggests that athletes endorsing high, exclusive athletic identity may be at risk for experiencing mental health problems upon retirement as well as coping with retirement in avoidant and maladaptive ways (Grove et al., 1997; Taylor, 2014).

Related to the potential for retirement difficulties is also the risk for underdeveloped career maturity (Beamon & Bell, 2002; Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996; Grove et al., 1997; Lally & Kerr, 2005; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). The reason for this being that commitment to athletic identity to the exclusion of cultivating other identities can get in the way of personal and career development. Athletes in this position may struggle to imagine their future without sports. By the time the end of college nears, and the need to focus on career becomes salient, student-athletes may lack the grades and extracurricular experiences that would make them competitive for post-graduation pursuits (Beamon, 2012). The adverse consequences of over-identifying with the athlete role pose implications for student-athlete mental health. For example, studies have found that retirement from sport has been connected with a variety of mental health concerns for athletes in this situation, such as anxiety and depression (Grove et al., 1997; Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013; Van Raalte & Andersen, 2007; Watson & Kissinger, 2007).

Differences across race. Some research suggests racial differences in reports of athletic identity. Though Sellers and Kuperminc (1997) did not find such differences in reports of athletic identity, several studies since then have. One such study by Cooper, Davis and Dougherty (2017), utilizing data from the 2006 NCAA GOALS study, found that Black student-athletes reported stronger athletic identity than respondents who did

not identify as Black. In addition, Black athletes, in particular, were more likely than their peers to report that others tended to view them primarily as athletes. A separate study of 109 football student-athletes at an NCAA Division 1 predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Southeast also found that African American student-athletes reported stronger athletic identity than their White peers in the study (L. Harrison, Sailes, Rotich, & Bimper, 2011). Similar to the study by Cooper, David and Dougherty (2017), African American student-athletes in this study also reported that others tended to see them primarily in terms of their athletic role (L. Harrison et al., 2011). Moreover, a study by Beamon and Bell (2002) indicated that Black student-athletes in the study were more than twice as likely than their White teammates to have strong aspirations for a career in professional sports. Given that less than two percent of NCAA football and men's basketball athletes go on to play professionally in the National Football League (NFL) or National Basketball Association (NBA) (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.b, n.d.c), such career aspirations could be precarious, though the chances seem to improve somewhat for draft-eligible Division 1 athletes or if other professional sport opportunities other than the NFL or NBA are included (e.g., international teams).

An important and related inquiry to this subject has to do with the factors contributing to the aforementioned results where Black male student-athletes have identified more strongly with the athlete role than their peers or were more likely to have strong aspirations to turn pro. This inquiry is outside the scope of the present study but warrants further investigation into the role of socialization, marginalization, and ways in which Black students may be hindered and foreclosed from pursuing academic-related

roles and other identities. For the purposes of this study, it is important to note that these trends do not occur by accident.

Given research on the negative consequences attending over-identification with sports, studies suggesting that Black athletes are more susceptible to report a strong athletic identity relative to their peers who do not identify as Black give cause for concern. Recent studies have borne this out. A large-scale study of Black athletes from seven PWI's found that high athletic identity was negatively correlated with GPA (Bimper, 2014). Beamon's (2012) study of Black former athletes highlighted the difficulties some of them faced upon retirement from college sports. Most, if not all, reported feeling ill-prepared or unable to explore other identities after the end of their athletic career. The majority of participants reported that they continued to see themselves primarily as athletes and reported that others tended to see them this way as well. Athletes in the study also reported expectations that they would go on to professional sports after graduating and noted that they had not received adequate preparation to deal with the possibility of a life without sports. As a consequence, participants reported feelings of depression and loss associated with the transition to being just a "normal" person (Beamon, 2012, p. 204) without a sense of value supported by the notoriety attending athletic achievement. In a related study, Black athletes reported feeling "used" by their universities, only to be discarded when no longer needed (Beamon, 2008). A Black male student-athlete participant in Bimper, Harrison, and Clark's (2012) study stated the following:

> Guys begin to realize that they aren't going to the next level . . . don't have a shot at catching water in the ocean with a 1.5 GPA and don't have

> any opportunity but to go back home with nothing but hopefully a piece a paper saying I graduated college and a smile. I feel like I see and hear it too often that they have nothing, but the school has three new recruiting classes, new facilities, more seats in the stadium, more fans, and all that bowl money.

(Bimper et al., 2012, p. 16). These athletes recognized that their universities benefited more from their hard work than they had.

Research involving Black athletes who avoided the above pitfalls underscore the value of identity complexity, that is, when an individual has a multifaceted self-concept characterized by identifying with diverse social groups (Roccas, 2003; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). In Bimper, Harrison and Clark's (2012) case study involving Black student-athletes who had distinguished themselves both athletically and academically, participants reported that sport was not their primary source of self-definition. They cited the importance of their own self-determination and their support networks of people who cared about them and challenged them academically. In this and other studies, Black athletes reported viewing education as a source of empowerment and means of resistance—a way to defy the stereotype of intellectual inferiority (Bimper et al., 2012; Martin, Harrison, Stone, & Lawrence, 2010).

It is interesting to note that some research may be interpreted as suggesting that athletic identity can be experienced as protective against racial stigma. Given the prominence of sports in the United States, the line of reasoning is that success in athletics has the potential to garner popularity, admiration, and acceptance across race in a way that success in other fields may not accomplish.

> Although many African American youths have scores of potential role models in their schools, churches, homes, or communities, they

> understand that no matter how much schooling or education they acquire, they will still confront frequent episodes of racism in mainstream America. These episodes appear with less frequency in sport participation.

(L. Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002, p. 129). As such, success in sports may provide increased opportunities for positive interactions with people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. In a study by Brown and colleagues (2003) involving 533 Black and White freshman student-athletes, Black student-athletes who were high in athletic identity reported greater levels of agreement with the statement that discrimination in the United States was no longer a problem in comparison with Black student-athletes who were low in athletic identity. In addition, higher athletic identity was associated with less central racial identity.

Athletic achievements, however, cannot be expected to entirely insulate Black student-athletes from the reality of racism and the distress it can cause, as seen in the backlash that professional athletes such as Colin Kaepernick and LeBron James have received after speaking up on social issues and matters of race (see e.g., Mather, 2019; Reid, 2017; Sullivan, 2018; Wyche, 2016). Such examples indicate that the tide of positive regard can quickly change. This point is cogently made in the words of a student-athlete quoted by David Perlmutter (2003, para. 23): "'It's funny, but you can cheer a guy on the court and still resent him sitting next to you in class.'"

The ramifications of possessing a strong athletic identity are complex. Even the ostensibly more positive potential for athletic identity to buffer racial stigma somewhat may have its own downsides, such as obfuscating the ever-present realities of racism that are ever ready to surface. And more generally, research suggests that inordinate athletic

identity does not serve Black athletes well in the long run, making them vulnerable to academic, vocational, and psychosocial concerns (Beamon, 2012; Beamon & Bell, 2002; Bimper et al., 2012).

Racism as a Stressor for Black Male Student-Athletes

Racism in the athletic context. One of the most potent and unrelenting forces Black student-athletes must deal with is racism. In athletic contexts, racism can take a number of forms, such as through the process of racial stacking, whereby Black athletes are passed over for leadership positions seen as requiring strategy and intellect, such as quarterback in football or point guard in basketball (Singer, 2005). In Singer's (2005) qualitative study involving Black male student-athletes from a Division 1A football program, participants spoke on this theme, observing that Black athletes were passed over for quarterback positions. They theorized a few reasons for this, including that some White coaches believed Black athletes would not be able to recall plays, and that White coaches feared that Black athletes would fully dominate the game if allowed to be quarterbacks. Participants observed a similar pattern of exclusion from administrative roles, noting the underrepresentation of Black people among managerial and coaching staff. These observations are supported by other research. Though Black athletes are overrepresented as athletes in revenue sports (Harper, 2016), they are underrepresented in sports administration (Harper, 2016; Hawkins, 2013; Lapchick, 2018c). These realities were not lost on the participants in Singer's (2005) study. Moreover, they noted other forms of discriminatory treatment, such as poorer quality academic advising, being singled out for drug testing, and less leeway granted for infractions.

These experiences of racism can create an environment for Black student-athletes in which they feel marginalized and exploited (J. Cooper & Hawkins, 2015; Hawkins, 2013; Meggyesy, 2000). Given their overrepresentation in the revenue sports, the monetary gain that universities reap through these sports are disproportionately gained from the labor of Black student-athletes. Black athletes, however, may scarcely enjoy the benefits of their hard work, notwithstanding their costly investment (see e.g., Beamon, 2008). Black athletes and scholars alike have criticized this process whereby Black athletes are used up until exhausted of their resources, only to be forgotten once their athletic careers come to an end (Beamon, 2008; Rhoden, 2010). The more damning critiques of intercollegiate athletics point out parallels to the historical exploitation of enslaved Black laborers (Branch, 2011; Hawkins, 2013; Rhoden, 2010). In his book Forty Million Dollar Slaves, Rhoden (2010) related the experience of former New York Knicks basketball player, Larry Johnson, who famously spoke out on the parallels between professional sports and the plantation. Rhoden observed: "For Johnson, the plantation was the NBA, where power was not shared fairly and players were bought, traded, and discarded when used up" (Rhoden, 2010, p. 240). Similarly, a basketball player who participated in Adler and Adler's (1991) seminal study of the student-athlete experience explained, "October 15 comes, we don't do what we want to do. The man's out there now. He's watching. You have to show him you've learned what he done taught you" (Adler & Adler, 1991, p. 73). Counter arguments that Black athletes benefit comparably from the arrangement through scholarships and degrees are countered by data indicating significantly lower graduation rates for Black athletes in comparison with

other students (Harper, 2016). Moreover, those who do graduate may be doing so with lower GPA's, missed opportunities, and less career maturity due to athletic demands (Beamon, 2012; Bimper, 2014).

Racism in non-athletic social contexts. In addition to the racism encountered in athletic contexts, Black student-athletes also encounter racism in social contexts outside of the athletics system. Hawkins (2013) notes that Black student-athletes at PWI's can have the paradoxical experience of being both highly visible and yet invisible. While physical appearance and local celebrity can make them easily recognizable, particularly athletes in revenue-generating sports, these athletes may simultaneously feel invisible due to others' reducing them to their athletic roles and failing to see other sides of them. These athletes may also endure exclusion from the rest of campus culture and feel discarded once they have exhausted their athletic usefulness, such as in the case of injury or discontinuation of sport. Cooper and Hawkins (2015, p. 115) also noted the potential for being othered as "outsiders" or "foreigners," without a clear sense of belonging. They further point out that some Black athletes who ultimately transferred from PWI's to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) have reported feeling a sense of belonging, acceptance, and comfort that they had not experienced at their former institutions.

Racism in academic contexts. Another setting wherein Black student-athletes experience marginalization is in academic contexts. Hawkins' (2013) commented on his own experience working in higher education, noting that when it came to academic advising, the academic interests and agency of Black student-athletes were regularly

disregarded. Faculty interactions have also received attention in the literature as a source of concern. Findings from Comeaux and Harrison's (2007) study involving Black and White male student-athletes suggested that Black athletes did not benefit equally from faculty interactions when compared with their White peers. Results indicated that the White athletes in the study were more likely to receive help from professors than were the Black athletes. A separate study by Comeaux (2010) utilizing photo elicitation to examine differences in the way faculty viewed student athlete accomplishments also found differences across race. Results of the study indicated that faculty tended to view Black athletes' achievements less favorably than those of White athletes. A participant in Harrison's (2002, p. 77) qualitative study of the Black male student-athlete experience commented, "'We are discouraged to graduate….We just don't get the support in society like we do in sport. We need more Black Professors!'"

Research involving Black student-athletes who have surmounted obstacles in order to achieve academic success highlight some of the added pressures these students have had to face in order to do so. Martin and colleagues' (2010) qualitative study of high-achieving Black male student-athletes at academically rigorous universities provided insight into some of the challenges commonly faced by participants of the study. One such hardship was the pressure they felt to prove they were qualified to attend their prestigious institutions and to demonstrate they had the academic credentials for the task (Martin et al., 2010). Participants spoke to the weight of possessing two stigmatized identities: Black and athlete. Some also spoke to the pressure they felt from other Black students, stating that there were Black students who assumed they had not

worked as hard to get into college. Notwithstanding these challenges, a number of student-athletes in the study prided themselves on their ability to excel academically, viewing academic excellence as a way of resisting and defying stereotypes.

Stereotype Threat

For Black student-athletes, a powerful corollary of racism is stereotype threat. The stereotype threat theory was first developed by Claude Steele (Steele, 2010) and can be defined as the threat experienced when an individual feels at risk for confirming a negative stereotype tied to one of their identities (Steele, 2010; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). The theory was first developed in the context of test performance among Black and White participants, but has since been extended to other contexts and identities (Steele, 2010). One such study involved Black and White undergraduate students at an elite university and found that White students performed more poorly than Black participants on a golf exercise when told it was diagnostic of innate athletic ability (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999). These participants performed better relative to Black participants, however, when told the exercise was diagnostic of intellectual ability. The opposite pattern was true for Black participants.

A central tenet of stereotype threat theory is that if a stigmatized identity is primed when a high-stakes task is performed, the distress associated with confirming a negative stereotype hinders optimal performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). As such, the stereotype may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy of poor performance. There have been several explanations proffered for the mediating processes involved in this phenomenon. One such conceptualization is that the stigma and risk associated with confirming

negative stereotypes leads to cognitive overload (Fishman, 2012; Steele, 2010; Steele et al., 2002). The resulting demands on working memory and other executive function then leave the individual with fewer cognitive resources to perform the given task. Consequently, the individual is not able to perform to their full ability and thus risks fulfilling the stereotype. Chronic exposure to the distress of stereotype threat is connected with concerning outcomes, such as diminished wellbeing and happiness, and physical health issues (Steele, 2010).

Another possible mediating factor is for stereotype threat to lead to early withdrawal of effort (Steele et al., 2002). In the face of expected underperformance, discouragement may lead some individuals to give up or invest less effort. In addition, stereotype threat may lead affected individuals to adopt lower performance expectations that align with the negative stereotype (Steele et al., 2002). This, in turn, may lead to efforts commensurate with the lowered expectations.

Stereotype threat in athletic contexts. A growing body of research examines the role of stereotype threat in the lives of student-athletes (Brutus, 2016; Stone, 2012; Stone, Harrison, & Mottley, 2012; Wininger & White, 2008; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). Research indicates that regardless of race, student-athletes believe their classmates hold lower academic expectations for them (Wininger & White, 2008). Research on race and athletic stereotypes highlight important nuances in the operation of stereotype threat. For example, Brutus' (2016) work highlights that the assumption of natural athletic ability in Black athletes may lead to minimization of the motivation, hard work, and tenacity that Black student-athletes' dedicate to honing their abilities. In her qualitative study of male

and female multiracial student-athletes, Brutus' findings indicated that participants' mixed-race identities had complex ramifications for their experience of stereotype threat (Brutus, 2016). For example, participants perceived that others assumed natural athletic ability in connection with their Black racial identity, while viewing their White or other non-Black identity as an athletic liability.

Stereotype threat in academic contexts. In the classroom, stereotype threat can be especially formidable for student-athletes who are anxious to do well and especially invested in their academic success. Stone, Harrison, and Mottley (2012) examined the impact of stereotype threat on Black and White student-athletes, focusing on differences in outcomes when priming for athletic identity versus scholar-athlete identity. Participants were administered a verbal test before which they were primed for one of three identities: athlete, scholar-athlete, or research participant. When primed for athletic identity alone, academically engaged Black student-athletes performed more poorly on difficult test items than academically engaged White student-athletes. When primed for scholar-athlete, however, Black participants performed poorly on both the easy and hard problems. The authors hypothesized that this result was caused by the influence of three factors: (a) the perceived imbalance of the scholar-athlete title such that the athletic role dominates, (b) the "dumb-jock" stereotype, and (c) participants' desire to do well on the task (Stone et al., 2012, p. 104). In comparison, the scores of academically engaged White student-athletes were not impacted when primed for scholar-athlete. White and Black student-athletes who were unconcerned about their academic performance seemed unaffected when primed for scholar-athlete. This study extended the findings of prior

research on stereotype threat, providing support for the notion that the scholar-athlete identity may be even more stigmatizing for Black students than the athlete identity alone (Stone, 2012; Stone et al., 2012).

Discussion

Taken together, the research suggested that Black student-athletes face unique challenges above and beyond those of other undergraduate students and even those faced by other student-athletes. This review differs from other studies in that it addressed these concerns for the purpose of better understanding risks to psychological wellbeing. The limited research on this subject recommends in favor of devoting closer attention to Black student-athlete mental health. This conclusion is underscored by the research of Smallman, Sowa, and Young (1991) indicating that Black student-athletes in their study experienced stressful events as more aversive than their White peers experienced them, potentially having to do with their being in a PWI setting. The stressors identified in this review, including racism, stereotype threat, and the potential ramifications of overly identifying with the athlete role to the neglect of other identity development, may place Black student-athletes at greater risk for developing mental health concerns, such as depression, anxiety, and other concerns.

Given the unique pressures facing Black athletes, there is a need for increased attunement and cultural humility (see Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington Jr, & Utsey, 2013; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Waters & Asbill, 2013) among athletics staff. Anshel and Sailes's (1990) study of student-athletes and coaching staff illustrates the role of cultural differences and lends support to the need for culturally-responsive work. In

this study, Black athletes reported greater discomfort with receiving negative feedback from coaches in comparison with White athletes. Similarly, Black athletes in the study reported believing more strongly that coaches needed to earn the respect of athletes and that coaches were too controlling and inflexible in dictating how their teams spent the time just before a game. In addition, Black student-athletes reported believing more strongly that race was influential in determining whether an individual started in a game. Black participants also reported feeling more responsible for the outcome of a game than their White teammates. These findings further speak to the vital need for culturally-responsive work in athletics, especially given the power dynamics between athletes and coaches in these systems. These findings also suggest the importance of rapport, trust, and attunement.

Given the conflicts of interest between student-athletes, athletics departments, and universities, those outside of the athletics system who have an interest in college athlete mental health can play an important role in advocating for the wellbeing of Black student-athletes. Given the lucrative nature of athletics, and the reality that universities and other stakeholders have much to gain from the athletic performance of athletes in revenue-generating sports, there is a risk that the mental health, academic experiences, social life, and professional development of Black male student-athletes will be neglected or overlooked as long as there is no threat to their eligibility. Students who might advocate for themselves must face stakeholders and institutions with considerably more power than they have. Advocating for oneself can feel particularly daunting for athletes who are dependent upon their athletics scholarships to attend university.

Another reason why advocacy from parties external to the athletics system is important is that student-athletes themselves may not be fully aware of the injustices they experience until after their sports participation has come to an end (Sartore-Baldwin & Warner, 2012). Sartore-Baldwin and Warner (2012) suggest that current athletes may be less critical of their athletic experiences in order to preserve self-esteem. An additional consideration is that further development, life experience, and distance from the phenomenon may enable former athletes to recognize inequities that they did not perceive when they were younger and in the midst of their athletic experience. The potential for current athletes to not fully grasp the nature and implications of the challenges they face at the time these challenges occur makes it all the more important for those with experience, empathy, and expertise to support these student-athletes through outreach and advocacy.

Gaps in the Literature

As stated previously, a contribution of scoping reviews is the focus on identifying gaps in the literature for the purpose of providing potential directions for future research (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). A clear need that presses through the existing body of research is the need for direct study of the mental health experiences of Black male student-athletes, particularly at PWI's. As it stands, there are scarcely any studies that squarely address this important issue. The following list represents some of the more specific areas that warrant further study:

1. Incidence of and contributors to common mental health problems;
2. The intersection of race, masculine norms, sexual orientation, and gender identity as they relate to student-athletes' lived experience;
3. The role of coaches and other athletic staff in student-athletes' experiences of mental health concerns;
4. Factors affecting utilization of psychological services, such as client-counselor cultural differences, therapeutic alliance, and clinician knowledge of athletics systems;
5. Utilization of sport psychology services and other mental health services by Black male student-athletes;
6. Cultural considerations in the presentation of mental health issues;
7. Disaggregation of trends among Football Bowl Schools (FBS) and Football Championship School (FCS) programs in Division 1 athletics, as there are substantial differences in resources, recruiting, and other factors between and within FBS and FCS programs; and
8. Studies on student-athletes other than those participating in Division 1 athletics.

Furthering research in the above-named areas will inform needed policy changes in college athletics. Future initiatives on behalf of Black male student-athletes should also aim to decrease isolation from the greater campus community. Cooper, Davis, and Dougherty's (2017) research lends support for the value gained when Black student-athletes have opportunities to pursue non-athletic extracurricular interests. Opportunities such as these provide opportunities to develop identity complexity through participation

in other facets of the campus community. Collaborative efforts among campus partners, such as offices of diversity and inclusion, cultural centers, student affairs, counseling services, and academic departments can help foster robust support systems for athletes. At universities where sports psychology services are limited or nonexistent, university counseling services and local providers can be trained and recruited to work with Black male student-athletes. In addition, Faculty Athletics Representatives at universities can play an important role in monitoring the needs of student-athletes and advocating for their wellbeing.

A limitation of the present review is that the paucity of relevant research on the mental health of Black male student-athletes. Consequently, this review surveyed the literature on the unique stressors faced by Black student-athletes and extrapolated implications for mental health based on these sources. Had the full extent of the shortage of research on this subject been realized from the beginning, the scope of this review would have been extended more broadly from the start. Another limitation of reviews of this kind, and those that use more stringent scoping review methods, is that an evaluation of the quality of included research studies is not the principal aim (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). As such, this review provides an overview of relevant research, but does not evaluate the quality of relevant studies or the strength of the associations. As the knowledge base for this subject increases, there will be more opportunities for reviews that both summarize and evaluate relevant research.

A further limitation of this review is the general cross-sectional nature of the included studies, which limits opportunities for drawing causal inferences. In addition,

this review did not explore potential variations across university type (e.g., public, private liberal arts) and NCAA division level, which are important considerations for understanding nuanced differences. Furthermore, this review focused only on Black male intercollegiate student-athletes, but future work should also focus on other groups, such as high school students, current professional athletes, and former professional athletes.

Conclusions

This review addresses several of the unique stressors faced by Black male student-athletes. Though the focus of the review is on hardships and barriers, the findings contained herein should also be considered with an eye toward positive development. The perseverance that many Black student-athletes exhibit amidst these daunting difficulties is cause for admiration. To honor their struggles and dreams, the findings of this review should be seen as important data for improving advocacy and empowering student-athletes toward realizing their personal, academic, and professional potential. The information presented in this review may be used to effect positive change. This change may involve bolstering campus support networks and increasing outreach to student-athletes. It may also entail that faculty, administrators, and athletic staff receive training and psychoeducation on issues of mental health and cultural humility pertinent to student-athletes of color. It will likely require other creative initiatives that advocate for and empower student-athletes. Interventions such as these will require that the involved parties reckon with the strong conflicts of interest—often financial—that can lead to the prioritizing of athletic performance above the mental

health, academic success, and identity development of student-athletes. However, the results of such efforts can be expected to promote the wellbeing of Black male student-athletes, which is of the utmost ethical importance.

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PAPER THREE

Identity and Future Aspirations of Black Male College Student-Athletes:

A Multivariate Analysis of Cross-Race Differences

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Author note

The authors of this study thank the National Collegiate Athletic Association for granting access to the data collected through their 2006 GOALS Study. Conclusions drawn from or recommendations based on the data provided by the National Collegiate Athletic Association are those of the authors based on analyses/evaluations of the authors and do not represent the views of the officers, staff or membership of the NCAA.

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Abstract

Recent racial controversies in sports point to the enduring racial tension that exists in the United States. The present study addressed a more subtle manifestation of racial difference than some issues that make headlines: the hypothesized race-based differences in college student-athlete athletic identity and career aspirations. Using a Critical Race Theory lens, this study examined three core research aims: (1) to explore whether there is an association between student-athlete race and degree of athletic identity among football and men's basketball players; (2) to determine whether there are differences in self-reported career sport aspirations across race for this same group of student-athletes; and (3) to ascertain whether athletic identity is associated with differences in self-reported career aspirations for this population. Data from the National Collegiate Athletic Association's 2006 GOALS Study were analyzed using linear and logistic regressions. Results indicated that Black student-athletes as a whole endorsed a stronger association with the athlete identity than their peers who identified as White or Other, and that the odds of believing in the likelihood of going pro was greater for Black athletes than it was for their White- and Other-identified peers. Future directions for research and implications for practice are addressed.

Identity and Future Aspirations of Black Male College Student-Athletes: A Multivariate Analysis of Cross-Race Differences

Recent controversies in athletics, particularly in football and men's basketball, speak to the enduring racial tension and divisions across cultural lines in the United States. One has to look no further than the intense, polarized reactions to Colin Kaepernick's protest of racial injustice to find evidence of this (see e.g., Mather, 2019; Reid, 2017; Wyche, 2016). Such events illustrate how professional sports is an arena where America's long history of unaddressed racial trauma plays out. Speaking to this dynamic as it manifests in collegiate athletics, a Black student-athlete quoted in David Perlmutter's (2003, para. 23) *Chronicle of Higher Education* essay observed: "'It's funny, but you can cheer a guy on the court and still resent him sitting next to you in class.'"

The present study addressed a more subtle manifestation of racial difference than some of the controversies that make headlines. The overrepresentation of Black male athletes in the revenue-generating sports of football and men's basketball is a reality sometimes taken for granted. However, differences in the experiences of Black student-athletes, as compared with White student-athletes, may contribute to key disparities. The foci of the current study were self-reported athletic identity and career sport aspirations among male basketball and football student-athletes. This study specifically examined the extent to which these outcomes were associated with the race of the student-athlete. Specifically, the present study examined the hypothesized relationship between race, athletic identity, and career aspirations using regression analyses.

This research is important because though collegiate sport participation may carry with it certain advantages, there are risks associated with identifying strongly with athletics to the exclusion of developing other identities and experiences (Beamon, 2012; Lally & Kerr, 2005; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). Similarly, there are risks associated with aspiring to a career in professional sports without career preparedness for other fields in case professional sport aspirations do not materialize. Race-based differences in athletic identity and career sport aspirations would suggest greater risk to one group for a range of negative outcomes in the event athletic identity or career sport aspirations were threatened (e.g., injury, not being drafted, retirement from sports).

Critical Race Theory as a Conceptual Frame for Examining Race-Related Issues in Collegiate Athletics

Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) provides a timely conceptual framework for examining issues of race in athletics. This is particularly the case given the paradoxes of athletics in the United States, which include incongruities that can obscure existing inequities to the casual observer. Examples include the fame and fandom that attends many Black athletes, especially in revenue-generating sports such as men's basketball and football. Also, there is the glorification of their athletic feats, the seeming upward mobility realized by Black superstars hailing from humble beginnings, and the product endorsements of professional athletes. Moreover, there is the widespread view that the disproportionate recruitment of Black athletes to collegiate sport is a gesture of altruism that provides access to college for students who otherwise would not attend. These surface level appearances and

common narratives obfuscate the more complex reality of race-related issues faced by Black student-athletes—realities that a CRT lens brings to light (Donnor, 2005).

Tenets of Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory is a conceptual frame with origins in American jurisprudence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Notwithstanding its legal origins, CRT has been widely adapted to other fields, including education and intercollegiate athletics (see e.g., DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Hawkins, Carter-Francique, & Cooper, 2016; Hiraldo, 2010; Patton & Bondi, 2015). Various summaries of CRT principles exist, with a variety of emphases, throughout the literature. The current study, however, principally drew on the seminal work of Drs. Ladson-Billings and Tate, who cogently argued for extending the CRT framework to the field of education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As they described it, CRT comprises several key tenets. One such tenet is the notion that racism is ingrained in American culture. As such, it is not merely a departure from a more equitable norm, nor an anomaly. Rather, it *is* the norm, the status quo. But "because it is so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 11).

Another hallmark of CRT is its criticism of the slow, incremental pace of civil rights reform and its critique of liberalism as championing civil rights (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT also maintains that the civil rights policies commonly construed as benefiting people of color have actually benefited White people more. It further maintains that unless there was a convergence of interest such that the interests of White individuals in power were also served, policies advancing the interests

of people of color would not be undertaken at all. Harper (2009) qualified this assertion, pointing out that there are White people who indeed advocate for Black people, not out of self-interest, but genuine altruism, sometimes even going against their own self-interest. However, Harper observed that some White people must perceive a clear benefit for themselves and their institutions before they seek the advancement of people of color.

Another tenet of CRT is its priority on storytelling and sharing counternarratives to challenge what has been accepted as truth. "The primary reason, then, that stories, or narratives, are deemed important among CRT scholars is that they add necessary contextual contours to the seeming 'objectivity' of positivist perspective" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 11). Ladson-Billings and Tate also point out other important functions of storytelling, such as the relief and validation it provides oppressed people, and its power to impact hearers. Finally, CRT is notable for its conceptualization of property rights in terms of race, pointing to "the construction of whiteness as the ultimate property," which provides rights of disposition, "use and enjoyment," "reputation and status property," and the "absolute right to exclude" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, pp. 58–60).

Critical Race Theory in education and collegiate athletics. With a CRT lens in mind, a critical look at the collegiate athletic enterprise in the United States reveals something beyond the glory and success of Black athletes (Johnson & Jackson, 2017). Rather, one sees entrenched inequities. One such disparity is the ubiquitous dynamic of Black labor and White wealth that has endured since the nation's founding (Hawkins, 2013; Rhoden, 2010). In *The New Plantation,* Billy Hawkins referred to Black male

athletes as the "'bread-winners' or workhorses'" that predominantly White institutions (PWI) could not do without (Hawkins, 2013, p. 116). Indeed, the style, talent, and drive of this class of students underwrite universities and make possible the excitement and fervor that surround campus athletic events. But given that student-athletes are prevented from reaping the financial proceeds of their labor, and that Black student-athletes in particular face myriad unique pressures, the contributions of Black student-athletes often outrun their reward.

Another prevailing disparity is the overrepresentation of Black men in revenue-generating sports juxtaposed with their conspicuous underrepresentation in positions of power, namely, as head coaches, athletic directors, and university faculty (Harper, 2016; Rhoden, 2010). For Division 1 schools during the 2016-2017 academic year, Black student-athletes comprised 44.2% of football and 53.0% of men's basketball student-athletes (Lapchick, 2018c). By contrast, just 22.3% of men's basketball head coaches, 7.7% of football head coaches, 8.2% of college athletic directors, 3.3% of conference commissioners, and 0% of FBS conference commissioners were Black (Lapchick, 2018c). White student-athletes, on the other hand, made up 41.5% of football and 26.9% of men's basketball student-athletes; yet, 74.9% of men's basketball head coaches, 88.0% of football head coaches, 86.1% of college athletic directors, 93% of conference commissioners, and 100% of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) conference commissioners were White (Lapchick, 2018c). Similarly, when comparing the student-athlete population with the larger campus population, Black men tend to comprise larger portions of basketball and football teams but smaller proportions of the general student

body (Harper, 2016). This inconsistency calls into question the "altruism" of recruiting Black students for big-ticket athletics, as there does not seem to be an equal priority of recruiting Black men who are not athletes.

Adding to these disparities is the apparently higher priority for recruiting Black men as athletes than for graduating them as students. In a qualitative study of the academic experiences of Black college football players, Singer related that his study participants stopped him partway through a focus group to correct his use of the term "student-athlete," asserting that terms such as "athlete-student" or "scholarship athlete" were more accurate (Singer, 2008, p. 403). Moreover, research has documented that Black male student-athletes in revenue-generating sports have significantly lower graduation rates than their White peers (Harper, 2016; Lapchick, 2018b, 2018a). Lapchick's (2018a) recent report of Graduation Success Rates (GSR) for student-athletes in FBS teams revealed a 17%-gap between White and African American football athletes, with GSR's of 90% and 73%, respectively. Similarly, Lapchick's (2018b) report of graduation success for Division 1 men's basketball revealed an 18%-gap between White and African American basketball athletes, with GSR's of 92% and 74%, respectively. As concerning as these results are, they likely do not fully capture the extent of the disparity. The GSR has come under criticism as an overstated measure of graduation rates, and it has been pointed out that the GSR excludes certain populations from its calculation, such as student-athletes who leave their institutions before graduating, those who develop a permanent disability or die, and those who leave school to join the military (Harper,

2016). In view of these and other factors, the graduation disparities are likely larger than what is indicated above.

As Rhoden (2010, p. 2) noted, "despite their . . . rise to prominence on the fields of integrated sports, African American athletes—male and female—still find themselves on the periphery of true power in the industry their talent built." The strong investment in athletics that has produced so much talent, style, culture, hope, and opportunities for influence, also carries with it vulnerability—vulnerability to exploitation, oppression, and reduction of one's whole self to merely the athletic identity, thus eclipsing Black student-athletes' myriad other talents and potential. The notion of athletic identity, in particular, warrants further consideration as it relates to Black student-athletes and Critical Race Theory. Athletic identity is defined in the literature as the degree to which a person identifies with the athlete role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993), and there is research suggesting that Black male student-athletes may be susceptible to identifying more strongly with the athlete role than their non-Black peers (Cooper, Davis, & Dougherty, 2017; Harrison, Sailes, Rotich, & Bimper, 2011). While important for athletic success, strong athletic identity can carry with it certain liabilities, particularly when athletes over-identify with the athlete role to the exclusion of a multidimensional concept of self (Beamon, 2012; Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). A CRT lens calls into question the factors that contribute to some Black men identifying more strongly with the athlete role, such as the impact of socialization, marginalization (e.g., ways in which Black male students are hindered from accessing other opportunities

or developing academic-related identities), and exploitation by those with privilege and power.

A liability of over-identifying with the athlete role to the exclusion of developing other identities is threats to psychological wellbeing in the event of injury or retirement from sport (Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013). Another potential casualty is the diminished ability to engage in other academic and extracurricular pursuits that could be rewarding for identity development, social support, and professional development. And in light of the literature suggesting that Black college athletes may be more likely to aspire to a career in professional sports (Harrison et al., 2011), there are worries about post-graduation employment in the event an athlete does not attain to a professional sports career. Given the low probability that a student-athlete in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) will go on to play for the National Basketball Association (NBA) or the National Football League (NFL) (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.a, n.d.b), holding professional sport aspirations could be precarious. Even for Division 1 athletes at the highest level of competition who may have better prospects, a professional career is not guaranteed and there is still the presence of other risks, such as serious, permanent injury. Thus, it seems appropriate to ask, who benefits most from Black student-athletes identifying strongly with the athletic role and aspiring to a career in sports? Comparative graduation rates of Black male student-athletes, among other outcomes, suggest that it is not the Black student-athletes themselves who benefit most. This is especially apparent when one considers the wealth accrued by powerful and predominantly White stakeholders and institutions.

Overview of the Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to gain additional insight into the experiences of Black male college athletes in the revenue-generating sports of football and men's basketball, across the three divisions of the NCAA. Given the unique opportunities and challenges associated with sports participation, and the need for more research on the experiences of Black male athletes in the revenue sports, this study examined three core research aims: (1) to explore whether there is an association between student-athlete race and degree of athletic identity among football and men's basketball players; (2) to determine whether there are differences in self-reported career sport aspirations across race for this same group of student-athletes; and (3) to ascertain whether athletic identity is associated with differences in self-reported career aspirations for this population. In addition to investigating trends across race and athletic identity, this study assessed differences across sport subdivisions. Approval for this study was granted by the University of Virginia's Institutional Review Board for Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-SBS), and access to de-identified data from the 2006 GOALS (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006) data was granted by the NCAA.

Research Questions

The specific research aims and hypotheses of this study were as follows:

Aim 1: To determine whether there is an association between student-athlete race and athletic identity among male student-athletes playing football or basketball.

Hypothesis 1a: Black male student-athletes will report higher athletic identity in comparison with peers who self-identified as White or Other.

Hypothesis 1b: Black male student-athletes in Division 1 sports will endorse higher athletic identity in comparison with their peers who do not identify as both Black and Division 1 athletes.

Hypothesis 1c: At the highest level of competition (i.e., first team in Division 1 Men's Basketball or Division 1 Football, Bowl Subdivision) Black male student-athletes will endorse stronger athletic identity relative to their peers who self-identified as White or Other.

Aim 2: To determine whether student-athlete race is associated with significant differences in self-reported career aspirations among male student-athletes playing football or basketball.

Hypothesis 2a: Black male student-athletes will have higher odds of believing it is likely they will attain a professional sport or Olympic career, relative to their peers who self-identified as White or Other.

Hypothesis 2b: Black male student-athletes in Division 1 sports will have higher odds of believing it likely that they will

attain a professional sport or Olympic career in comparison with their peers who do not self-identify as both Black and Division 1 athletes.

Hypothesis 2c: At the highest level of competition (i.e., first team in Division 1 Men's Basketball or Division 1 Football, Bowl Subdivision) Black male student-athletes will have higher odds of believing in the likelihood of attaining a professional sport or Olympic career relative to their peers who self-identified as White or Other.

Hypothesis 2d: Black male student-athletes will have higher odds of intending to devote time to sport in their first year out of college, relative to their peers.

Aim 3: To determine whether athletic identity is associated with significant differences in self-reported career aspirations among male student-athletes playing football or basketball.

Hypothesis 3: Positive athletic identity will be associated with a greater odds of believing in the likelihood of attaining a professional sport or Olympic career.

Taken together, the current study was intended to address important gaps in the extant research regarding racial differences in the student-athlete experience, and specifically with regard to male student-athletes in the revenue sports of football and

basketball. This study has important implications for reducing racial disparities that exist for these student-athletes, as well as implications for supporting student-athletes' identity development and professional development in a way that prioritizes their wellbeing. Furthermore, this research was framed to inform policy and practice, particularly in the realm of higher education and athletics departments.

Methods

Overview

This study used data from the NCAA's Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in College (GOALS Study) (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006). The purpose of the GOALS study was to obtain data on the experiences and attitudes of NCAA athletes regarding academic engagement and achievement, athletic experiences, physical and mental health, social life, career goals, campus and team environment, and time demands. To this end, the NCAA research team developed the GOALS survey instrument in consultation with external academic experts.

Data from this study are cross-sectional and were collected during the 2005-2006 academic year. There have since been other GOALS study administrations in 2010 and 2015. Much has changed in the context for student-athletes in revenue-generating sports in the intervening time since the 2006 study, such as the growth of "Power 5" conferences, (i.e., the ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac 12, and SEC) and increases in revenue. This study utilized the 2006 data because it is the most recent that the NCAA has made publicly available at the time of the writing of the current paper.

Sampling. The GOALS Study consists of data collected from student-athlete participants from a representative sample of NCAA member institutions that sponsor a given sport. In this process, sports that had only a small number of respondents, such as fencing, were excluded from the study. From there, NCAA research staff created a computer program to randomly sample member institutions, and then choose one to three sports from each institution to be recruited for the study. Only one to three sports were selected from each school in order to limit the burden on each institution. In total 2,026 sports teams from 1,026 member institutions were asked to participate in the study. In the end, there was a 60 percent response rate with 620 institutions ultimately participating. For Division I and II schools, the response was 66%, and it was 54% for Division III schools. The total number of student-athletes surveyed was 19,786. All participating athletes identified as men and as 18 years of age or older.

Administration. As noted above, the study was paid for and fielded by the NCAA. Participating student-athletes were given an anonymous, self-administered survey to complete onsite at their member institutions, although some institutions opted to administer the survey electronically. The survey was proctored by the Faculty Athletics Representative for the institution, and no coaches or other athletics staff were allowed to be present. Each Faculty Athletics Representative was given a script to administer the survey. The script included a notice that participation was voluntary and individual responses would remain confidential.

Data. The resulting complete data set comprises 260 variables that are separated into domains representing different aspects of the participants' experience, namely

athletics, academic, student-athlete, social, health and wellbeing, time commitments, and background information. Participants were also given opportunity to leave comments. In addition, the NCAA research group created variable weights to facilitate comparisons across division and sport.

Participants in the Current Study

Given the current study's focus on male student-athletes in the revenue-generating sports of football and men's basketball, the sample for this study was extracted from the larger GOALS Study and includes male student-athletes who identified their sport of participation as football or men's basketball, as indicated by the *Sports* variable under the Athletic Experiences section of the database. All other cases were dropped from the data set (e.g., lacrosse, volleyball, baseball). The resulting sample comprised 5,024 participants. See Appendix A1 for a summary of unweighted frequencies and percentages for participants by sport and NCAA division level.

Measures

Participant Demographic Characteristics. Students were asked to self-report select socio-demographic information, such as *gender* (male or female) and *race*. The GOALS study included two variables for race. The first variable measured race in a dichotomous form (White, Other), and the second measured it in the trichotomous form (White, African-American, Other). The latter of these was used in the proposed study. Participants also completed information about levels of parent education.

Division and Subdivision. The data included each participant's NCAA Division level (i.e., I, II, or III), and further specifies sport division (e.g., Division 1 football,

Division 3 men's basketball). In addition, the data also indicated whether participants attended a school in the Bowl (IA) or Championship (IAA) subdivision.

Athletic Identity. Five survey items from the 2006 GOALS study were used to measure the construct of *Athletic Identity.* These items were taken from the Student-Athlete Experiences section of the questionnaire. Four of the five total items utilized the same six-point Likert scale. These items included "I view myself as more of an athlete than as a student"; "I feel that other students view me as more of an athlete than as a student"; "I feel that my professors view me as more of an athlete than as a student"; "I spend more time thinking about my sport than academics." These items were selected for their similarity to items in the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) (Brewer et al., 1993), an established measure of athletic identity. Appendix A2 lists the above items with apparent counterparts from the AIMS. The fifth survey item that was included asked participants, "How many of your closest friends at this college are on your sports team?" In its original form, this item utilized a five-point Likert scale, but it was converted to a six-point scale and reverse coded for consistency with the other items.

The construct of *Athletic Identity* is represented herein by means of a composite measure that comprises the sum of the five aforementioned survey items. The resulting continuous measure was a scale ranging from 6 to 36, with higher scores suggesting stronger levels of athletic identity. An alpha was calculated to help ensure internal consistency of the construct, with $\alpha = 0.728$.

Professional Sport Aspirations. The extent to which participants aspire to a professional sports career was measured using a variable from the Academic Experiences

section of the GOALS study: “How likely do you think it is that you will become a professional and/or Olympic athlete in your sport?” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006). This variable was selected for inclusion based on the connection in the literature between athletic discontinuation (e.g., injury, retirement) and mental health concerns (see e.g., Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013). Given the low probability of NCAA athletes going on to professional careers in the NFL or NBA (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.a, n.d.b), high aspirations in the face of low probability is considered a risk factor.

In its original form, this measure utilized a six-point Likert scale. But given the absence of a normal distribution, it was converted to a bimodal form. Those who thought it likely (i.e., somewhat likely, likely, or very likely) that they would realize a career in professional sports were assigned a 1, while those who believed this to be unlikely (i.e., somewhat unlikely, unlikely, or very unlikely) were assigned a 0.

A second outcome variable used in the study related to professional sport aspirations was the *Trajectory* survey item; this item prompted participants to complete the statement, “In my first year after leaving this college, I figure to be...” Original response categories included options such as the following: “working at a job related to my major,” “military service,” “attending grad school,” and “devoting time to sport.” In the current study, the *Trajectory* variable was dichotomized as “devoting time to sport” or not, indicated as 1 vs. 0 respectively.

Covariates. Roster spot (e.g., first team, practice squad), year in school (e.g., freshman, senior), and maternal education served as primary control variables. Grade

Point Average (GPA) was considered for inclusion but ultimately excluded due to its level of missingness. Appendix A3 details frequencies and percentages of missingness for variables used in this study.

Missing Data. To ascertain the nature of the missing data, a missing value analysis was conducted. Results indicated that not all of the variables could be said to meet the assumption of missingness completely at random. Upon inspection of the variables, there did not appear to be a theoretical reason why the questions would lead participants not to respond, resulting in the data being missing not at random. For this reason, we assumed in the current study that the data are missing at random (MAR), and thus multiple imputation was an appropriate method (Azur, Stuart, Frangakis, & Leaf, 2011; *Multiple Imputation in Stata,* n.d.).

Given the assumption of MAR, a multiple imputation was attempted to supply missing values. However, the nature of missingness present in this data set prevented use of multiple imputation as a strategy for imputing missing data. Appendix A3 details the frequencies and percentages of missing data. The only variables with no missing values were *Gender* and the string variables *Division, Subdivision, Sport,* and *Sport-Gender with Division.* Stata requires that there be no missingness in the variables used as a basis to impute missing values in other variables; however, the few variables with no missing cases were deemed qualitatively insufficient for imputing missing values for Race, Maternal Education, and other variables used in this study. In light of this, only complete cases could be included for analysis (*Multiple Imputation in Stata,* n.d.).

Analyses

The above-described measures were used in regression analyses that explored the aims articulated above. Consistent with what has been described previously, the two outcome variables of interest were *athletic identity* (*athid*) and *professional sport aspirations* (*proaspir*). Each construct was conceptualized as a manifest outcome variable, although *athid* also functioned as an explanatory variable for the second research question. Explanatory variables for the first research question included *race* (*Black, White, other*), degree of *athletic identity* (*athid*), and control variables. The first of these variables, *race*, was defined by the GOALS race/ethnicity variable in the trichotomous form (i.e., White, African-American, Other). To facilitate comparisons, the three response options were dichotomized. Analyses of the data were conducted using Stata statistical software (StataCorp, 2017).

Aim-Specific Analyses

Potential associations between outcome and explanatory variables were explored by means of multivariate regression using the following models.

Aim 1. The first aim of this study was to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between student-athlete race and athletic identity. Descriptive analyses were first conducted in order to disaggregate data by sport division and subdivision. The following regression formula was utilized to this end:

Model 1: $$ATHID_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{MBB1}_i + \beta_2 \text{MBB2}_i + \beta_3 \text{MBB3}_i + \beta_4 \text{FBS}_i + \beta_5 \text{FCS}_i + \beta_6 \text{MFB2}_i + \beta_7 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_8 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_9 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$$

The explanatory variables represent the dichotomized form of the NCAA variable for sport by gender, division, and subdivision. The final term ε represents the error.

Model 1a: $ATHID_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLACK_i + \beta_2 OTHER_i + \beta_3 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_4 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_5 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 1a regressed *Athletic Identity* against explanatory measures *Race* with *Roster Spot, Year in School,* and *Maternal Education* as control variables. $White_i$ served as the reference category. The final term ε represents the error.

Model 1b: $ATHID_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLACK\_DIV1_i + \beta_2 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_3 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_4 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 1b regressed *Athletic Identity* against explanatory measure *Black-Division 1* with *Roster Spot, Year in School,* and *Maternal Education* as control variables. *Black-Division 1* was a new variable generated by including those who identified themselves as Black and as participating in Division 1 sport. Thus, the reference category includes all those who did not fall within these groups. The final term ε represents the error.

Model 1c: $ATHID_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLACK\_FBS\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_3 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_4 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 1d: $ATHID_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WHITE\_FBS\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_3 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_4 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 1e: $ATHID_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 OTHER\_FBS\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_3 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_4 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 1f: $ATHID_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLACK\_MBB1\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_3 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_4 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 1g: $ATHID_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WHITE\_MBB1\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_3 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_4 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 1h: $ATHID_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 OTHER\_MBB1\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_3 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_4 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Models 1c through 1h regressed *Athletic Identity* on the explanatory measures representing race and the highest level of competition (i.e., first team for Division 1 Men's Basketball and Football Bowl Subdivision). *Roster Spot, Year in School,* and *Maternal Education* served as control variables. New variables were generated to represent the combination of race and the highest level of competition (e.g., black_fbs1st to denote Black student-athletes who competed in the Football Bowl Subdivision and who had a first team roster spot). Thus, the reference category includes all those who did not fall within these groups. The final term ε represents the error.

Aim 2. To determine whether student-athlete race was associated with significant differences in participants' career sport aspirations. Descriptive analyses first disaggregated data by sport division and subdivision, to explore trends in professional aspirations. The following regression formula was utilized to this end:

Model 2: $PROASPIR_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{MBB1}_i + \beta_2 \text{MBB2}_i + \beta_3 \text{MBB3}_i + \beta_4 \text{FBS}_i + \beta_5 \text{FCS}_i + \beta_6 \text{MFB2}_i + \beta_7 ATHID_i + \beta_8 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_9 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_{10} MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

As with the Aim 1 analyses, the explanatory variables here represent the dichotomized form of the NCAA variable for sport by gender, division, and subdivision. The final term ε represents the error.

Model 2a: $PROASPIR_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLACK_i + \beta_2 OTHER_i + \beta_3 ATHID_i + \beta_4 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_5 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_6 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 2 regressed the *PROASPIR* outcome measure on the explanatory measures for *Race*, controlling for *Athletic Identity*, *Roster Spot, Year in School,* and *Maternal Education*. $White_i$ served as the reference category, and the final term ε represents the error.

Similar to the analyses for Aim 1, additional models for Aim 2 examined the relationship between professional aspirations and race for Black Division 1 student-athletes, and student-athletes at the highest level of competition for their sport. The models for these analyses included the following:

Model 2b: $PROASPIR_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLACK\_DIV1_i + \beta_2 ATHID_i + \beta_3 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_4 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_5 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 2c: $PROASPIR_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLACK\_FBS\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ATHID_i + \beta_3 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_4 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_5 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 2d: $PROASPIR_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WHITE\_FBS\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ATHID_i + \beta_3 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_4 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_5 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 2e: $PROASPIR_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 OTHER\_FBS\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ATHID_i + \beta_3 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_4 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_5 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 2f: $PROASPIR_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLACK\_MBB1\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ATHID_i + \beta_3 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_4 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_5 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 2g: $PROASPIR_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WHITE\_MBB1\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ATHID_i + \beta_3 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_4 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_5 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

Model 2h: $PROASPIR_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 OTHER\_MBB1\_1ST_i + \beta_2 ATHID_i + \beta_3 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_4 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_5 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

The final model that addresses Aim 2 explored whether there was a relationship between race and student-athletes' intention to devote time to sport in their first year out of college. This was addressed through the following logistic regression:

Model 2i: $TRAJECTORY = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLACK_i + \beta_2 OTHER_i + \beta_3 ATHID_i + \beta_3 ROSTER\_SPOT_i + \beta_4 YEAR\_IN\_SCHOOL_i + \beta_5 MOM\_ED_i + \varepsilon$

This model is similar to Model 2a, however, with the outcome variable being *Trajectory*. The final term, ε, represents the error term.

Aim 3. The third and final aim of this study was to determine whether a positive athletic identity was associated with participants' professional sport aspirations. Models

2 through 2i, above, each include *Athletic Identity* as a covariate. Given this, the conclusion regarding Aim 3 was formulated based on the results of these same models.

Results

Aim 1: Athletic Identity

The results that follow were intended to address the first aim regarding whether male student-athletes' reported sense of athletic identity varied in relation to factors such as their sport, division, and racial identity.

Sport and Division. Table 1 displays linear regression coefficients for the relationship between the outcome variable *Athletic Identity* and sport, which is disaggregated by division and subdivision. In these analyses, Division 3 football served as the reference category. Controlling for *Roster Spot, Year in School,* and *Maternal Education,* the results indicated statistically significant positive associations with *Athletic Identity* for each disaggregated sport, with exception to Division 3 men's basketball, which did not yield statistically significant results. Controlling for the other variables in the model, Division 1 men's basketball student-athletes reported the strongest association with athletic identity, as indicated by the regression coefficient of 3.314. Division 1 football student-athletes who played in Bowl subdivision schools were second, as indicated by the regression coefficient of 2.828, suggesting a strong association with the athlete role relative to their peers. Interestingly, the results suggested a weaker association with athletic identity for student-athletes who competed in Division 1 football programs at the championship subdivision level, as indicated by a regression coefficient

of 0.932, even when compared with Division 2 football and basketball, 1.707 and 1.932, respectively. This was an unexpected finding.

Race. Table 1 displays aggregate findings for the association between *Athletic Identity* and the *Race* variable (Model 1a). These aggregations examined the role of race across sport and division. Control variables included *Roster Spot, Year in School,* and *Maternal Education*, with *White* serving as the reference category. Consistent with the hypothesis for the first aim, Black athletes reported stronger association with athletic identity followed by student-athletes who identified their race as Other or White. Relative to athletes of color, White-identified athletes had a weaker reported association with athletic identity.

A separate analysis, also reported in Table 1, revealed that Division 1 Black student-athletes on the whole reported stronger association with athletic identity than other student-athletes not in this category (e.g., Division 1 White athletes, Division 3 Black athletes). However, as seen in Table 1, at the highest level of competition for football and basketball, student-athletes who identified as White or Other reported stronger associations with athletic identity in reference to the rest of the study sample than their peers who identified as Black. In the case of student-athletes who competed at the Division 1 level in the Football Bowl Subdivision with a first-team roster spot, White student-athletes reportedly had the strongest association with athletic identity when compared with the rest of the study sample, followed by student-athletes who identified as Other, and then Black athletes. The same was true for men's basketball. White student-athletes in Division 1 men's basketball with a first team roster spot displayed the

strongest association with athletic identity, followed by Other and Black. These findings regarding athletic identity at the highest level of competition disconfirm hypotheses for this study.

Aim 2: Professional Sport and Olympic Aspirations

Sport and Division. The second set of findings related to student-athletes' reported belief regarding their likelihood of attaining a career in professional sports or Olympic competition (Aim 2). Table 2 displays odds ratios reflecting the odds that student-athletes in each sport, disaggregated by division, believed it likely that they would go pro. Consistent with the athletic identity results, student-athletes in Division 1 men's basketball demonstrated the highest odds of believing they would go pro, with an AOR = 17.591, $p < .05$, regarding belief than those who did not play Division 1 basketball. Also consistent with *Athletic Identity* findings, student-athletes in Division 1 football bowl schools had the second-highest odds of believing they would go pro, specifically the AOR was 9.274, $p < .05$, regarding the belief they would go pro in comparison with other football and men's basketball sport-divisions.

Race. The next set of analyses addressed our second aim, regarding the association between race and professional sport aspirations. Model 2b examined these relationships in aggregate—that is, across sport and division level. Results are displayed in Table 2. Control variables included *Athletic Identity, Roster Spot, Year in School,* and *Maternal Education,* with *White* serving as the reference category. Consistent with the *Athletic Identity* findings, the odds that Black student-athletes believed they would go on to be a professional or Olympic athlete in their sport was 10.009, $p < .05$, compared to

their White peers. Similarly, the odds ratio for Black athletes competing at the Division 1 level was 6.767, $p < .05$.

Models 2c-2h examined professional aspirations for student-athletes competing at the highest level of competition, that is, first team for Division 1 men's basketball and football bowl programs. The odds of believing it likely to 'go pro' was 8.626, $p < .05$, as much for Black FBS, first-team student-athletes, in comparison with the rest of the sample in aggregate. For Black Division 1, first-team men's basketball student-athletes, the odds were 9.827, $p < .05$, as much as the rest of the sample in aggregate. In comparison, the AOR for White student-athletes at the highest level of competition in football and men's basketball were 2.210, $p < .05$, and 4.058, $p < .05$, respectively. While consistent with the hypothesis for this model, the results contrast with the *Athletic Identity* results, which indicated that White student-athletes at the highest level of competition endorsed the strongest athletic identity in reference to the rest of the sample. The *Professional Aspiration* results indicate a reversal. Although White student-athletes at the highest level of competition endorsed the strongest athletic identity in comparison with the rest of the sample in aggregate, Black student-athletes at the highest level of competition had higher odds of believing in the likelihood they would go pro relative to the rest of the sample.

Race and Trajectory. The final set of analyses (Model 2i) explored the association between the race variable and student-athletes' plans for their first year out of college. These analyses were conducted as part of Aim 2 of the study, which was to determine whether student-athlete race was associated with significant differences in

participants' career sport aspirations. As discussed above, the outcome variable, *Trajectory*, was dichotomized as "devoting time to sport" or not, indicated as 1 vs. 0 respectively. Control variables included *Athletic Identity, Roster Spot, Year in School,* and *Maternal Education,* with *White* serving as the reference category. Results of these analyses, which are displayed in Table 3, indicate that the odds of planning to devote time to sport after graduating was 5.764, $p < .05$, times as much for Black student-athletes as it was for White student-athletes, controlling for athletic identity, division, roster spot, year in school, and maternal education. Otherwise stated, results suggests a greater likelihood that Black student-athletes in the sample planned to continue sports involvement after college relative to their peers who identified as White or Other.

Aim 3: Athletic Identity

Aim 3 of the current study was to determine whether athletic identity was associated with significant differences in participants' professional sport aspirations. Each of the professional aspiration models incorporated *Athletic Identity* as a control variable. As can be seen throughout the reported analyses, *Athletic Identity* was consistently and strongly related to professional aspirations, though it was not as influential as the race variable or level of competition in most cases. For example, Model 2 logistic regression analyses, which explored the association between athletic identity and professional aspirations, suggested that athletic identity was associated with increased odds of believing in the likelihood of going pro, such that the AOR of endorsing this belief was 1.075, $p < .05$, with each unit increase in athletic identity, controlling for sport-divisions, roster spot, year in school, and maternal education.

Otherwise stated, student-athletes who reported increased athletic identity also had greater odds in believing it was probable they would attain to a career in professional sports. Similarly, regression analyses for Models 2a-2i, which included *Athletic Identity* as a control variable, supported the hypothesis that increased levels of athletic identity were associated with higher odds of believing in the likelihood of going professional.

Discussion

The overarching goal of this study was to address gaps in the extant literature regarding the experiences of Black male student-athletes in the revenue sports of football and basketball across the three divisions of NCAA athletics. Toward this end, we leveraged the GOALS data to examine the following three specific aims: (1) to determine whether an association existed between student-athlete race and reported athletic identity; (2) to examine whether there were differences in self-reported career sport aspirations across race for this same group of student-athletes; and (3) to understand whether athletic identity was associated with differences in self-reported career aspirations for this population. The primary contribution of this study was the identification of race-based differences among the outcome variables. Specifically, the results indicated that Black student-athletes as a whole endorsed a stronger association with the athlete identity than their peers who identified as White or Other. Similarly, and in answer to the second aim, the odds of believing in the likelihood of going pro was greater for Black athletes than it was for their White- and Other-identified peers. In addition, higher athletic identity was also associated with increased odds of believing in the likelihood of going pro. Race, and

specifically identifying as Black, however, was associated with the highest odds of endorsing this belief, more so than athletic identity.

The findings of this study highlight differences in the degree of athletic identity and the professional aspirations endorsed by male student-athletes of different racial backgrounds in the revenue-generating sports of football and men's basketball. Moreover, the results indicated that those with higher athletic identity had greater odds of believing they were likely to go pro, a career trajectory that the NCAA indicates is unlikely for most (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017). For this reason, strong identification with sport to the potential exclusion of developing other identities is risky, as is holding professional sport aspirations to the exclusion of obtaining broader preparation for other careers. The potential for race-based disparities in identity development and professional sport aspirations is something that should be explored in future research, and if confirmed, should prompt further inquiry regarding the causes and perpetuating factors for such disparities.

Implications for Practice

The existence of race-based differences in the aforementioned domains prompts further questions regarding how these differences came to be, their consequences, who is harmed and who benefits. Answers to these questions are beyond the scope of the current study, but they warrant further attention, nonetheless. A CRT lens would seem to underscore the importance of examining the role of racism in constructing these differences and in interpreting their consequences. In a review of publications reporting race-related findings in the field of higher education, Shaun Harper (2012) uncovered the

tendency of researchers to discuss "race without racism" thereby minimizing the role of racism in the disparities reported in the studies (Harper, 2012, p. 9). However, the pervasive and endemic nature of racism in our society, as pointed out by Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), requires close examination to uncover the stealthy, and even unconscious, workings of racism in the culture, institutions, and systems of athletics that account for these race-based differences.

In the specific context of college athletic programs, and specifically, the revenue-generating sports of football and men's basketball, race-based differences among student-athletes warrant examination of the role of racism in creating and perpetuating these differences. The findings of this study prompt inquiry as to why Black student-athletes, and those identifying as Other, tended to endorse stronger athletic identity than their White peers and to perceive a professional sport career as a likely opportunity notwithstanding the long odds. The priority to better understand this race-related difference is made more pressing by the reality that strong and exclusive athletic identity can have harmful consequences, for example, underdevelopment of other social identities, hindrances to career maturity, and mental health problems following injury, termination of sport involvement, and other events (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000; Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013; Roccas, 2003; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Van Raalte & Andersen, 2007; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). The disproportionate risk to Black athletes must also be juxtaposed with the disproportionate benefit to powerful, predominantly White stakeholders. Arguably, those who benefit most from student-athletes' strong, and

sometimes exclusive, athletic identity are historically White institutions and their predominantly White leadership who reap billions of dollars annually from the athletic enterprise.

An unexpected finding of the current study was that White student-athletes competing at the highest level of competition for football and basketball, reported stronger associations with athletic identity, in reference to the rest of the study sample, than their peers who identified as Black. By comparison, when it came to professional sport aspirations, it was Black student-athletes at the highest level of competition who had higher odds of believing in the likelihood they would go pro relative to the rest of the sample. An explanation for these results is not apparent from the data but should be a focus for future research. First, it would be important to see whether these findings are replicated in other samples. If so, future research should investigate the experiences of White and Black student-athletes competing at the highest level of collegiate sports to ascertain whether there is something unique about the process of becoming an elite athlete and competing in this context that contributes to White student-athletes reporting a stronger sense of athletic identity relative to their teammates of color. Also worth exploring is whether elite White student-athletes experience less stigma in declaring "athletics first" than do elite Black student-athletes, and the possibility that this could show through in self-report data. Support for this may be found in the Stone, Harrison and Mottley (2012) study where results indicated that academically engaged Black student-athletes performed worse than White peers when primed for athletic identity; whereas their White peers were unaffected when thus primed. Such findings suggest that

some Black student-athletes might experience athletic identity as more stigmatizing, and this might be especially true for elite Black student-athletes who may feel reduced by others and the media to little more than their athlete role. Thus, it is possible that elite Black student-athletes feel pressure to emphasize academic identity while downplaying athletic identity whereas elite White student-athletes may not feel the same pressure.

In this study, it was curious that elite White athletes identified more strongly with the athletic role and yet did not have the highest odds of believing in the likelihood they would compete professionally. Future research may investigate possible explanations for this, such as the role of beliefs about Black athletes being perceived as more likely to play professionally, as well as identity development of White athletes and whether they are facilitated in their development of other identities such that they do not see career athletics as likely or even a chief goal.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are some limitations of this study that are worth noting. One such limitation is the 60% response rate for the 2006 GOALS Study, as well as the missingness throughout the variables used. The extent of missingness resulted in there being insufficient complete cases to supply missing data through multiple imputation. This issue warrants exploration of the reasons for the lower response rate and degree of missingness, particularly for variables with higher rates of missing data such as race and parent education. For the purposes of the present study, findings have limited generalizability given the use of complete case analysis since missing data could not be estimated through multiple imputation.

Another limitation of the study is that the data were not recent. Since the most recent data available from the GOALS Study was 2006, the degree to which the observed trends have waned, persisted, or intensified is uncertain. Since more than 10 years have elapsed since 2006; the present study might not fully reflect present realities. Since 2006, social media has grown, and with it, awareness and public discourse on certain issues of race. During this time, Colin Kaepernick, former quarterback for the San Francisco 49'ers, took a historic stand by kneeling during the national anthem in response to police shootings of unarmed Black people and the oppression of people of color (see e.g., Mather, 2019; Reid, 2017; Wyche, 2016). It is possible that this and other instances of athlete activism, as well as the criticisms launched against the NFL, have impacted the degree to which college athletes aspire to careers in professional sports. In addition, recent studies and public discourse about incidence of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) in football players (see e.g., Emanuel, 2017; Mez et al., 2017), may have impacted the number of college student-athletes who identify strongly with the athlete role or aspire to a career in professional sports.

Though more than ten years have passed since the 2006 GOALS study, there are some things that have remained the same, such as the underrepresentation of Black people in coaching and sports administration (Lapchick, 2018c), or the relevance of CRT tenets such as the endemic nature of racism and the convergence of interest principle (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Hawkins et al., 2016). Black student-athletes are overrepresented in the revenue-generating sports of football and men's basketball (Harper, 2016), and college sports continues to be a financially lucrative industry. In

addition, there are arguably still socializing elements that continue to perpetuate the overrepresentation of Black men and boys in football and basketball. Though the age of the data is a limitation of the study, the continued existence of the above factors suggests that the findings herein discussed, though based on data from the 2006 study, have implications for today.

Another limitation of the study is the race measure—specifically, its simplified, trichotomous structure—as well as limited availability of demographic variables, which prevented investigation of trends across the larger spectrum of possible racial and ethnic identities, exploration of intersectionality, and within-group diversity. The NCAA used the term African American as part of its trichotomous measure of race, though in this paper, the term Black is also used for the purpose of including other student-athletes who may have identified themselves as African American for the purposes of the survey but who may not have felt that the term African American best represented their ethnicity, nationality, or other characteristics. Use of the term Black has limitations, too, however. It is possible that some participants who personally identify as Black but not African American selected Other or did not specify a racial identity at all. In future studies, inclusion of additional racial, cultural, and demographic categories could provide enhanced clarity.

In addition, this study is further limited by the self-report nature of the data. The large sample size of student-athletes and the complexity of gathering data from numerous athletic programs would undoubtedly pose challenges to pursuing additional sources of data. Nonetheless, this study would be enhanced by the triangulation of other types of

data besides self-report (e.g., academic records, longitudinal data regarding post-graduation outcomes). The addition of validated scales for constructs such as athletic identity, identity development, career readiness, and mental health outcomes could help further strengthen the study through supporting the validity and reliability of the constructs under examination.

Lastly, the NCAA's positionality in this study should be considered. Given its role in administrating college athletics for thousands of student-athletes, the NCAA understandably has an interest in ascertaining the athletic, social, academic, and health experiences of their student-athletes. To this end, the NCAA was able to leverage its unique access to student-athletes to collect data from nearly 21,000 of them (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2014). The NCAA undertook measures positioned to guard the integrity of the study, such as creating the survey in partnership with external consultants, enlisting Faculty Athletics Representatives to administer surveys to student-athletes, and recruiting an outside organization to compile the data into a completed database (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2014). But even with these protections, there may be opportunities for blind spots or bias when any organization studies itself. For this reason, the current study would be bolstered by data gathered from other sources in addition to the NCAA, particularly from organizations that do not have a stake in the findings.

Conclusions and Implications

The results of this study have important implications for practice and future research. Given the high athletic identity indicated by Division 1 men's basketball and

FBS student-athletes, campus partners should make special efforts to interface with these populations to encourage and support holistic identity development. At schools where athletic departments are at risk for reinforcing athletic identity to the exclusion of the harmonious development of other identities (e.g., in academic pursuits, interpersonal relationships, the arts, social justice, and other extracurricular interests), it will be important for campus partners to support and advocate for student-athletes. Power dynamics between student-athletes and athletics staff can make it difficult for some student-athletes to assert themselves. Moreover, the complexity of university systems can be hard for students to navigate in their search for support, resources, and opportunities. Lack of familiarity with the opportunities available to them outside of athletics may also prevent some student-athletes from accessing these opportunities unless intentional efforts are made to bring resources to their attention. The demands and conflicting interests that can inhere in athletics programs may prevent student-athletes from obtaining this guidance within athletics departments, further underscoring the value of outreach from campus partners.

The above considerations have applications to male student-athletes who identify as Black or Other, as compared to White athletes, as these subgroups in the study generally endorsed stronger associations with athletic identity and had greater odds of believing in the likelihood that they would go pro. The potential influence of race warrants further investigation in order to better understand the role of individual and systemic racism and the harm it may be causing student-athletes of color. Examples of such harms might include differential treatment by athletics staff and professors (Anshel

& Sailes, 1990; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007), exclusion from positions seen as requiring intellect and strategy (e.g., guard, quarterback) (Singer, 2005), overtly racist comments and actions, and feelings of exploitation (Beamon, 2008; Rhoden, 2010). A sense of exploitation may be intensified by factors such as the current milieu as well as historical traumas experienced by the population(s) with which they identify.

As a result of the foregoing, campus partners should come alongside student-athletes of color in advocating for their holistic development. Logical partners might include campus counseling centers, multicultural offices, deans, residence life, career services, faculty, and other students. Faculty and staff in the aforementioned offices should receive training regarding the specific nature of athletics and the common needs of student-athletes, with attention also given to the unique stressors facing student-athletes of color. Support and advocacy should be on both the individual level as well as the institutional (see Patton & Bondi, 2015).

Taken together, the findings of this study elucidate key differences in how male student-athletes of diverse racial backgrounds identify with their role as athletes as well as differences in their beliefs about the likelihood of competing in professional sports. These observed differences should provoke deeper inquiry into the roots of the divergence, with special attention given to the roles of individual and institutional bias and racism. Better understanding of these factors can be expected to furnish insight needful for enacting changes that promote equity and holistic development. Partnerships between student-athletes and campus partners within and external to athletics departments are critical for providing advocacy and support for student-athletes as well as

accountability and boundaries for stakeholders whose own interests may conflict with those of student-athletes. These and other initiatives may empower many student-athletes to employ the same dedication, fortitude, leadership, and resilience applied in their sport toward the exploration and achievement of additional possibilities.

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Table 1
Linear Regression Models for Variables Associated with Degree of Reported Athletic Identity

	Model 1		Model 1a		Model 1b		Models 1c-1h	
	Athletic Identity	Athletic Identity (Excl. Maternal Ed.)	Athletic Identity	Athletic Identity (Excl Maternal Ed.)	Athletic Identity	Athletic Identity (Excl Maternal Ed.)	Athletic Identity	Athletic Identity (Excl Maternal Ed.)
Variable								
Black	--	--	0.858***	0.985***	--	--	--	--
			(0.231)	(0.218)				
Other	--	--	0.846*	0.822**	--	--	--	--
			(0.352)	(0.336)				
Roster Spot	-1.150***	-1.131***	-0.948***	-0.939***	-1.015***	-1.003***	--	--
	(0.107)	(0.099)	(0.111)	(0.107)	(0.099)	(0.092)		
Year in School	0.132	0.155	0.375**	0.363**	0.262**	0.253***	--	--
	(0.109)	(0.101)	(0.110)	(0.106)	(0.099)	(0.092)		
Maternal Education	-0.135*	--	-0.110	--	-0.100	--	--	--
	(0.059)		(0.061)		(0.054)			
D1 Men's Basketball	3.314***	3.133***	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0.399)	(0.375)						
D2 Men's Basketball	1.932***	1.976***	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0.385)	(0.363)						
D3 Men's Basketball	0.365	0.423	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0.375)	(0.356)						
D1 Football-Bowl	2.828***	2.869***	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0.340)	(0.312)						
D1 Football-Champ	0.932**	1.222***	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0.358)	(0.328)						
D2 Football	1.707***	1.872***	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0.303)	(0.280)						
Black D1	--	--	--	--	1.017 ***	0.883**	--	--
					(0.274)	(0.256)		
Black D1 FBS 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.570*	1.208*
							(0.684)	(0.613)
White D1 FBS 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.739**	2.613***
							(0.581)	(0.554)
Other Div. 1 FBS 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.390	1.487
							(1.296)	(1.166)
Black Div. 1 MBB 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.081**	2.004**
							(0.646)	(0.630)
White Div. 1 MBB 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.836**	2.470*
							(0.862)	(0.837)
Other Div. 1 MBB 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.623	2.550
							(01.419)	1.325

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Note. D = Division, MBB = Men's Basketball, FBS = Football Bowl Subdivision.

Table 2. *Logistic Regression Models for Variables Associated with Perceived Likelihood of Playing Professional Sport*

	Model 2		**Model 2a**		**Model 2b**		**Models 2c-2h**	
	Athletic Identity	Athletic Identity (Excl. Maternal Ed.)	Athletic Identity	Athletic Identity (Excl Maternal Ed.)	Athletic Identity	Athletic Identity (Excl Maternal Ed.)	Athletic Identity	Athletic Identity (Excl Maternal Ed.)
Variable								
Black	--	--	10.009***	10.162***	--	--	--	--
			(1.055)	(1.024)				
Other	--	--	2.934***	3.221***	--	--	--	--
			(0.411)	(0.437)				
Athletic Identity	1.075***	1.073***	1.110***	1.106***	1.088***	1.089***	--	--
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.008)		
Roster Spot	0.548***	0.536***	0.655***	0.646***	0.617***	0.610***	--	--
	(0.028)	(0.025)	(0.035)	(0.033)	(0.029)	(0.027)		
Year in School	0.833***	0.832***	0.962	0.957	0.916*	0.911*	--	--
	(0.037)	(0.035)	(0.047)	(0.045)	(0.037)	(0.035)		
Maternal Education	0.934**	--	0.985	--	0.944*	--	--	--
	(0.024)		(0.027)		(0.022)			
D1 Men's Basketball	17.591***	17.494***	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(3.672)	(3.380)						
D2 Men's Basketball	8.000***	7.904***	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(1.681)	(1.545)						
D3 Men's Basketball	1.419	1.447	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0.319)	(0.301)						
D1 Football-Bowl	9.273***	10.026***	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(1.768)	(1.729)						
D1 Football-Champ	6.468***	6.257***	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(1.229)	(1.084)						
D2 Football	5.166***	5.167***	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0.921)	(0.837)						
Black D1	--	--	--	--	6.767***	6.931***	--	--
					(0.804)	(0.782)		
Black D1 FBS 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	8.626***	9.858***
							(2.925)	(3.152)
White D1 FBS 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.210***	2.056**
							(0.4935153)	(0.439)
Other Div. 1 FBS 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	8.195827**	5.625**
							(5.304)	(2.952)
Black Div. 1 MBB 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	9.827***	9.512***
							(3.298)	(3.173)
White Div. 1 MBB 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.058***	3.648***
							(1.464)	(1.269)
Other Div. 1 MBB 1st Team	--	--	--	--	--	--	6.653**	7.150**
							(4.431)	(4.662)

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Note. D = Division, MBB = Men's Basketball, FBS = Football Bowl Subdivision.

Table 3.

Logistic Regression Model for Variables Associated with Future Athletic Trajectory

	Trajectory		Trajectory (Excl. Maternal Ed.)	
Variables	**AOR**	**95% CI**	**AOR**	**95% CI**
Black	5.764*** (0.696)	[4.548, 7.304]	5.793*** (0.675)	[4.609, 7.280]
Other	2.703*** (0.480)	[1.908, 3.829]	2.899*** 0.496	[2.074, 4.053]
Athletic Identity	1.134*** (0.013)	[1.110, 1.159]	1.131*** (0.012)	[1.107, 1.155]
Roster Spot	0.745*** (0.048)	[0.657, 0.846]	0.747*** (0.047)	[0.661, 0.845]
Year in School	0.973 (0.057)	[0.867, 1.091]	0.975 (0.055)	[0.872, 1.090]
Maternal Education	1.001 (0.032)	[0.940, 1.066]	--	--
Constant	0.005	[0.002, 0.011]	0.005	[0.003, 0.011]

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Note. Trajectory = plan to devote time to sport in first year after graduation. AOR = adjusted odds ratio. CI = confidence interval.

Appendix A1.

NCAA 2006 GOALS Study Participants who Played Football or Men's Basketball

Sport and Division Level	Unweighted Frequency	Percent (%) Total Respondents
Football	3784	19.1
Division IA – FBS*	876	4.4
Division IAA – FCS**	782	4.0
Division II	1563	7.9
Division III	561	2.8
Men's Basketball	1240	6.3
Division 1	417	2.1
Division II	360	1.8
Division III	463	2.3

* Football Bowl Subdivision
** Football Championship Subdivision

Appendix A2.

Athletic Identity Variables

Item No.	NCAA GOALS Variable	Item No.	AIMS Counterpart
Q4-1a	I view myself as more of an athlete than as a student.	1	I consider myself an athlete.
Q4-1b	I feel that other students view me as more of an athlete than as a student.	7	Other people see me mainly as an athlete.
Q4-1c	I feel that my professors view me as more of an athlete than as a student.	7	Other people see me mainly as an athlete.
Q4-1d	I spend more time thinking about my sport than academics.	5	I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else.
Q4-13	How many of your closest friends at this college are on your sports team?	3	Most of my friends are athletes.
	--	2	I have many goals related to sport.
	--	4	Sport is the most important part of my life.
	--	6	I need to participate in sport to feel good about myself.
	--	8	I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport.
	--	9	Sport is the only important thing in my life.
	--	10	I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport.

Appendix A3.

Frequencies and Percentages of Missing Data

Variables	Missing Cases*	Percent (%) Missing
Roster Spot	83	1.65
Pro Aspirations	105	2.09
Year in School	129	2.57
Reason for Choosing College	178	3.54
First Year after Graduation	219	4.36
More Athlete than Student	458	9.12
Students View of Me	461	9.18
Professors View of Me	472	9.40
Think about Athletics	474	9.44
Sacrifice Academics	637	12.68
Friends on Team	593	11.81
Race**	997	19.85
Father Education	1143	22.76
Mother Education	1166	23.21
First Generation Student	1062	21.14

* *Total number of cases in the data set is 5023.*
** *Race was trichotomized as White, African American, and Other.*