

NCAA ACADEMIC REFORM AND GRADUATION RATES OF DIVISION I FBS BLACK
MALE STUDENT-ATHLETES: MOVING FROM REFORM TO EXPECTATION

By

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I dedicate this to my parents for giving me the greatest gift that could ever be given to someone.
You believed in me!

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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By

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Chair: Luis Ponjuan

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This quantitative study sought to examine the graduation success rates of male student-athletes initially enrolled at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I Football Bowl Series (FBS) institutions from 1995-2002. Data from the NCAA Student-athlete Experiences Data Archive were used to examine the relationship between the graduation rates of Division I FBS male student-athletes and their individual characteristics (i.e. race/ethnicity), sports affiliation, institutional characteristics, and conference affiliation.

Study results showed that the majority of male college student-athletes from NCAA Division I FBS institutions are persisting to graduation, including Black male student-athletes on highly visible football and men's basketball teams. There were observed differences in the graduation rates of Division I FBS Black and White male student-athletes. The results of the study demonstrated that individual characteristics, sports affiliation, and institutional characteristics are related to the persistence of Division I FBS male student-athletes. No significant differences were found in the NCAA Graduation Success Rate (GSR) of male college student-athletes when considering their conference affiliation.

The results of this study provided support for the ongoing use of the NCAA Academic Performance Program (APP) in promoting the academic success and persistence of NCAA

Division I FBS college student-athletes. Recommendations were made for NCAA policy changes that might further improve the GSR of Division I FBS college student-athletes and for further research that examines and evaluates the connections between all the perceived problems of college athletics in a sociological and comprehensive context.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

We still have work to do and can't declare victory just yet, but the trend lines are moving in the right direction. The ultimate success is in the changed lives of student-athletes. The so-called "dumb jock" myth is just that—a myth.

—Myles Brand, *NCAA News Release*

College athletics in institutions of higher education in the United States have grown to become an integral part of the college experience, and by 2010 there were more than 430,000 student-athletes participating in sports on college campuses across the country (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010a). The academic performance of college student-athletes has always received a vast amount of attention from the media and in the literature—much of it negative (Fountain & Finley, 2009; Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Hyatt, 2003). Extant studies (e.g., Jameson, Diehl & Danso, 2007; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita & Jensen, 2007; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005) have indicated that when college student-athletes perform the student role in their student-athlete status, they have often been stigmatized as illegitimate students who will not progress to graduation because they are seen as academically unqualified or unmotivated. Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, and Jensen elaborated that student-athletes are often perceived to “put in minimum effort, do little academic work, take easy classes and have others do their work for them” (p. 252).

Academic researchers (e. g., Benford, 2007; Craughron, 2001; Gerdy, 2006; Gill & Goff, 2008) have suggested that issues surrounding academic standards and institutional accountability for educating college student-athletes, including academic fraud and questions of compliance, have permeated the national landscape of college athletics since the mid-1800s when college students first began playing sports in the name of their institutions. As intercollegiate athletics have grown to be an integral part of the contemporary college experience, these concerns have

concomitantly increased in both scope and significance (Knight Commission, 1991; Knight Commission, 2001). Gill and Goff, college athletics researchers, suggested that “academic reform in college athletics is one of the hottest (if not the hottest) topic in higher education” (p. 37). Over the past two decades and in response to several academic scandals, academic reformed-minded groups such as the Knight Commission, the Drake Group, and the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), have offered strategic plans to help increase academic standards and bolster academic integrity within college athletics (Benford, 2007; Ridpath, 2008; Ridpath, 2010). Despite continual reform efforts over the years and a multitude of reports, the academic experiences and successes of college student-athletes continue to be questioned and examined by university faculty groups and the media. This dissertation research study is an attempt to better understand the persistence of college student-athletes through empirically based examination of national NCAA institutional level data.

This study will examine the differences in graduation rates of Division I FBS male student-athletes by individual characteristics (e.g. race/ethnicity), collegiate sports affiliation, institutional characteristics, and conference affiliation. This preliminary examination will begin with a brief discussion of the most recent NCAA rules and standards established for student-athletes in Division I. I will then examine the distinct characteristics of male college student-athletes at Division I FBS subdivision universities.

The NCAA and Recent Academic Reforms

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the primary governing association for most intercollegiate sporting events in the nation, has initiated and implemented rules and standards for college student-athletes since its constitution was established in 1906 (Davis, 2006; Baxter & Lambert, 1990). Although the NCAA serves as a governing association for college athletics, complete with administrators and staff members, it lacks actual institutional control and

oversight of athletics at colleges and universities (Newman & Miller, 1994). The actual responsibility for the regulation of the NCAA lies in its membership: the member institutions and conferences in which they might participate (NCAA, n.d.a). The NCAA was initially formed as a discussion group and rules-making body to encourage colleges and universities to oversee college athletics by developing standards for student-athletes' eligibility and retention (Baxter & Lambert, 1990). Since then the NCAA has developed and transformed a multitude of guidelines, regulations, and standards for its member institutions in order to help maintain academic integrity at colleges and universities. For example, after establishing the academic guidelines and standards, it then monitors, collects, and publishes the academic performance data by institutions, sports, and athletic conferences.

Although academic reform efforts have been ongoing since the inception of the NCAA, reform efforts at the end of the 20th century were developed mostly from controversies surrounding academic deficiencies and questionable academic practices that persisted through the 1980s at many high profile "big-time" athletic programs at various universities (Blackman, 2008; Benford, 2007). Initially, NCAA academic reform guidelines focused primarily on the pre-collegiate academic preparation of student-athletes.

In 1986 the NCAA implemented Proposition 48 in order to heighten academic standards for incoming freshman student-athletes with intentions to improve their college graduation rates (Sack, 1984). This academic reform package increased academic standards for incoming freshman by using minimal levels of academic qualifications that included 1) earning a score of at least a 700 on the SAT or a 15 on the ACT, 2) completing eleven core academic courses while in high school, and 3) achieving a minimum GPA of 2.0 in those core courses in order to be eligible to participate in collegiate athletic programs (Sack, 1984).

In response to a 1991 report by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, the NCAA instituted an even stronger NCAA academic reform package in 1996 (Smith, 2010). Like Proposition 48, Proposition 16 established initial academic eligibility standards for student-athletes who wanted to participate in NCAA athletic competitions and receive student-athlete financial aid (Smith, 2010). Like before, academic standards required that freshman student-athletes earn a minimum SAT score and a minimum GPA in core high school courses in order to be eligible to compete and receive athletic financial aid. However, the NCAA developed academic minimum standards on a sliding scale so that students with a higher high school GPA can still be eligible with a lower SAT requirement. In addition, NCAA also added two additional courses to the core high school requirements already established in Proposition 48.

The Knight Commission and other academic reform-minded groups have continued to revisit the issue of academic integrity in college athletics through the new millennium. A Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) report in 2001 called for a greater emphasis on increasing the graduation rates of student-athletes. In response to this call for greater emphasis on persistence to graduation, the most recent and impacting academic reform package for academic eligibility requirements was adopted in 2004 by the NCAA Division I Board of Directors. It was hoped that these higher academic standards would influence academic success culture and responsibility in the athletic department and institutionally by placing heavy emphasis on degree completion. Myles Brand, the NCAA president at the time of the adoption, called the reform the most “far-reaching academic reform in decades” (Hamilton, 2005).

In order to help increase the graduation rates of student-athletes, especially for those participating in football and men’s basketball, the NCAA began implementing the Academic

Performance Program (APP) in 2005 (Christy, Siefried, & Pastore, 2008). The APP is comprised of two main components, the Academic Progress Rate (APR) and the Graduation Success Rate (GSR), which would be measured against critical academic benchmarks to ensure that student-athletes are academically successful and progressing towards graduation.

The APR, considered to be the centerpiece of the APP, is an annual methodology that measures both a team's and an institution's progress towards academic benchmarks (e.g. degree completion rates) (Gill & Goff, 2008) The APR is essentially a points system that evaluates progression towards graduation by using the eligibility, retention, and graduation factors of student-athletes. Penalties are assessed against member institutions rather than on individual student-athletes. Institutions not meeting these standards face sanctions under a penalty structure that includes public warnings, loss of scholarships, bans from postseason competition, and restricted membership status (Beland, 2004). Conversely, institutions that performed well or improved on their NCAA academic performance rates might receive a package of public relations and additional financial incentives.

The Division I GSR is a more long-term methodology used to measure student-athletes' academic success by measuring graduation rates (Gill & Goff, 2008). This measure is unique in that it differs from federal education guidelines by measuring graduation rates without penalizing the institutions of student-athletes who leave school while still academically eligible and also accounts for student-athletes who transfer into another institution (Paskus, 2011). This process takes into account the greater mobility in today's college student-athletes (Gill & Goff, 2008).

In addition to measuring academic success and graduation success rates, the NCAA also put forward new requirements for measuring ongoing progression towards a degree with the implementation of the 40/60/80 rule (Beland, 2004; Gill & Goff, 2008). After two years a

student-athlete must have completed 40% of the school's requirements for graduation; after three years 60% must be completed; and after four years 80% of the school's requirements for graduation must be completed.

The literature on the history of the NCAA and the ever-present impetus for the establishment of academic standards for college student-athletes shows how entrenched intercollegiate athletics are in higher education. Ridpath (2008) suggested that the "integrity of college sports must start at its stated purpose-education of the participants" (p. 12). This study seeks to determine whether the plethora of calls for academic reform in college athletics and the implementation of more stringent standards for the persistence of college student-athletes by the NCAA have indeed impacted the academic success of college student-athletes as measured by the NCAA Graduation Success Rates.

College Student-athletes

Student-athletes have been a special population on college campuses since the mid-1800s and some researchers even consider college student-athletes to be "special needs" students because of their unique academic and athletic participation demands (Crom, Warren, Clark, Marolla, & Gerber, 2008; Ferris, Finster, & McDonald, 2005; Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009; Greer & Robinson, 2006; Jolly, 2008). College student-athletes and their non-student-athlete peers face similar issues relating to adjusting to the demands of college coursework, but student-athletes must also cope with the pressure of participation in athletic activities, public scrutiny, and the physical and mental exhaustion that comes from their daily practices and workouts (Greer & Robinson, 2006). They face greater time-management issues, isolation from other students, and other personal difficulties that affect their lives as students (Gaston Gayles & Hu, 2009; Simiyu, 2010; Watt & Moore, 2001).

One study suggested that women at institutions of higher education have higher graduation rates than men in general, and when comparing the graduation rates of student-athletes at Division I FBS institutions, the gender gap is even more disparate (Rishe, 2003). The study indicated that male college student-athletes, especially those on highly visible and revenue-producing teams like football and men's basketball, are especially vulnerable to lower graduation success rates when compared to female student-athletes. Rishe postured that these student-athletes are likely to have greater emphasis placed on their athletic performance and intense pressure to perform at high levels which may lead them to spend greater time preparing for athletics and less time studying academics.

Male student-athletes are also more likely than female student-athletes to see their continued participation in professional sports as a post-college option. A 1985 study by Adler and Adler examined the academic performance and commitment to completion of degree of men's basketball players. They found that these student-athletes arrived at their institution with enthusiasm and optimism towards their academic experiences and viewed basketball as the means towards earning their degrees. Unfortunately, their athletic and academic experiences over their time as student-athletes gradually led them to place greater emphasis on basketball as a career, and they became detached from their academic commitments.

These factors are especially significant in student-athletes from underrepresented racial/ethnic populations on college and university campuses. Several research studies published over the past fifteen years suggested that Black male student-athletes are a unique subgroup of student-athletes with distinctive academic and social experiences requiring specialized programs for student academic success (Killeya, 2001; Beamon & Bell, 2006; Melendez, 2008). A 1987 study by the American Institute for Research (as cited in Person & Lenoir, 1997) showed that

many Black male student-athletes come to college with lower standardized test scores and grade point averages when compared to all student-athletes. Due to these factors, they are often labeled academically at-risk and are more likely to struggle academically (Cuyjet, 1997; Hrabowski, 2002). Researchers suggested that these student-athletes may often face a larger challenge academically because the gap between their prior academic abilities and their actual preparedness do not adequately prepare them for the demands of college coursework. This academic preparation disparity may often leave Black male student-athletes with a daunting task as they strive for academic success in addition to their heavy demands of college athletic participation, especially for those on football and basketball teams.

When compared to the enrollments of all Black male undergraduates in higher education, Black male student-athletes are greatly overrepresented on these teams. A study for the Dellums Commission found that while 10.3% of the male undergraduates at colleges and universities across America in 2004 were Black, more than 30 % of all male student-athletes at these institutions were Black (Harper, 2006). Researchers argue that this enrollment disparity may suggest that Black male student-athletes believe in their potential of a greater financial gain from a professional sports career than from a career stemming from a college degree (Rishe, 2003). They may often focus on their particular sport as the means to achieve their definition of success. Consequently, they may develop negative perceptions about non-athletic professions, which may lead them to focus less on their educational success and career needs during their college years and affect persistence (Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002; Harrison & Lawrence, 2003).

This raises additional questions and concerns about the current plight of Black male student-athletes in American higher education in general and in their participation in athletic programs, specifically. With the NCAA's renewed and heightened focus on academic

performance in collegiate sports programs and the growing presence of Black males in college athletics, these contrasting trends require additional interrogation. In particular, there is a greater need to examine how these students academically perform (e.g. graduation rates) compared across different institutional types, sports conferences, and sports team affiliation.

Purpose of the Study

Towards that end, the intent of this dissertation research is to conduct a quantitative study to examine the graduation success rates of male student-athletes initially enrolled at NCAA Division I FBS institutions from 1995-2002. This study will utilize NCAA GSR rates that compare the number of student-athletes who enter a university in a given year and the number of student-athletes who graduated within six years of their initial enrollment (Paskus, 2011). In particular, this study examines high profile/ high revenue sports (e.g. football, men's basketball) across the nation.

Research Questions

The study will address the following specific research question: How do individual characteristics (i.e. race/ethnicity), sports affiliation, institutional characteristics, and conference affiliation relate to the graduation rates of Division I FBS male student-athletes? Accordingly, the following research sub-questions will guide the focus of this empirical study:

1. What is the relationship between race/ethnicity (e.g. Black, White) and the graduation rates of male student-athletes at NCAA Division I FBS schools?
2. What is the relationship between collegiate sport affiliation (e.g. football, basketball) and the graduation rates of male student-athletes at NCAA Division I FBS schools?
3. What is the relationship between institutional type (e.g. public/private) and the graduation rates of male student-athletes at NCAA Division I FBS schools?
4. What is the relationship between conferences affiliations (e.g. Southwestern, Big Ten) and the graduation rates of male student-athletes participating in football or men's basketball at NCAA Division I FBS schools?

Rationale for the Study

There is only a limited amount of extant literature that addresses recent trends in the graduation rates of Division I FBS student-athletes, specifically after the most recent academic reforms were initiated in 2004 by the NCAA. The NCAA has always collected a wealth of information about its student-athletes, but it has provided limited access to the information for the public or to academic scholars. Much of the earlier literature published before and through the first half of this decade was likely based upon non-representative and incomplete samples, allowing for limited and negative critiques (Ferris, Finster, & McDonald, 2004).

In 2008, then NCAA President Myles Brand initiated the formation of a student-athlete data archive, now called the NCAA Student-athlete Experiences Data Archive, to enhance college student-athlete research by scholars in academia and to affect higher education policy development related to both general student populations and student athletics (Paskus, 2011). These data sets, both aggregate and individual data, were released in late spring 2011 by the NCAA through the University of Michigan. These data sets and those to be released later will allow for more empirically supported discussion of the academic success of college all student-athletes at Division I universities.

The primary rationale for this study is to critically examine this data and provide initial discussions about the academic performance of Black male student-athletes participating in football and men's basketball. Moreover, this study relies on national level data that answers earlier critics of incomplete and limited datasets. Finally, there is a need to explore what characteristics are related to graduation rates, especially for underrepresented student-athletes that are less academically prepared to succeed in many institutions in American higher education.

Significance of the Study

Student persistence is an intended assessment outcome of every university because it highlights the overall success of the higher education institution. It is particularly important to examine student-athletes' persistence during their collegiate athletic career. Myles Brand, the president of the NCAA until his death in 2009, had made academic reform and increased graduation rates for college student-athletes his overall primary focus.

It is especially vital to examine Division I Black male student-athletes progression towards graduation since they often are highly visible through collegiate sports such as football and men's basketball, and yet they are often the least academically prepared. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which college male student-athletes at Division I FBS schools persist to graduation. Accordingly, this study seeks to make a contribution to literature by: 1) focusing on the graduation rates of Black male student-athletes at Division I FBS schools; 2) providing an analysis of the individual, squad, institutional, and conference affiliation background graduation success rates using NCAA longitudinal multi-institutional data; 3) proposing a view of college male student-athletes' persistence through a framework of social and academic institutional systems to better understand the extent to which they might impact graduation success rates.

Organization of the Study

This research will empirically examine the factors related to the persistence to graduation that male student-athletes at NCAA Division I FBS institutions experience. Chapter 1 included a brief background and overview of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the rationale for the study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed review of the literature pertaining to college student-athlete academic success and persistence to graduation. It also includes literature related to the implementation of NCAA academic standards and the

significance in their enforcement. Chapter 2 concludes with a presentation of the theoretical framework guiding this research study. Next, Chapter 3 presents a detailed overview of the methodology utilized to study the research questions. Chapter 4 reports the research findings of the investigation. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results in relation to the current literature and the theoretical framework. Finally, Chapter 6 discusses implications for higher educational institutions and make recommendations for further research on the persistence of college student-athletes to graduation.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

FBS. A subdivision of NCAA Division I. It includes 120 institutions that play in the Bowl Championship Series. It is administered by 11 FBS conferences.

DIVISION I. Denotes a NCAA member institution's division for legislative and competition purposes. Division I members sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women) with two teams sports for each gender.

GRADUATION SUCCESS RATE (GSR). A measure of graduation rates at NCAA Division I institutions and includes student-athletes transferring into the institutions. It also allows institutions to exclude student-athletes who leave the institutions before graduation from the computation, so long as they would have been academically eligible had they remained there.

INTEGRATED POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION DATA SYSTEM (IPEDS). A system of interrelated surveys conducted annually by the U.S. Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). IPEDS gathers information from every college, university, and technical and vocational institution that participates in the federal student financial aid programs.

NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (NCAA). The governing body which oversees and governs intercollegiate athletics and student participation at four-year institutions.

PERSISTENCE. The completion of a bachelor's degree within six years of initial enrollment at an institution. This is the 150% standard adopted by the NCAA and the federal government to measure student graduation rates.

STUDENT-ATHLETE. A designation for any individual who is on the roster of an intercollegiate sport at a four-year institution, regardless of institutional aid received.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to provide a better understanding of the persistence of NCAA Division I FBS Black male college student-athletes to graduation and to review the theoretical framework guiding this study. Chapter 2 begins by providing a review of the history of NCAA standards and their effect on college student-athlete persistence. In the second section, attention will be given to extant literature on college student-athletes, with particular attention given to Black college male student-athletes. The theoretical framework, Comeaux and Harrison's (2011) model of academic success for student-athletes, and a conceptual model guiding this study will be presented and discussed in the subsequent section. The literature review concludes with a summary of the highlights presented through Chapter 2.

Literature Related to the NCAA and Academic Standards

Issues surrounding academic standards and institutional accountability for educating college student-athletes have existed since the mid-1800s when college students first began playing sports in the name of their institutions (Craughron, 2001). Despite continual reform attempts over the years and a multitude of reports, the academic experiences and successes of college student-athletes continue to be questioned and examined by faculty-centered groups, the media, and the NCAA. As intercollegiate athletics have grown to be an integral part of the contemporary college experience, these concerns have concomitantly increased in both scope and significance.

As mentioned earlier, over 100 years ago, the NCAA created a constitution to implement rules and standards for college student-athletes since its constitution was established in 1906 (Newman & Miller, 1994). These academic standards have been developed and imposed on its member institutions in order to emphasize the academic component of being a college student-

athlete and to legitimize the link between athletic sports participation and academics in colleges and universities (Heck & Takahashi, 2006). Although the NCAA serves as a governing association for college athletics, it lacks real institutional control and oversight of athletics at these colleges and universities. Instead, compliance to NCAA rules and standards is left to staff members and administrators within the athletic departments at individual institutions (Peach, 2007).

Early NCAA Academic Guidelines and Standards

Investigating the reform movements throughout the history of intercollegiate athletics leads one to ascribe to the old French proverb “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” Speaking more succinctly on the repeated NCAA reform efforts, Sociologist Robert Benford remarked, “Despite the cycles of reform activity and a plethora of in-depth reports, the problems seem to have gotten worse over time” (2000, p. 6). The reform movements over the past 100 years have addressed everything from amateurism and commercialism to cheating scandals and academically unqualified student-athletes. The latest reform movement, implemented in 2005, centers on student-athletes’ persistence to graduation by focusing primarily on the graduation rates of student-athletes, especially in football and men’s basketball, the two high profile revenue generating sports.

The earliest reform directives for college student-athletes were developed by academic leaders at Harvard and Brown Universities prior to the inception of the NCAA (Benford, 2007). The principles proposed by these groups provided a significant framework of guidelines that continue to impact current NCAA standards and regulations, including eligibility benchmarks, academic integrity, amateurism, and the roles of higher education faculty and staff in athletics (Newman & Miller, 1994). Unfortunately during those early years, most universities refused to support the guidelines and few approved or put these principles into practice for their student-

athletes. Newman and Miller suggested that this allowed some student-athletes who were receiving athletic scholarships to essentially be paid for attending a particular university without necessarily attending classes.

When the NCAA was first established, it adopted those academic eligibility standards already put forward by academic leaders as its own and supported institutional faculty control of athletic programs in order to put student-athletes' learning first and to preserve fundamental educational standards within athletics (Newman & Miller, 1994). The NCAA did not exercise control over the enforcement of their adopted standards. Instead, member institutions were expected to enforce academic standards for their student-athletes, police themselves for violations, and then provide the NCAA with reports on academic eligibility for both new and continuing student-athletes (Hawes, 1999). Without fear of real retribution, these institutions seldom conformed to these expectations. Hawes noted that eventually the NCAA recognized that member institutions were not effectively policing themselves and that a better system of enforcement of eligibility guidelines needed to be established.

One of the central tenets of the NCAA is the classification of amateur status of college student-athletes. In order to emphasize their commitment to this, the NCAA has been regulating athletic scholarships throughout their existence. Athletic scholarships have been used by American universities as early as the 1890s in order to entice student-athletes to become students at their institutions to increase the chances of having successful athletic teams, which in turn, might bring them greater prestige (Bensel-Meyers, 2003). Four-year athletic scholarships were initially provided as educational gifts only to those student-athletes with financial needs, and they could not be revoked by the universities even if the student-athlete did not play due to injury or by choice. Without a real supervising authority, many of the institutions recruited

student-athletes who played at several schools during their college career depending on the scholarship offer they received.

Growing concerns about ongoing financial aid abuse and aggressive recruiting led the NCAA to institute what became known as the “Sanity Code” in 1948 (Eckard, 1998). It banned scholarships related to athletic ability and required student-athletes to be held to the same academic standard as the non-student-athletes in their student cohort. Eckard suggested, however, that colleges and universities continued to circumvent the NCAA rules, and because the rules could not be enforced effectively the code was repealed in the early 1950s.

NCAA Standards from the 1950s to the 1980s

The idea of college student-athletes as students first and foremost became an issue of concern once more in the 1950s when student-athletes began to receive scholarships again. These four-year athletic scholarships were not need-based, and they provided student-athletes with funding for tuition, room, board, and textbook costs (Bensel-Meyers, 2003). By 1973, athletic scholarships were reduced to binding contracts given as annual renewable grants controlled and assigned by coaches and athletic directors. Until the 1980s, the primary concern of coaches and athletic directors was merely keeping student-athletes academically eligible. Little emphasis was placed on student-athletes’ academic achievement or progression towards graduation.

In 1965, the NCAA adopted the “1.6 Rule” which required college bound high school student-athletes to achieve a predicted first-year college grade point average (GPA) of at least a 1.6 before they could receive athletic scholarships (Newman & Miller, 1994). This rule used a predictive methodology to pre-screen student-athletes’ potential for collegiate academic success. If it was predicted that a student-athlete would earn a 1.6 GPA as a freshmen in college, that student would still be eligible to participate in athletic programs.

In 1971, the NCAA enacted the “2.0 Rule” which was based on actual earned grades rather than predictive methodologies of the “1.6 Rule” (Newman & Miller, 1994). Student-athletes were required to graduate high school with at least a 2.0 GPA. Ironically, this actually weakened the academic standards for some student-athletes because the lack of uniformity in the nation’s high schools coursework and corresponding grade assignments did not place an overarching meaning to a 2.0 GPA. College graduation rates for student-athletes decreased consistently after the 1.6 Rule was replaced by the 2.0 Rule. Newman and Miller noted that academic standards eroded to the point where severely unqualified student-athletes were gaining admission to universities and awarded scholarships with little chance to be successful in the classroom or to earn a degree.

Student-athletes continued to perform below their non-student-athlete peers, and many failed to progress to graduation. In 1985, Adler and Adler conducted a four-year participant-observation study of a men’s basketball program at a medium-size private Division I university that explored how these college student-athletes’ participation in athletics affected their educational experiences. The researchers followed the academic progression of the student-athletes over the full length of their college careers and ascertained that although the student-athletes arrived at their school with optimism and strong expectations for academic success, they eventually made what the researchers called “pragmatic adjustments in their attitudes, efforts, and goals” (p. 247). The overwhelming demands of participation in athletic programs, the social isolation from the general student body, and a gap between many student-athletes’ academic abilities and classroom expectations led to a diminution in academic performance and progression to graduation.

NCAA Standards from the 1980s to the Present

The NCAA's effort to combat rules violations by enacting reforms, establishing eligibility standards, and utilizing centralized governance was well established by the 1980s. Although the NCAA did have some successes enforcing its rules, controversies surrounding academic deficiencies and questionable academic practices at universities considered by others to be athletic powerhouse universities persisted through the 1970s and the 1980s. A multitude of NCAA violations continued to occur at these institutions; some of the most serious infractions included inappropriate recruiting, financial aid abuses, and academic fraud, especially related to student-athletes receiving passing grades for classes they never attended and institution-wide cheating scandals (Blackman, 2008).

These problems persisted through the 1990s and even into the new millennium bringing about a call for even greater oversight of student-athletes' academic achievement and academic integrity (Benford, 2007). National reform-minded groups such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), and the Knights Commission called for a greater faculty role in athletic governance so that athletic programs could help to augment the academic missions of institutions rather than undercut them (Lawrence, Ott, & Hendricks, 2009).

Student-athletes at major Division 1 universities continued to lag behind the general student cohort in academic success. A recent study using 3 years of data collected in the mid-1980s on all students at Clemson University showed that student-athletes did not achieve academic success at the same level as their nonathletic peers (Maloney & McCormick, 2003). The researchers found that the average GPA of student-athletes was statistically significantly different from the GPA of non-student-athletes. By controlling various background factors, the researchers found that the reasons for this disparity included student-athletes arriving at college

with far lower SAT scores, inferior high school academic preparation, and below average high school academic performances. Graduation rates for all student-athletes were about 10% lower than the rest of the student body, and the grades of football and male basketball players were considerably lower than their athletic peers from nonrevenue sports (p. 562).

Proposition 48

Proposition 48 was implemented by the NCAA in 1986 to heighten academic standards for incoming freshman student-athletes and produce a higher graduation rate for them (Davis, 2006). Student-athletes had to meet these standards in order to gain initial eligibility. This academic reform package required that potential student-athletes have a minimal level of academic qualifications that included 1) earning a score of at least a 700 on the SAT or a 15 on the ACT, 2) completing eleven core academic course while in high school, and 3) achieving a minimum GPA of 2.0 in those course courses in order to be eligible to participate in athletic programs (Sack, 1984).

A study by Heck and Takahashi (2006) examined the graduation rates of the freshman student-athletes in 105 NCAA Division 1A (now called Division I FBS) football programs before and after Proposition 48 was implemented. Using a time-series structural equation model to investigate Proposition 48's impact on graduation rates, they found that graduation rates of football players at these programs rates in the years just before Proposition 48 was implemented had averaged around 42%. They also found that the graduation rates of the first set of freshmen in the football programs enrolled after the implementation of Proposition 48 were higher (53.5%) than pre-policy levels. This corresponded closely to a 1999 NCAA report that listed graduation rates for these Division 1 football programs in 1992 to be approximately 51%. This same report showed that the graduation rates for the cohort's men's basketball players stood at 41%. These rates compared to a 54% overall male student body graduation rate at Division 1 schools.

The implementation of Proposition 48 appeared to have a positive impact on student-athlete academic performance. However, as a result of Proposition 48, the amount of eligible student-athletes, especially for football and men's basketball, was reduced significantly for athletic programs at average-prestige and low-prestige institutions (Heck & Takahashi, 2006). In order to fill the gaps caused by fewer eligible athletes, these institutions changed their recruiting strategies and recruited more aggressively from junior colleges. Proposition 48 did not impact the athletic recruitment of freshmen at high-prestige universities. Although the overall pool of eligible freshmen became smaller, student-athletes that were eligible continued to look at these high-prestige universities first and foremost for their future participation in college athletic programs.

Proposition 16

In response to a 1991 report by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, the NCAA instituted an even stronger NCAA academic reform package in 1996. Proposition 16 established higher initial academic eligibility requirements for student-athletes who wanted to participate in NCAA athletic competition and receive athletic financial aid. The NCAA added two additional courses to the core requirements already established in Proposition 48. As with Proposition 48, the standards required that freshman student-athletes earn a minimum SAT score and a minimum GPA in core high school courses in order to be eligible to compete and receive athletic financial aid. However, these minimums were created on a sliding scale so that a higher high school GPA would allow for a lower SAT requirement.

Like Proposition 48, Proposition 16 affected which students would realize the opportunity to participate in athletics at Division 1 schools (Amato, Gandar, & Zuber, 2001). These more stringent college entry standards resulted in a greater percentage of Black male student-athletes being declared ineligible for freshman athletics' participation and athletic

financial aid. A National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (1996) study revealed that while 67% of the White college-bound seniors would have met Proposition 16's minimum standards only 46% of their Black peers would have met those same standards. Student-athletes from lower socio-economic classes were also affected disproportionately. Several legal challenges were brought against the implementation of Proposition 16 claiming that it had an intentional discriminatory impact (Waller, 2003). In response to the lawsuit, in 2003 the NCAA lowered the academic requirements of Proposition 16 and amended the sliding scale initial eligibility index to be less restrictive and less discriminatory.

Since the NCAA put these more stringent standards into place in the mid-1980s, all student-athletes at Division I universities, on average, have matched or exceeded the graduation rates of their corresponding student cohorts (Ferris, Finster, & McDonald, 2004). Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for football and male basketball players at these same universities. Although the graduation rates of both football players and men's basketball players have trended upward slightly, a large gap continues to exist between the graduation rates of these players and other student-athletes in non-revenue generating sports.

Academic Performance Program

The Knight Commission has continued to revisit the issue of academic integrity in college athletics through the new millennium. A report in 2001 called for a greater emphasis on increasing the graduation rates of student-athletes (Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics). In response to this call for greater emphasis on persistence to graduation, the most recent and impacting academic reform package for academic eligibility requirements was adopted in 2004 by the NCAA Division I Board of Directors.

In order to help increase the graduation rates of student-athletes, specifically football and men's basketball student-athletes, the NCAA began implementing the Academic Performance

Program (APP) (Christy, Seifried, & Pastore, 2008). As mentioned previously, the APP is a comprehensive reform package comprised of two main components, the Academic Progress Rate (APR) and the Graduation Success Rate (GSR). Both the APR and the GSR are components of the NCAA's long term commitment to improving college student-athletes' academic success and continued movement towards graduation persistence.

Gill and Goff (2008) described the APR as the “fulcrum upon which the entire academic-reform structure rests” (p. 37). The researchers further elaborated that the APR is an ongoing and updated assessment of teams' academic performance that is based on a points system. Low team APR scores can lead to loss of scholarships and inaccessibility to postseason play. Gill and Goff also described the GSR as a tool of assessment meant to “provide graduation data that more accurately reflect the mobility among today's college student-athletes” (p. 38). The GSR takes into account the academic eligibility of student-athletes who transfer so that the schools from which the student-athletes are transferring are not punished for non-persistence.

Other NCAA Mandates

Over the past two decades, the NCAA has also considered other factors of college success in the lives of student-athletes beyond their athletic commitments and academic eligibility and persistence. Additional directives by the NCAA have been established so as to help student-athletes balance their lives as college athletes and students (Carodine, Almond, & Grotto, 2001; Gaston Gayles & Hu, 2009). To specifically facilitate their social and academic integration on campus, the NCAA stipulated that student-athletes should live and socialize with their non-student-athlete peers on campus (Norton & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). To encourage this, the NCAA stated that less than half of the residents in any institutional residence halls were allowed to be student-athletes. It was believed that this student integration would help with the development of both the student-athletes and the non-student-athletes (Watt & Moore, 2001).

The NCAA also addressed the intense time demands of the athletic training and competition of college student-athletes by restricting the amount of time student-athletes are allowed to spend participating in athletics both on a daily and weekly basis.

In addition, the NCAA developed other programs to help student-athletes. For example, the NCAA Student-athlete Affairs program (formerly the NCAA CHAMPS/LifeSkills and Student-athlete Development) offers student development and life skills support to its member institutions (NCAA, n.d.b). Several programs have been developed and supported by the NCAA over the past two decades to help college student-athletes integrate socially and academically on campus. These programs, both supported and financed partly through the NCAA, provide student-athletes opportunities to further enhance their experience and growth, personally and professionally, through classes, workshops, community service and leadership opportunities. Student-athletes are also encouraged to examine career options and participate in community service.

Another program the NCAA helped to establish and fund is its Degree Completion Award Program. This program provides financial assistance for tuition, fees, and the cost of books for student-athletes at Division I schools who have exhausted their eligibility for institutional financial aid and are within 30 hours of graduation (NCAA, n.d.c). The key goals of the program are to track relevant information about non-completing former student-athletes, identify former coaches and mentors who have personal and influential relationships with the student-athletes so they can encourage non-completers to return to school, and disperse funds in support of the program.

The literature has shown that the high visibility of Division I athletic programs warrants that these institutions must focus on using NCAA academic standards and programs as

guideposts for providing academic support and guidance to their student-athletes at every step of their college lifespan. In the next section, the unique challenges and needs that these college student-athletes face are examined.

Understanding College Student-athletes

Intercollegiate athletics permeate university tradition and are tied to the ideals of a holistic higher education where the value of discipline, perseverance, and collaboration can be learned by both the spectators and the student-athletes (Duderstadt, 2003). Student-athletes, particularly those on highly visible football and men's basketball teams at Division I schools, connect the playing fields to the student body, faculty, and alumni. Their high visibility may bring with it notoriety and preferential treatment, but there are also inimitable issues that these student-athletes experience while in college that can produce sizeable challenges to their academic success (Crom, Warren, Clark, Marolla, & Gerber, 2008). While college student-athletes and their non-student-athlete peers face similar development issues, student-athletes must also cope with the athletic culture on campus and the pressure of athletic performance and the public scrutiny that comes with it from alumni, the media, and their peers (Greer & Robinson, 2006; Jolly, 2008). These differences make it important then to review extant literature that specifically addresses college student-athletes when investigating their academic success and persistence.

The Unique Attributes of College Student-athletes

College student-athletes have unique experiences that often greatly impact their day-to-day lives. They face greater time-management issues and rigid scheduling, isolation from other students, and other personal difficulties that affect their lives as students (Watt & Moore, 2001). After attending their daily classes, they must also face the physical and mental exhaustion that comes from their daily practices and workouts (Greer & Robinson, 2006). For many

student-athletes, attendance at scheduled study halls after practice is mandatory so that they can earn good enough grades to maintain their athletic eligibility and meet the appropriate NCAA progression requirements towards graduation (Gaston Gayles, 2009). The pressure to continually find both athletic and academic success can cause college student-athletes to feel tremendous strain (Carodine, Almond, & Gratto, 2001). In fact, as Miller and Kerr (2002) suggested, many student-athletes find that “their academic and athletic lives are (sic) intricately interwoven” (p. 347).

In a 2008 literature review on the unique attributes of college student-athletes, Jolly pointed out that the challenges that these student-athletes face on campus, especially their rigid time constraints, can often lead to extensive emotional stress and physical exhaustion. The intense demands that college student-athletes often experience can negatively affect their identities as students and student-athletes, and impede their opportunities to interact meaningfully with their teachers. Jolly noted that although stereotypes of student-athletes as “unintelligent and unqualified” continue to persist on college campuses, he found most student-athletes to be “capable-to-excellent students” (p. 148).

In spite of a wealth of researchers’ harsh critiques of college student-athlete experiences and academic failures in the late 1990s, more recent studies have indicated that participating in college athletics does not impact the academic and psychosocial experiences of college student-athletes adversely. A study by Ferris, Finster, and McDonald (2004) suggested that when Division I college student-athletes are considered as a group, they are actually “more average than other students” (p. 568) resulting in a homogeneous college academic experience for these student-athletes. The authors proposed that these normative experiences derive from the similarity in college student-athletes’ academic credentials as well as the extensive athletic

culture in which they are immersed from the moment they arrive on campus. The vast academic support services available for student-athletes at Division I universities become what the researchers called “structural mechanisms” that eventually create similar academic success and graduation rates for all college student-athletes.

A 2006 study by Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, and Hannah found that in spite of the stressors and hardships that male student-athletes on highly visible revenue generating teams might face, they generally have similar or better overall educational experiences than their non-student-athlete peers. Despite earning slightly lower grades than their peers, these student-athletes are as engaged in educational activities as their non-student-athlete peers, and this engagement often leads them to develop greater feelings of overall support from the campus community and greater overall satisfaction with their college experiences.

Understanding Black male College Student-athletes

This part of the literature review will focus on the experiences of Black male student-athletes at institutions of higher education and the factors that affect their retention and persistence. It will be presented in the following sections: cognitive factors in academic preparedness and success, social factors in achievement and persistence, policies and programs of support for Black male student-athletes, and institutional support and funding.

Participating in college athletics appears to help Black male student-athletes persist to graduation. Although Black male student-athletes at many public universities and colleges across America progress and graduate at rates higher than their non-student-athlete Black peers on campus (Harper, 2006), a disparity continues to exist between White and Black male student-athletes’ graduation rates, as well as Black male and female student-athletes’ graduation rates (Benson, 2000; Franklin, 2005; Harper, 2006; Hyatt, 2003; Lapchick, 2010). Many factors likely influence the persistence of Black male student-athletes to graduation including academic

under-preparedness, academic failure and ineligibility, social background, socialization and identity awareness, and professional career plans.

Cognitive Factors in Academic Preparedness and Success

Research indicates that academic success and educational achievement is not a reality for the majority of Black males in the United States (Bailey, 2003). Nearly a quarter of Black males leave school without a high school diploma and recent data indicated that only 33% of Black male college students completed their bachelor's degree (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Pre-College Academic Preparation

Low academic performance in high school is often a strong indicator of the risk of non-persistence in college. A recent ACT study on college persistence shows that a student's high school grade point average has the strongest correlation with college performance, retention, and persistence (Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004). As noted previously, a 1987 study by the American Institute for Research (as cited in Person & Lenoir, 1997) indicated that many Black male student-athletes come to college with lower standardized test scores and grade point averages when compared to all student-athletes. They are often labeled academically at-risk because of this and because of the likelihood that they will struggle academically through their coursework (Cuyjet, 1997; Hrabowski, 2002). These student-athletes face a larger challenge academically because the gap between their academic abilities and preparedness and the demands of collegiate coursework and athletics can leave them with a daunting task as they strive for academic success without support (Benson, 2000).

Although much of the available extant literature on student-athletes points to the negative effects athletic involvement plays in the academic performance of all student-athletes, more recent studies show that sports participation does not necessarily negatively impact the grades or

graduation rates of Black male student-athletes (Baker, 2008; Martin, Harrison, Stone, & Lawrence, 2010).

In fact, today's college student-athletes receive a wealth of institutional support. Since the NCAA first used recommendations by the Knight Commission for implementing higher standards of persistence for all student-athletes, institutions of higher education have developed specialized student success programs for student-athletes in order to address the new standards (Hyatt, 2003). With this profusion of additional academic support available to student-athletes, participating in college athletics may actually help Black male student-athletes persist to graduation. Although Black male student-athletes have the lowest graduation rates of all student-athletes, some researchers argue that these academic support services help these student-athletes to persist since their graduation rate is much higher than their Black non-student-athlete peers (Kane, Leo & Hollerin, 2008). Academic support is an essential element of higher graduation rates. Hollis (2002) noted that schools admitting academically weaker student-athletes more often provide more student services, and graduation rates of all student-athletes are positively correlated with the amount of student services provided.

High Achieving Black male Student-athletes

While the majority of research on Black male student-athletes at PWI paints a homogenous group of underprepared students, there are high achieving Black male student-athletes at universities and colleges across the nation. These Black male student-athletes provide a counterpoint to the embedded stereotypes facing all Black male student-athletes. A 2006 study by Martin and Harris that examined 27 high achieving Black male student-athletes at four Division I universities found that all of the participants placed a high value on their academic success-some even more than their athletic success. The student-athletes often credited their strong self-concepts and identities to their achievements outside of athletics. Several of the

participants remarked that they “dealt with their daily challenges by staying focused on their academic pursuits and long-term career aspirations” (p. 372). They also indicated that their personal commitments to academic success were quite different from the majority of their teammates.

Social Factors in Achievement and Persistence

Psychosocial development and the social interactions within and among the entire college setting highly influence the academic achievement and persistence of Black male student-athletes. Research has shown that non-cognitive factors may provide a greater influence on their overall academic success and persistence (Killeya, 2001; Watt & Moore, 2001; Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004; Beamon & Bell, 2006; Melendez, 2008) Individual, family, team, and campus issues and distractions may affect the emotional experiences of these students which might then impact their academic achievement and persistence (Melendez, 2008). Athletic identity, background/socialization, and athletic performance and self-esteem are some of the social factors related to academic achievement and persistence of Black male student-athletes.

Athletic Identity of Black male Student-athletes

Black male student-athletes and their non student-athlete peers face similar issues relating to establishing racial identity, but Black male student-athletes also face additional challenges to their sense of identity because of the profound impact their athletic ability makes on their overall identity (Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001). Despite the fact that their racial and athletic identities are unconsciously linked, many Black male student-athletes focus primarily on their athletic identity and disregard other identities (Harrison & Lawrence, 2003). A study by Brown, Jackson, Brown, Sellers, Keiper, and Manuel (2003) determined that athletic and racial identities were negatively correlated for Black student-athletes. The authors noted that while White

student-athletes with great athletic identity had corresponding levels of racial identity, Black student-athletes with a strong athletic identity most often conveyed lower levels of focused racial identity.

Black student-athletes may face additional issues of identity development because their racial and ethnic development is often tied closely to their self-esteem (Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002). The literature consistently showed that the negative and positive reinforcements that these student-athletes receive for their athletic endeavors can both facilitate and impede the development of their identities and their successes as student-athletes and as students (Brown, et al., 2003; Watt & Moore, 2001). Brown et al. also found that Black student-athletes were less willing than White student-athletes to hear negative feedback from their coaches and more likely than White student-athletes to believe that coaches should earn the respect of their players (Brown, et al.). Black male student-athletes playing in revenue producing sports (e.g., football and men's basketball) are especially at risk for delayed college adjustment and poor identity development because of stereotype threat (Steinfeldt, Reed, & Steinfeldt, 2010).

The lack of progression in the identity development of Black male student-athletes and emphasis on athletics might impede their academic progress. Beamon and Bell (2006) suggested that during the socialization of Black male student-athletes, greater emphasis is placed on their athletic abilities than on their academic abilities. Other research further substantiates the premise that academic performance by Black male student-athletes decreases as their focus on athletics increases (Brown, Jackson, Brown, Sellers, Keiper, & Manuel, 2003; Beamon & Bell, 2006).

Black male student-athletes are especially surprised by their perceptions that some of their professors, coaches, and classmates hold and express a negative view of their academic abilities (Melendez, 2008). In their 2006 study of an entire football team at a Division I

University, Beamon and Bell found that the Black student-athletes experienced higher rates of academic probation, suspension, and ineligibility than their White counterparts despite the fact that White players were academically performing worse. Beamon and Bell speculated that this might be due to lower expectations by instructors or racism, perceived or actual, against the Black male student-athletes. The researchers argued that students at higher levels of Black identity development would likely be more able to diffuse the perception of racism. Otherwise, academic success may decline, and the Black male student-athlete's overall identity development could be hampered.

Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) suggested that since the athletic ability of Black male student-athletes so profoundly impacts their holistic identity, they need specialized assistance in developing an identity and personality based on all of their strengths. Harrison and Lawrence (2003) noted that role models can be especially useful in encouraging student-athletes to develop both an athletic and academic identity.

Background and Socialization

Black male student-athletes come from diverse socioeconomic and academic backgrounds, yet there are demographic tendencies that can be ascribed to this population in general (Person & Lenoir, 1997). A 1987 study by the American Institute for Research (as cited in Person & Lenoir, 1997) revealed that many Black male student-athletes are more likely to be first-generation college-students (i.e. students who are first in their family to attend a postsecondary institution). The study also indicated that the families of Black male football and basketball student athletes are more likely to be from a lower socioeconomic status (SES) and are more often headed by women than their White peers. Finally, the study noted that Black male student-athletes are quite often academically underprepared for college; they score in the lowest quartiles in both standardized testing and their high school grades prior to beginning college.

Person and LeNoir (1997) suggested that while Black male student-athletes are more likely to have stronger ambitions about attending and completing college, earning a postsecondary degree is not necessarily the primary goal of their college experiences.

Once in college, Black male student-athletes may face socialization issues that might impede their academic progress. Beamon and Bell (2006) suggested that Black male student-athletes in college place greater emphasis on their athletic identity than their academic identity during their initial socialization into their academic and student-athlete roles. Research further indicated that academic performance by Black male student-athletes decreases as their focus on athletics increases (Brown, Jackson, Brown, Sellers, Keiper, & Manuel, 2003; Beamon & Bell, 2006).

Beamon and Bell (2006) suggested that the parents of Black male student-athletes can profoundly affect the academic success of their sons in college. Their research indicated that these students don't always receive guidance and support from their parents towards academic success although the more that Black parents emphasize academic performance over athletic achievement, the greater the player will succeed in their courses (Hyatt, 2003; Beamon & Bell 2006). Beamon and Bell also found that when Black parents attend their sons' football games and are more involved in their lives, their Black male student-athlete sons find greater success both academically and socially.

Athletic Performance and Self-Esteem

Black male student-athletes must often cope with the pressures of athletic performance and public scrutiny (Greer & Robinson, 2006). These student-athletes might feel more closely connected to and valued by their institutions because their team membership creates a direct and visible atmosphere of inclusion and support and because their athletic successes may provide recognition and acclaim among the general student population (Melendez, 2008).

On the other hand, their athletic prowess may prove detrimental in how their non-student-athlete peers consider them. A study by Knapp, Rasmussen, and Barnhart (2001) evaluated the responses of 1028 college students at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas in order to determine student body perceptions about their athletic teams. While not necessarily representative of all American universities, this study provided a reasonable model on which to assess non-student-athlete college students' attitudes and beliefs about student-athletes at all Division I universities with expansive athletic programs. The study showed that student-athletes were perceived negatively by the student body, with over half of those surveyed indicating that they didn't consider student-athletes to be "legitimate students." Black male student-athletes are especially surprised by some of their professors and classmates' lack of acceptance (Melendez, 2008). In turn, these negative perceptions can influence their self-esteem since it is so closely bounded with their racial and ethnic development (Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002). Their overall self-esteem and anxiety, including that derived from both academic and athletic performance, is especially tied to their academic success and persistence (Killeya, 2001).

Career Focus of Black male Football and Basketball Student-Athletes

When compared to the enrollments of all Black male undergraduates in higher education, Black male student-athletes are greatly overrepresented, particularly on football and men's basketball squads. It's been suggested in research that Black student-athletes in football and basketball, in particular, have poorer academic performance and lower graduation rates because they often believe more in their post-collegiate athletic careers than their academic options (Jameson, Diehl & Danso, 2007). A 1996 study by DeBrock, Hendricks, and Koenker investigated the graduation rates of Division I football student-athletes and male and female basketball student-athletes. The study found that male basketball student-athletes have lower persistence compared to their female peers because they are the most likely to leave college for

professional careers. The authors noted that “professional opportunities have a significant impact on persistence” (p. 516). Departure was not due to academic inadequacy as much of the literature has suggested but rather because “most students who fail to graduate do so by rational economic choice” (p. 516).

Edwards (2000) found fault with the role that athletic programs have played within the Black community because so many Black male student-athletes either place their focus more profoundly on their athletic ability with little focus on academic success or leave college early to play professionally. He noted that the stereotype of superiority in athletics for Black male student-athletes often leads to a general societal stereotype of their inferiority in academics.

This disparity between emphasis on academic athletic ability over academic ability may lead Black male student-athletes to believe in a greater financial gain from a professional sports career than from a career stemming from a college degree and then focus on their particular sport rather than on academics as a means to achieve success (Rishe, 2003). They may develop negative perceptions about non-athletic professions, and this may lead them to focus less on their educational success and career needs during their college years (Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002; Harrison & Lawrence, 2003).

A study by Person and LeNoir (1997) reported that findings from a NCAA study showed that nearly half of the Black football and basketball players came from the lowest socio-economic quartiles and most of them received either financial aid or an athletic scholarship. Since the majority of Black male college-student-athletes at Division I universities play on the football and men’s basketball teams, then one of the most important factors in support of the persistence Black male student-athletes may be the receipt of financial aid in the form of institutional need-based aid rather than scholarship awarded solely on athletic ability (Gerdy,

2006). Cuyjet (1997) noted that as early as the 1950s, faculty-led college athletics reform groups have suggested that it would be in the best interest of all student-athletes' to receive this type of financial support so that they are on campus, first and foremost, to persist to graduation. Gerdy further suggested that the overall college experiences of student-athletes can become more well-balanced, and a greater opportunity to integrate both academically and socially into their university would be realized.

A 2009 study by Mendez, Mendoza, and Archer used a student-level dataset that took into account all students enrolled in four-year regional colleges and research universities in Oklahoma that completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The researchers noted that financial aid packages in the form of grants were specifically most important in the retention of low-income minority student-athletes. However, contradictory information showed that Black student-athletes who received similar financial aid packages (grants or loans) were less likely to persist than their White peers.

Institutional support for the retention of male college student-athletes is essential at all levels within the institution, but structured support specifically for helping Black male student-athletes achieve academic success and persist to graduation must begin at the highest institutional levels. Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) suggested that senior academic, student affairs, and athletic department administrators must develop policies and research-based programs which support both the cognitive and psychosocial identity development of these student-athletes and their persistence to graduation. They further elaborated that collaboration must be developed between the athletic department and the rest of the institution so that the policies and programs enacted for all student-athletes correlate with the academic goals of the institution and the overall developmental needs of all students. The expertise of college

administrators, faculty, student affairs professionals, counselors, and athletic department personnel must converge and be used to assist both the cognitive and psychosocial development of student-athletes, especially Black male student-athletes, in order to increase retention and persistence (Valentine & Taub, 1999).

All of the support for student-athletes, along with the real costs of running athletic programs, obviously requires a sizeable amount of funding. Costs for athletic department personnel, both for coaching and non-coaching personnel, as well as large insurance costs for student-athletes are just some of the items that drive athletic spending increasingly upward (Knights Commission, 2010). Cunningham and Sagas (2002) suggested that college athletic programs require extensive support from external individuals and groups.

Recently, this drive for earnings and the amount of spending on athletics has become an issue of concern not only because of the sheer amount spent but also due to the rate at which the spending is growing. A 2010 Knights Commission report on Division I FBS athletic spending showed that the athletics spending on student-athletes at all 11 FBS conferences was vastly outpacing the academic spending on student-athletes. Consequently, financial support from ticket sales and television broadcasts must be used to help fund these costs. Major FBS conferences have become money-making powerhouses simply by participating in the BCS, because teams that play in Bowl Championship Series (BCS) football bowl games can earn millions for their conferences and, therefore, also for their institutions. The report further elaborated that the athletics spending cannot be met through athletics income alone, and most institutions must support their athletic programs with additional funding.

Comeaux and Harrison's Model of Academic Success for Student-athletes

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) noted that theoretical models that specifically explain the academic success of college student-athletes are scarce, and most college athletics' educational

researchers have relied, instead, on the previously mentioned models of academic success and retention. In this study, the researcher will subscribe to Comeaux and Harrison's *Model of Academic Success for Student-athletes* (2011), a theoretical framework that contains variables that have been found to be connected specifically to the college persistence of Division I student-athletes. Comeaux and Harrison's model addresses the unique experiences of college student-athletes while still considering other theoretical models of retention, such as Swail's model, that take into account the ideas of social and academic integration (2011, p.235).

The structure of Comeaux and Harrison's model includes four layers of interactions that lead to progression and persistence, the key elements in the NCAA's latest academic reform standards. These interacting and progressive layers include: precollege characteristics (individual attributes, family background, and educational experiences); initial commitments (goal, sport, and institutional); college environmental factors (social and academic systems and integration); and developed commitments (goal, sport, and institutional). The focus of this study will be on the two layers of the model that include precollege characteristics and college environmental factors, including institutional social and academic systems and their role in student-athlete persistence. Goals, institutional, and sport commitments will not be considered in this study.

The first layer of academic success in Comeaux and Harrison's (2011) model is precollege characteristics. According to the authors, college students arrive on campus with an array of precollege characteristics that will directly and indirectly shape their college experiences. These characteristics include family background, educational experiences and preparation, and individual characteristics. As mentioned earlier, student-athletes' race/ethnicity is a characteristic often associated with the academic success of college student-athletes. The quality of the undergraduate experience for historically underserved students, such as Black

males at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) can diverge dramatically from the experiences of White male students at these same institutions (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). Black male student-athletes are often the least prepared academically, particularly those who play on revenue-producing sports such as football or men's basketball (Benson, 2000).

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) proposed that academic progression and persistence are the results of long-term development that stems from interactions in the school environment. These environmental characteristics in another layer include the extent to which students integrate both socially and academically into the campus surroundings on physical and emotional levels. Social integration advances and evolves through encounters with new opinions, feelings, and ideals, and how student-athletes respond to these encounters is essential to their academic success in college.

Social integration into the general student population for student-athletes occurs primarily through their involvement in campus extracurricular activities, connections with faculty, and interactions with peers other than their teammates in the classroom and out of it (Comeaux and Harrison, 2011). Involvement in student organizations on campus can facilitate greater social awareness and academic successes for student-athletes. These organizations, including academic honors groups, Greek-letter organizations, religious groups, and political groups facilitate social adjustment by serving as settings for expression, advocacy and validation (Museus, 2008).

Chickering and Gamson (1987) offered seven principles that would enhance student learning in higher education. One of the principles, student-faculty contact, is a key factor in student motivation and sense of belonging. Knowing faculty members on a more personal level can enhance students' intellectual commitment and encourage them to think about their present learning and their future goals.

The social integration of Black male student-athletes attending PWIs is a fundamental contributing factor to their academic achievement and persistence. Black males at PWI often have issues with self-concept, racism, building support relationships, and membership in relevant communities (Sedlacek, 1999). It is then essential that Black male student-athletes at colleges and universities socialize with their peers so that they gain a sense of belonging and satisfaction with their overall college experience. Diverse interactions in college are particularly useful in developing both cognitive and psychosocial development (Chang, Witt, Jones, and Hakuta, 2003, as cited in Strayhorn, 2008).

According to the model, academic integration comes primarily through academic success and intellectual development (Comeaux and Harrison, 2011). Although interactions with faculty have been previously discussed in terms of social integration, it bears saying that these interactions can also contribute to academic success and academic integration.

Harrison (2002) co-created the Scholar-Baller program which is meant to provide options and ideas for interactions for college student-athletes so as to improve their social and academic integration into their college environments. This program utilizes faculty and staff at all levels across the college campus to create and implement athletic and ethnic culturally relevant curriculum for student-athletes.

Some researchers have suggested that Black male college student-athletes are often seen as lacking a commitment to their academic success. They do not use their out-of-class time wisely, and they do not spend an adequate amount of time studying and preparing for their classes (Harper, 2005). When they do study, they often study alone and seldom socialize with students from their classes, even other Black students (Gordon and Bridglall, 2004). Faculty who place a heavy emphasis on effective teaching, value scholarly thought, and hold high academic

expectations for Black males are more likely to have a greater impact on their cognitive growth (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, as cited in Seifert, Drummond, & Pascarella, 2006). Effective teaching is enhanced by significant faculty interactions with students both in and out of the classroom. In fact, positive faculty-student classroom interactions are likely the most important factor in academic achievement and persistence for Black males at PWI (Davis, 1994, as cited in Dawson-Threat, 1997).

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model of this study (Figure 2.1) is based on Comeaux and Harrison's *Model of Academic Success for Student-athletes* as a framework to illustrate the relationship between selected individual, team, institutional, and athletic conference factors that may influence the persistence of Division I FBS male college student-athletes. Comeaux and Harrison's *Model of Academic Success for Student-athletes* is a comprehensive model that takes into account both quantitative and qualitative attributes of college student-athletes, thereby exceeding the scope of this study. In particular, I used data derived from the NCAA Student-athlete Experiences Data Archive, in particular, the data set, *NCAA Division I and II Graduation Success Rate and Academic Success Rate, 1995-2002 [United States]* which does not include any data about the qualitative attributes of college student-athletes. Therefore, I selected only relevant variables from Comeaux and Harrison's *Model of Academic Success for Student-athletes* that are found in the data set to be used for the study.

Chapter Summary

This extensive literature reviewed provided empirical data on the historical background of the NCAA academic standards, the unique characteristics of college student-athletes, and the cognitive, social, and institutional characteristics of Black male college student-athletes that are connected to their persistence. A theoretical framework of college-student academic success was

then reviewed and utilized to build a conceptual model to be used to investigate the graduation success rate of Division I male college-student-athletes, with particular emphasis on Black male student-athletes.

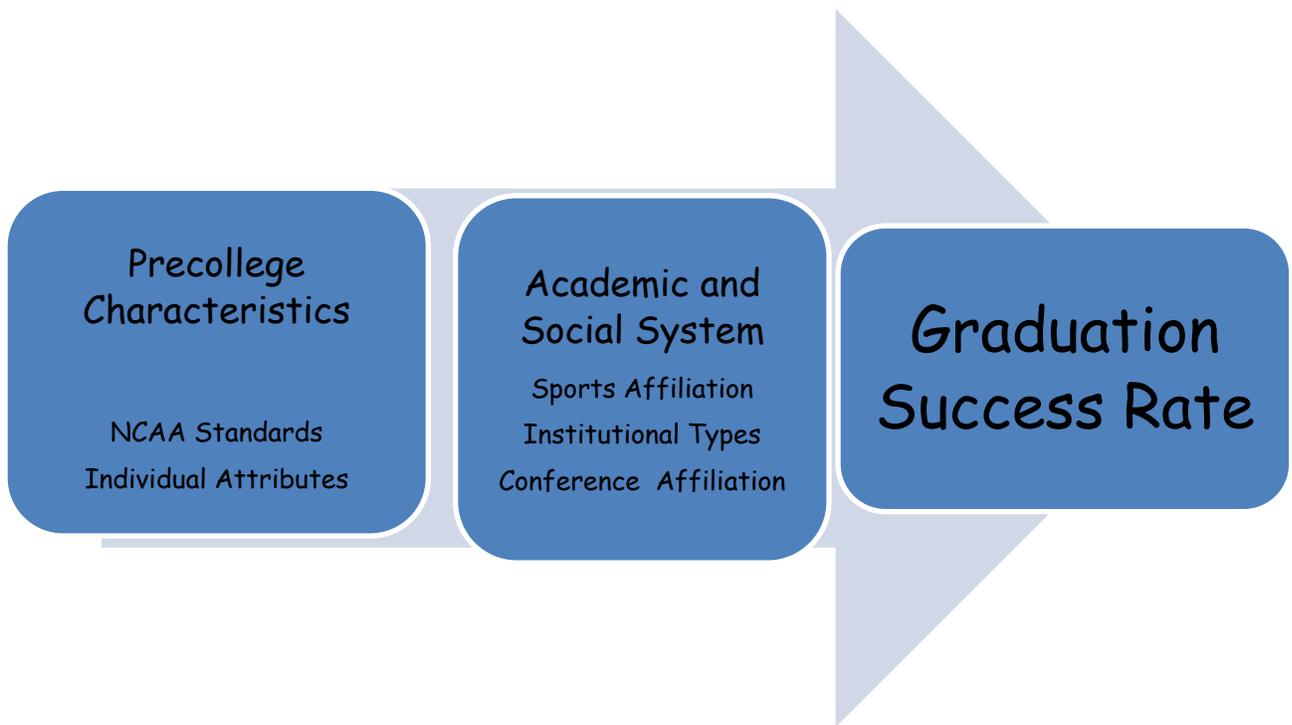


Figure 2-1. Conceptual model: Graduation success rates of Division I FBS Black male student-athletes

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The objective of Chapter 3 is to describe the research methodology used to conduct this study. I begin Chapter 3 by reintroducing the purpose of the study. The next section will present the research questions and the associated hypotheses that will guide this inquiry. I will then provide an overview of the data sources, descriptions of the dependent and independent variables and their operational definitions, and the quantitative analytical methods used in this study. Chapter 3 will conclude with a discussion of the limitations inherent to the study.

The intent of this dissertation research is to conduct a quantitative study to examine the graduation success rates of male student-athletes initially enrolled at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) institutions from 1995-2002. This study will utilize the federal graduation rates (FGR) based on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Graduation Rates (IPEDS-GRS) as well as the NCAA Graduation Success Rates (GSR). The FGR considers the six-year proportion of those students and student-athletes who graduated from the institution in which they initially enrolled. Specifically, the FGR for student-athletes uses a proportion of student-athletes who graduated from the institution in which they initially enrolled compared to those who entered an institution on institutional aid. The GSR compares the number of student-athletes who enter a university in a given year and the number of student-athletes who graduated from any institution within six years of their initial enrollment (Paskus, 2011). This study will analyze the institutional level data with special emphasis on high profile/high revenue sports (e.g. football, men's basketball) across the nation. To that end, there is a primary research question and four sub-questions guiding this study:

How do individual characteristics (i.e. race/ethnicity), sports team affiliation, institutional characteristics, and conference affiliation relate to the graduation rates of Division I FBS male student-athletes?

1. What is the relationship between race/ethnicity (e.g. Black, White) and the graduation rates of male student-athletes at NCAA Division I FBS schools?
2. What is the relationship between collegiate sport affiliation (e.g. football, basketball) and the graduation rates of male student-athletes at NCAA Division I FBS schools?
3. What is the relationship between institutional type (e.g. public/private) and the graduation rates of male student-athletes at NCAA Division I FBS schools?
4. What is the relationship between conferences affiliations (e.g. Southwestern, Big 12, Big Ten) and the graduation rates of male student-athletes participating in football or men's basketball at NCAA Division I FBS schools?

Answers to these research questions will be addressed with an examination of conference, institutional, squad, and student-level data from the NCAA Student-athlete Experiences data archive. The resultant findings are intended to provide a better understanding of contemporary trends in the academic persistence of male college student-athletes, specifically those in high profile/high revenue sports (e.g. football, men's basketball) whose graduation rates have lagged behind those from other intercollegiate sports teams in the past two decades.

Proposed Hypotheses

As previously noted, there is only a limited amount of contemporary extant literature that addresses recent trends in the graduation rates of Division I FBS student-athletes, specifically after the most recent academic reforms were initiated in 2004 by the NCAA (NCAA, n.d.d). Furthermore, it appears that some researchers may even look beyond recent trends in graduation rates by ignoring the latest NCAA graduation success rates for student-athletes and relying on older data (Eitzen, 2009; Baker 2008) Other researchers might acknowledge the academic progress of student-athletes in recent years, but then point more fervently to gaps that might

exist between student-athletes from differing gender, racial or ethnic groups, or between different college teams/squads (Lapchick, 2010). Based on the research questions guiding this study and the contradictory results found in the extant literature, the following null-hypotheses are proposed:

- **Hypothesis 1:** There are no significant differences in the graduation success rates of Division I Black and White male student-athletes.
- **Hypothesis 2:** There are no significant differences in the graduation success rates of Division I student-athletes participating in football or men's basketball.
- **Hypothesis 3:** There are no significant differences in the graduation success rates of Division I male basketball student-athletes based on institutional types (public/private).
- **Hypothesis 4:** There are no significant differences in the graduation success rates of Division I football student-athletes based on institutional types (public/private).
- **Hypothesis 5:** There are no significant differences in the graduation success rates of Division I male basketball student-athletes based on conference affiliations (Southeastern/Big 12/Big Ten).
- **Hypothesis 6:** There are no significant differences in the graduation success rates of Division I football student-athletes based on conference affiliation (Southeastern/Big 12/Big Ten).

Data Sources

Data for this study were derived from the NCAA Student-athlete Experiences Data Archive. In particular, the data set, *NCAA Division I and II Graduation Success Rate and Academic Success Rate, 1995-2002 [United States]*, includes the federal graduation rate for all NCAA member institutions who participated in Division I sports beginning from 1995 through 2002 and the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) for all Division I institutions (Paskus, 2011).

As stated previously, the NCAA has always collected an abundance of varying information about its student-athletes, yet it has only recently provided access to academic scholars and the general public. The NCAA Student-athlete Experiences Data Archive encompasses the most comprehensive and recent aggregate level data released by the NCAA to date. Its release is

meant to help answer research questions posed by higher education administrative staff, faculty members, athletic staff personnel, the media, student-athletes, and all others in higher education. The dissemination of the data allows researchers and administrators the opportunity to understand the graduation trends in NCAA athletic programs, advance discussions about these trends, and offer new policy and programmatic recommendations to improve these trends.

Measures

Dependent Variables

The educational experiences of college student-athletes have become an increasing concern to the NCAA over the past two decades, and these concerns have evolved from a primary focus on meeting entrance standards and maintaining player eligibility status to a more centralized spotlight on successful academic degree completion (Gayles & Hu, 2009; Satterfield, Croft, & Godfrey, 2010). Graduation rates have become the primary measure of academic success for college student-athletes at NCAA member institutions (Watt & Moore, 2001).

The primary focus of this study is the graduation success rates of male student-athletes initially enrolled at NCAA Division I FBS institutions from 1995-2002. In this study, student-athletes are considered to be any individuals who are on the roster of an intercollegiate sport at a Division I FBS four-year institution, regardless of institutional aid received. Student-athletes participating in “club” sports are not included in this study.

The dependent variables for this study are measured as continuous variables based on the percentage of students who complete a college undergraduate degree. The variables represent the federal graduation rates (FGR) based on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Graduation Rates (IPEDS-GRS) and the NCAA graduation success rates (GSR) of college student-athletes at NCAA Division I FBS schools. The data set utilized in this study provides

both the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Graduation Rates and the NCAA Division I Graduation Success Rates for the 1995-2002 cohorts.

Graduation rates data are collected on the number of students entering the institution as full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students in a particular year (cohort) who graduate within six years of entry (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). These six years are equivalent to 150% of what is considered the normal time required to attain a bachelor's degree (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). The Division I Graduation Success Rate (GSR) includes student-athletes who transfer into an institution while excluding student-athletes who separate from the institution and would have been academically eligible to compete had they returned. These differences from how the federal government interprets graduation rates for college students are likely more accurate since they point to final graduation attainment regardless of student transfers (Satterfield, Croft,& Godfrey, 2010).

Independent Variables

This study is unique in that it focuses primarily on Black male Division I FBS football and basketball student-athletes. The independent variables include the race/ethnicity of the student-athletes which is consistent with Comeaux and Harrison's category of precollege individual attributes. Sports affiliation, institutional characteristics, and conference affiliation are consistent with Comeaux and Harrison's category of college environmental factors. Finally, the model depicts the sole dependent variable: the NCAA Graduation Success Rate (GSR) which falls under academic success in Comeaux and Harrison's model (2011). The independent variables utilized in this study were provided by the NCAA Student-athlete Experiences Data Archive, including institutional data from IPEDS-GSR. Independent variables were separated into the following categories: 1) race/ethnicity, 2) sports team affiliation, 3) institutional type, and 4) conference affiliations.

Race/Ethnicity

The rationale for including race/ethnicity in this study comes from higher education literature. Research indicates that academic success and educational achievement is not a reality for the majority of Black males in the United States (Bailey, 2003). In 2008, nearly 55% of all first-time college students who sought a bachelor's degree from a public 4-year institution completed their degree within 6 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). As noted previously, during that same time period, only 33% of corresponding Black male college students completed their bachelor's degree. Higher education researchers have begun to investigate this disparity more thoroughly in recent years (Diprete & Buchmann, 2006; Harper, 2006; Strayhorn, 2008).

Conversely, extant literature (e.g. Carter, 2001; Hamilton, 2005; Hollis 2002) has suggested that participating in college athletics appears to help Black males persist to graduation, primarily because today's college student-athletes at major universities receive a wealth of institutional support both academically and socially. Black male college student-athletes at most NCAA FBS schools are graduating at significantly higher rates than their non-athletic peers (Harper, 2006). For example, by 2010, the NCAA GSR of Black football players at Division I FBS bowl-bound schools reached nearly 60% (Lapchick, 2010).

Despite the fact that Black male student-athletes at many public universities and colleges across America may progress and graduate at rates higher than their non-athletic Black peers on campus, extant literature and recent NCAA reports on persistence indicate that a disparity continues to exist between White and Black male student-athletes' graduation rates (Baker, 2008; Harper, 2006; Martin, Harrison, Stone & Lawrence, 2010). The study intends to investigate these differences.

Sports Team Affiliation

The basis for the incorporation of sports team affiliation (i.e. football and men's basketball) in this study is established in the higher education literature. While the NCAA has recently presented the graduation rates of student-athletes at all-time highs (Paskus, 2011), extant literature has pointed to the graduation rates of male student-athletes who participate in revenue sports (i.e., football and men's basketball) as a deficiency (Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Miller & Kerr, 2002; Sack, Park, & Thiel, 2011). None of these studies have utilized recent NCAA data in their investigations. Therefore, it is important to use recent NCAA data to investigate whether the difference in graduation rates for football players and men's basketball players differ significantly from the student-athlete population. It is also relevant to determine whether Black and White student-athletes on these teams have significantly different graduation success rates.

Institutional Types

Although individual background characteristics and institutional experiences are more likely to play a greater role in college student persistence, higher education persistence theory and retention models also indicate that certain institutional characteristics of 4-year universities and colleges also have contextual effects on student persistence (Berger & Millem, 1999; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007; Mangold, Bean, & Adams, 2003; Titus, 2004).

Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2007) suggested that institutions with smaller enrollment, primarily non-profit private schools, are more likely to engage students since lower faculty-student ratios and smaller class sizes provide greater opportunities for interaction between faculty members, students, and their peers. Other extant literature has noted that college students have higher rates of persistence at private bachelor's degree granting institutions of higher education than at similar public institutions (LaForge & Hodge, 2001; Scott, Bailey, & Kienzl, 2006).

Conversely, Mangold, Bean, and Adams purported that when comparing only large universities and excluding smaller liberal arts college, size is positively related to persistence. The inconsistencies in these studies indicate that further research is needed. In this study, I will specifically look at the graduation success rates of Black and White male student-athletes at public and private FBS institutions in order to determine if a significant difference can be found between them.

Sports Conference Affiliations

NCAA Division I FBS athletic conferences and teams receive high media exposure through participation in bowl games in football and in the NCAA basketball tournaments at the end of each season. Highly successful and visible college athletics can often cultivate positive perceptions about institutional quality and prestige, especially to prospective students, college alumni, and financial supporters (Fisher, 2009). A number of extant studies (e.g., Clopton, 2008; Fisher, 2009; McEvoy, 2005; Rhoads & Gerking, 2000; Rische, 2003; Tucker, 2005) have investigated whether successful and revenue generating sports teams, such as football or men's basketball programs, at universities or colleges can increase institutional graduation rates. These studies have provided inconsistent and mixed results, and when considered collectively, little can be inferred.

In this study, I will seek to determine whether the graduation rates of Black and White male student-athletes at FBS institutions are significantly different based on conference affiliation. I will also seek to determine how these graduation success rates compare between the conferences. According to a 2010 report by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, the SEC conference, the Big 12 conference, and the Big Ten conference spent the most in athletic spending per student-athlete in 2008. For this reason, they are included for evaluation in this study.

Analytical Methods

This section provides an overview of the analytical methods that will be performed to address the research questions. I will use a quantitative approach to answer the research questions and hypotheses about the graduation success rates of male college student-athletes at Division I FBS schools. Data analysis will be conducted to generate the results presented in Chapter 4.

The data analysis for this study will include a preliminary analysis of graduation success rates using descriptive statistics that illustrate trends in graduation rates for male student-athletes these rates over time. Analysis will include t-test comparisons on the dependent variable, graduation success rates, with respect to race/ethnicity, sports affiliation, and institutional characteristics.

The purpose of ANOVA statistical methods (F tests) is to examine sample variances to test the equality of three or more population means (Triola, 2010). In this study, ANOVA statistical methods will be utilized to determine whether any observed differences exist between the mean graduation rates of student-athletes according to conference affiliations. If differences are found, the Scheffe post-hoc comparison test, using orthogonal contrasts, will be utilized to determine which pairs of group means may be statistically different. Scheffe's test helps decrease the possibility of Type I errors when examining these contrasts (Huck, 2008).

Study Limitations

The intent of this empirical study is to examine the graduation success rates of male student-athletes initially enrolled at NCAA Division I FBS institutions from 1995-2002. Data were made available through the NCAA Student-athlete Experiences Data Archive. Although these data sets are likely the best available today, in order to follow the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and ensure confidentiality, the data sets were

altered in order to limit the risk of disclosure (Paskus, 2011). These alterations in the data sets limit the specific tests that might be conducted or may lead to erroneous results and/or findings in this study.

Specifically, this study will provide a critical analysis of the persistence of Black and White male college student-athletes at NCAA FBS institutions and will especially highlight those on highly visible and revenue-producing teams like football and men's basketball. Therefore, the study is somewhat limited in its generalizability to male student-athletes in other Division I institutions, as well as to all other male student-athletes competing in state colleges, junior colleges, and community colleges across the county.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of the relationship between the graduation success rates of male student-athletes initially enrolled at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) institutions in the 2002 cohort and selected characteristics of those student-athletes. The characteristics explored in this study were race/ethnicity, sports affiliation, institutional characteristics, and conference affiliation.

Chapter 4 presents the results of descriptive statistics and inferential analyses of study data accomplished using SPSS[®] 19.0 for Windows (2010) statistical package. I begin Chapter 4 with a presentation of the descriptive statistics followed by the results of *t*-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The descriptive statistics from the data set include frequency distributions, categorical descriptions, and time-series representations of key variables. This preliminary analysis section will be followed by a presentation and discussion of the results of the conducted *t*-tests and ANOVAs. The data was analyzed to address the following research question: How do individual characteristics (i.e. race/ethnicity), sports affiliation, institutional characteristics, and conference affiliation affect the graduation rates of Division I FBS male student-athletes?

Demographics

The sample consisted of a total of 120 institutions of higher education from the NCAA FBS conferences. The FBS is comprised of eleven conferences geographically located throughout the country that include 103 public institutions and 17 private institutions. The data set consisted of 11,602 male student-athletes of which 4114 were football players and 932 were men's basketball players (Table 4-1). When considering the data by race/ethnicity, White student-athletes comprised the majority ethnic/racial group for the entire male student-athlete

2002 cohort (Figure 4.1). However, Black student-athletes comprised the majority ethnic/racial group for both football and men's basketball (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). Specifically, 57.3% (n = 6648) of the entire male student-athlete cohort were White, 49.3% (n = 2028) of the male student-athletes participating in football were Black, and 62.4% (n = 582) of the male student-athletes participating in men's basketball were Black. According to the data set, Black male student-athletes only participated in 12 of the 16 sports in which NCAA FBS institutions participate. No Black male student-athletes participated in fencing, skiing, water polo, or ice hockey for the 2002 cohort.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4-3 provides descriptive statistics regarding the NCAA Graduation Success Rates (GSR) for the 2002 student-athlete cohort. As can be seen on the table, all male student-athletes at Division I FBS institutions for the 2002 cohort had a mean GSR of 69.93 (SD = 13.71). The mean GSR for Black male student-athletes was 57.56 (SD = 14.35) while the mean GSR for White male student-athletes was 76.07 (SD = 10.47). The mean GSR for football student-athletes was 65.11 (SD = 12.38) while the mean GSR for male basketball student-athletes was 59.53 (SD = 22.12). The apparent gap between the GSR of Black and White male student-athletes, as well as the apparent gap between football student-athletes and male basketball student-athletes supports further testing of the differences between their mean GSR.

T-Tests

Independent *t*-tests were conducted in order to investigate whether significant differences existed between student-athletes' Graduation Success Rate (GSR) when considering race/ethnicity, team sport, and institution type. Independent sample *t*-tests were conducted on a basis of belief that the four underlying assumptions of independent *t*-tests (randomness, independent data, normal distribution of the data, and same degree of variability of the data)

were not violated (Huck, 2008). In order to ensure that no violations have occurred, the results do not assume groups have equal variances. The results of the *t*-tests are presented in this section.

Hypothesis One

In order to investigate whether significant differences existed between student-athletes' GSR for male student-athletes based on race/ethnicity, a paired samples *t*-test for related means was conducted for Black male student-athletes and White male student-athletes in all sports across the 1995-2002 cohorts (Table 4-3). For the conducted *t*-tests, significant differences were found for mean GSR between Black male student-athletes and White male student-athletes in all sports at the 0.001 alpha level ($t(119) = 21.29, p = .000$). These results suggest that Black male student-athletes have significantly lower GSR than White male student-athletes.

Hypothesis Two

In order to investigate whether significant differences existed between student-athletes' GSR for male student-athletes based on sport affiliation, a paired samples *t*-test for related means was conducted for male student-athletes who played basketball and football (Table 4-4). For the conducted *t*-tests, significant differences were found for mean GSR between male basketball players and football players sports at the 0.01 alpha level ($t(119) = 3.23, p = .002$). These results suggest that male basketball student-athletes have significantly lower GSR than football student-athletes.

Hypotheses Three and Four

In order to investigate whether significant difference existed between student-athletes' GSR for student-athletes who attended public institutions and private institutions, between group mean comparisons were made between public and private institutions for both male basketball student-athletes (Table 4-5) and football student-athletes (Table 4-6). There were significant differences found for the mean GSR between male basketball student-athletes attending public

institutions and private institutions at the 0.001 alpha level ($t(118) = 3.60, p = .000$). There were also significant differences found for the mean GSR between football student-athletes attending public institutions and private institutions at the 0.001 alpha level ($t(118) = 5.45, p = .000$). The results suggest that both male basketball student-athletes and football student-athletes attending public institutions have significantly lower GSR than their peer male basketball student-athletes and football student-athletes attending private institutions.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Between groups comparisons were also utilized in this present study in order to examine whether differences in the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) of male basketball student-athletes and football student-athletes were significantly different across conference affiliations. These ANOVA models were intended only to compare differences in graduation rates at the conference level and not the GSR of student-athletes specifically. One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to compare the GSR of the Southeastern Conference (SEC), the Big 12 Conference, and the Big Ten Conference. These conferences were selected for comparison because their individual conference median athletics' spending per athlete in 2008 was far above the FBS median athletics' spending per athlete for all FBS conferences (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010).

Hypotheses Five and Six

The first ANOVA model provides an analysis of the graduation success rates (GSR) of male basketball players in the SEC, Big 12, and Big Ten (Table 4-8). The ANOVA for GSR did not suggest that significant differences in GSR were present between male basketball student-athletes in the SEC, Big 12, and Big Ten ($F=1.53, p = .223$). A second ANOVA provides an analysis of the graduation success rates (GSR) of football student-athletes in the SEC, Big 12,

and Big Ten (Table 4-10). The ANOVA results indicated that there are no significant differences in GSR between men's basketball student-athletes in the SEC, Big 12, and Big Ten ($F=.1.57$, $p = .233$).

Chapter Summary and Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to address questions regarding how individual characteristics (i.e. race/ethnicity), sports affiliation, institutional characteristics, and conference affiliation affect the graduation rates of Division I FBS male student-athletes. The findings from the descriptive and inferential analyses presented in Chapter 4 generated answers to the research questions in this study. In sum, there is evidence that there are some significant differences in GSR between male student-athletes. When compared on whole, Black male student-athletes have significantly lower GSR than White male student-athletes.

Chapter 5 will further discuss the results of the conducted analyses, weighed against the previous literature on this topic.

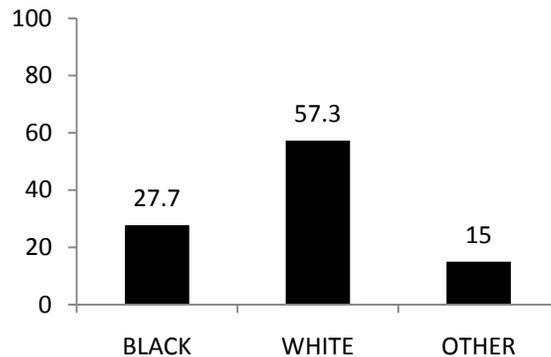


Figure 4-1. Racial/ethnic percentages of the 2002 male student-athlete cohort

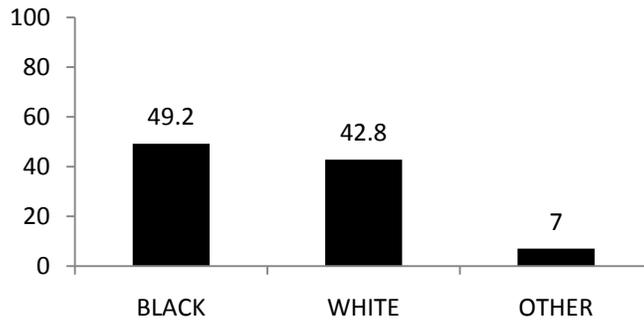


Figure 4-2. Racial/ethnic percentages of the 2002 football student-athlete cohort

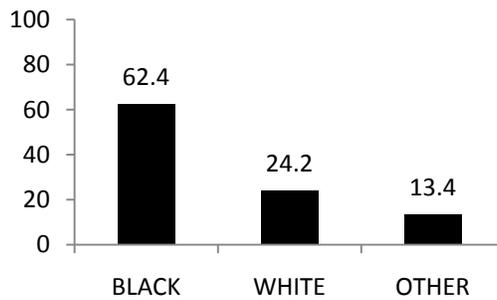


Figure 4-3. Racial/ethnic percentages of the 2002 basketball student-athlete cohort

Table 4-1. Frequency of students by race/ethnicity and sport

Race/ethnicity	Frequency (Percentage)		
	Black	White	Other
All male student-athletes	3214 (27.7%)	6648 (57.3%)	1740 (15.0%)
Football student-athletes	2028 (49.3%)	1758 (42.7%)	328 (8.0%)
Male basketball student-athletes	582 (62.4%)	225 (24.2%)	125 (13.4%)

Table 4-2. Descriptive statistics of Graduation Success Rate (GSR) for cohort 2002

	Mean	N	Standard Deviation
All male student-athletes	69.93	120	13.71
All Black male student-athletes	57.56	120	14.35
All White male Student-athletes	76.07	120	10.47
Football student-athletes	65.11	120	12.38
Male basketball student-athletes	59.53	120	22.12

Table 4-3. Paired t-test between Black male student-athletes and White male student-athletes in all sports across the 1995-2002 cohorts

	Mean GSR	N	Standard Deviation	t	df	p-value
Black male student-athletes	57.56	120	14.35	t = 21.29	119	P = 0.000
White male student-athletes	76.07	120	10.47			

Table 4-4. Paired t-test between basketball male student-athletes and football student-athletes in the 2002 cohort

	Mean GSR	N	Standard Deviation	t	df	p-value
Male basketball student-athletes	59.53	120	22.12	t = 3.23	119	P = 0.002
Football student-athletes	65.11	120	12.38			

Table 4-5. Independent samples t-test between public and private institutions for male basketball student-athletes in the 2002 cohort

	Mean GSR	N	Standard Deviation	t	df	p-value
Public	56.72	120	21.37	t = 3.60	118	P = 0.000
Private	76.59	120	19.20			

Table 4-6. Independent samples t-test between public and private institutions for football student-athletes in the 2002 cohort

	Mean GSR	N	Standard Deviation	t	df	p-value
Public	62.86	118	10.85	t = 5.45	118	P = 0.000
Private	78.71	120	12.65			

Table 4-7. Analysis of variance comparing GSR for conference affiliation (SEC, Big 12, Big Ten) for male basketball student-athletes

	Mean GSR	N	Standard Deviation	F	df1, df2	p-value
SEC	50.75	12	21.73	F = 1.53	2, 32	P = 0.223
Big 12	64.00	12	14.70			
Big Ten	54.25	11	17.94			

Table 4-8. Analysis of variance comparing GSR for conference affiliation (SEC, Big 12, Big Ten) for football student-athletes

	Mean GSR	N	Standard Deviation	F	df1, df2	p-value
SEC	62.83	12	10.65			
Big 12	61.42	12	8.32	F = 1.57	2, 32	P = 0.233
Big Ten	68.55	11	11.73			

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Until recently, much of the extant literature on student-athletes in NCAA Division I schools painted a picture of academic failure, academic fraud, and illegitimate college student-athletes (Benford, 2007; Eitzen, 2009; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007). This debasement of college student-athletes has pervaded the national perspective of college athletics since the earliest stages of intercollegiate competition (Craughron, 2001; Gerdy, 2006; Sack, 2009). Over the past decade, academic reform, measured primarily in the form of college persistence, has become the primary concern and greatest focus of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and reform-minded faculty (Benford, 2007; Gill & Goff, 2008; Ridpath, 2008; Ridpath, 2010).

This research study examined national NCAA institutional level data in order to better understand the current graduation trends of Division I college student-athletes. This study extends the literature base by challenging assumptions that there are no inherent differences in the GSR among NCAA Division I FBS college student-athletes. Research has contended that participating in athletics is positively correlated to academic success (Pascarella, Edison, Hagedorn, Nora, & Terenzini, 1996). There are four issues that were explored in the study: the relationship between race and ethnicity and the graduation rates of male student-athletes; the relationship between collegiate sport affiliation and the graduation rates of male student-athletes; the relationship between institutional type and the graduation rates of male student-athletes; and the relationship between conference affiliation and the graduation rates of male student-athletes.

Findings for this empirical study reveal that the majority of Division I college student-athletes are persisting to graduation, including Black male student-athletes on highly visible football and men's basketball teams. However, the study also finds that a significant

difference exists between the graduation rates of Black male student-athletes and White male student-athletes. This investigation updates and broadens the literature on the persistence of college student-athletes at Division I schools and brings further awareness to the graduation success rates of Black male college student-athletes, especially those playing football and men's basketball.

In Chapter 5, I will focus on the relationships between individual and institutional characteristics of college student-athletes and their graduation success rates (GSR). This includes a look at the relationships between GSR and race/ethnicity, sport team, institutional type, and conference affiliation. I have utilized Comeaux and Harrison's *Model of Academic Success for Student-Athletes* as a framework to help to craft my research questions and to construct a conceptual model for this study. Specifically, three significant factors from the framework were considered: precollege characteristics, social integration and academic integration. For this study, the corresponding measures that were studied included college student-athletes' individual attributes related to race or ethnicity, sport and conference affiliations, and institutional types. This framework will consequently be utilized throughout Chapter 5 as I interpret and connect the results of the study with the available extant literature.

Graduation Success Rates of Division I FBS Male College Student-athletes

How do individual characteristics (i.e. race/ethnicity), sports affiliation, institutional characteristics, and conference affiliation relate to the graduation rates of Division I FBS male student-athletes?

Race and Ethnicity

The results of this study rejected the null hypotheses that stated there are no significant differences in the graduation success rates of Division I Black and White male student-athletes. Specifically, the results suggest that White male student-athletes at Division I institutions have

higher graduation success rates than Black male student-athletes. These results are in support of previous literature that suggested that Black males in college have lower graduation rates (Bailey, 2003; Diprete & Buchmann, 2006; Harper, 2006; Strayhorn, 2008). Literature on Black male student-athletes also suggested that they graduate at lower rates than their White peers (Benson, 2000; Franklin, 2005; Harper, 2006; Hyatt, 2003; Lapchick, 2010; Lewis, 2010). In fact, much of the literature specifically addressed the lower graduation rates of Black male football and basketball student-athletes (Franklin, 2005; Kane, Leo, & Holleran, 2008; Lewis, 2010; Maloney & McCormick, 1993).

An assortment of explanations offered in the literature may illuminate why Black male student-athletes have a lower graduation success rate than White male student-athletes. Black male student-athletes are often at a disadvantage when they arrive on campus, because they are more likely to be academically under-prepared for college-level academic work than their White peers (Cuyjet, 1997; Hrabowski, 2002). As a result of this, their awareness of academic inadequacy might then exacerbate negative feelings about motivation to succeed academically (Gaston-Gayles, 2004). Harper (2005) noted that Black male student-athletes are not always committed to their academic achievement; therefore they don't study effectively or adequately. Finally, pressure to perform athletically, especially for those student-athletes participating in highly visible sports such as football and men's basketball, might lead Black male student-athletes to focus primarily on athletic success and to lose their focus on academics (Bell, 2009).

Sport Team Affiliation

The education and academic success of student-athletes participating in football and men's basketball has received a large amount of consideration in the research literature in recent years (Benson, 2000; Donnor, 2005; Ridpath, 2010; Splitt, 2007). As mentioned previously in

this study, much of the literature points directly to the lower graduation success rates of these student-athletes, particularly the Black male student-athletes playing these sports (Franklin, 2005; Kane, Leo, & Holleran, 2008; Lewis, 2010; Maloney & McCormick, 1993).

The study results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the graduation success rates of Division I male student-athletes participating in football and male student-athletes participating in basketball. Football student-athletes graduate at higher rates than basketball student-athletes. These results are in congruence with extant literature that has indicated that basketball student-athletes have the lowest rates of all student-athletes (Benson, 2000; Franklin, 2005; Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Harper, 2006; Hyatt, 2003; Lapchick, 2010; Lewis, 2010; Miller & Kerr, 2002; Paskus, 2011; Sack, Park, & Thiel, 2011).

The lower GSR of male basketball student-athletes should likely be looked at as a comprehensive problem, but one reasonable explanation for this trend is that male college student-athletes playing Division I basketball believe that they have a great opportunity to play basketball professionally, dismissing their need for a college degree. In fact, they likely detach themselves from academics because of their profound belief that they can play their sport professionally (Adler & Adler, 1991). DeBrock, Hendricks, and Koenker (1996) suggested that male basketball student-athletes have lower persistence because they are the most likely to leave college for professional careers, and that their non-persistence was due less to academic inadequacy and more because they can have a career playing basketball.

Another plausible explanation for the lower graduation success rates of basketball student-athletes is the time commitment that their in-season play requires of them. Simiyu (2010) suggested that student-athletes' time, more specifically their time spent away from academics, is one of the major barriers between student-athletes and their academic success. This is especially

true for football student-athletes and male basketball student-athletes. The *NCAA 2010 GOALS and SCORE Studies of the Student-Athlete Experience* reported that Division 1 FBS football players spend over 40 hours a week on athletics during in-season competition while basketball student-athletes spend about 39 hours per week on athletics during in-season competition. This time amount may appear to be nearly equivalent for both groups, but in-season competition for basketball student-athletes is different from in-season competition for football student-athletes. Not only does in-season play for basketball student-athletes last longer, but it likely crosses two academic semesters. This means that two semesters worth of classes can be affected by in-season competition. Mangold, Bean, & Adams (2003) validated this idea when they asserted that basketball is more disruptive of academic integration than football.

Social integration, a key factor in the persistence of college student-athletes according to the conceptual model used for this study, can also be affected by these time constraints. Gaston Gayles and Hu (2009) found that student-athletes in high profile sports (e.g., football and men's basketball) had such limited time availability that they interacted less often with students outside of their sport team. As noted earlier in this study, social integration advances and evolves through encounters with other college students, especially non-student-athletes, and how student-athletes respond to these encounters with other college students is essential to their academic success in college (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011).

Institutional Type

The study found consistent significant differences in the graduation success rates of Division I male student-athletes based on institutional types (public/private). In fact, the results suggest that both male basketball student-athletes and football student-athletes have higher graduation success rates when they attend private institutions of higher education. The somewhat limited existing literature on the persistence of college students at institutions of higher education

has mostly suggested that six-year graduation rates at public bachelor's degree granting institutions are lower than similar private institutions of higher education (LaForge & Hodge, 2011; Scott, Bailey, & Kienzl, 2006).

Much of the extant literature that addresses higher graduation rates between public and private higher education institutions points more specifically to the higher selectivity of students at elite private colleges (Brewer, Eide, & Ehrenberg, 1999; Titus, 2004) These studies suggested that the academic ability of the students that attend those institutions and the positive impact of working with other academically-able peers might be the specific impacting factors of attending private colleges and universities. Additionally, student-athletes generally follow the graduation trends of the schools that they attend. Titus noted that the top five schools in graduation rates have nearly matching graduation for its student-athletes.

Conference Affiliation

Limited literature exists on the relationship between conference affiliation and college persistence. A 2010 Knights Commission report on Division I intercollegiate athletics investigated the most recent costs of competing and the rate at which these costs were increasing. Athletics spending for student-athletes was found to be rising while at the same time academic spending for student-athletes was flattening out. Institutional spending on high profile sports (e.g., football and men's basketball) is growing at alarmingly high rates when compared to academic spending at those institutions. The top three conferences in Division I FBS athletics in athletic spending per athlete included the Southeastern (SEC), the Big 12, and the Big Ten. The study sought to determine if there were any significant differences in the graduation rates of the male student-athletes in the SEC, Big 12, and the Big Ten.

The study results support the hypothesis that there are no significant differences in the graduation success rates of Division I student-athletes based on conference affiliation. There

were no significant differences between the mean GSR of both male basketball student-athletes and football student-athletes in the SEC, Big 12, and Big Ten. The 2010 Knights Commission report on college athletics' finance showed that in 2008 that the median academic spending for all 11 conferences were within approximately \$1000 of each other. With this in mind, it's not surprising to find that the GSR of the student-athletes in these conferences are not significantly different.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 offered a discussion of the results of this study. Specifically, this discussion explored the relationship between the graduation success rate (GSR) of Division I FBS college student-athletes and the individual and institutional characteristics of race/ethnicity, sport team, institutional type, and conference affiliation. The results were described for each dependent variable and by themes across the conceptual model. Chapter 6 provides a discussion of policy recommendations and future research focus.

CHAPTER 6 IMPLICATIONS

Policy Recommendations

A multitude of highly palpable scandals have plagued several NCAA Division I FBS institutions over the past year. The most prominent scandals included a parent looking for pay-to-play money for his son in trade for his return to Division I football (Owens, 2011), football players at Ohio State University selling awards, gifts, and their athletic clothing for cash (Murschel, 2011), and most recently, the revelations against University of Miami booster Nevin Shapiro who provided improper benefits, including financial and sexual, to student-athletes while also collaborating with coaches in recruiting violations (Wolff, 2011). In fact, it appears that the major academic scandals of years past may have become overshadowed by scandals related to recruiting and financial compliance rather than academic cheating and lack of academic persistence

These recent scandals notwithstanding, the truth is that academic reform is still at the forefront of concern for college student-athletes. Calls for greater improvement in the persistence of college student-athletes, especially Black male student-athletes who play men's basketball or football still remain in the spotlight of higher educational persistence policy. In his 2010 report on bowl-bound college football teams, Richard Lapchick, the director of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida, noted that although graduation success rates for Division I FBS football players are continuing to show gains, the gap between Black football student-athletes and White football student-athletes remained "disturbing" (p. 1). In a 2011 report on the college basketball teams reaching the NCAA Sweet 16, Lapchick reported an even larger gap in graduation success rates between Black male basketball

student-athletes and White male basketball student-athletes than for that year's bowl-bound football players.

While it may be striking to note that Black male student-athletes graduate at rates higher than their Black non-athletic peers, many Black leaders such as Syracuse professor Boyce Watkins (2011) intensely vocalize that the disparity gap between White and Black male student-athletes is too wide and must be lessened as a matter of civil rights. In a March 25, 2010 commentary he wrote for ESPN.com, Arne Duncan, the U. S. Secretary of Education, addressed the “small number of programs that seem largely indifferent to the academic success of their student-athletes” and pondered why they were rewarded with post-season play. He specifically “called out” the University of Maryland and the University of California, Berkeley, who had not graduated a single player who had entered between 1999 and 2002.

Despite the great progress in graduation success rates over the past two decades, one of the primary focal points discussed at the most recent meeting of NCAA leadership and university presidents in August centered on the ongoing push for academic success and reform in Division I athletics (Potter, 2011). In an NCAA online report, Potter noted that president, Mark Emmert, told those in attendance that in spite of other concerns, “At the end of the day, our mission is to educate and graduate students...though progress has been made; there is more we can, and must do.” Fortunately, as a result of these meetings, the NCAA recently adopted a rule that connects a team's postseason eligibility to the requirement that its Academic Progress Rate (APR) indicates that at least 50% of their players are on track to graduate (Knights Commission, 2011).

The results from this study have shown that graduation success rates (GSR) have improved for student-athletes since stronger standards for college admittance were initially established in the 1980s and more recently when increased focus was placed on the persistence

of college student-athletes when the most recent and impacting academic reform package for academic eligibility requirements was adopted in 2004 by the NCAA Division I Board of Directors in 2004. However, while the results of the study showed that no significant differences were found for mean GSR between all male basketball players and football players collectively when compared to all other male sports' teams, it is important to note that the study indicated that male basketball players have significantly lower GSR than football players and that Black male student-athletes still have significantly lower GSR than White male student-athletes.

The results of this study provide for policy implications for higher education policy makers, leaders, and administrators at the federal, state, and institutional level. This includes officials at the NCAA, college presidents, senior academic and student affairs officers, athletic administrators and the athletic department staff. Policies and programs that continue to increase the graduation success of all student-athletes, particularly Black male student-athletes, are needed to ensure that these students have opportunities to become active and productive members of the communities to which they return when they have finished playing sports. The policy recommendations that I will propose are primarily centered on increasing persistence for Black male student-athletes but would apply to all student-athletes. Based on the findings and expositions of this study, I would like to suggest the following four policy recommendations.

NCAA Policy Recommendations

Increased Eligibility Standards

The NCAA must continue to utilize the Academic Performance Program (APP) in promoting the academic success and persistence of NCAA Division I FBS college student-athletes. A policy recommendation that addresses the GSR disparity gap between Black and White male student-athletes is that the initial academic eligibility standards for all Division I student-athletes should be increased. Adelman (1983) defined standards in terms of expectations

of performance and meeting objectives. Specifically, he contrasted the idea of standards with the notion of requirements, remarking that requirements refer strictly to credentials rather than accomplishments of learning. The NCAA uses both credentials and standards in its NCAA Freshman-Eligibility Standards (NCAA, n.d.e). For Division I student-athletes' credentials, there are 16 core courses that must be completed in high school, including English, mathematics natural/physical science, social science and other coursework. In addition to these requirements, the NCAA uses a sliding scale standard that utilizes both the core grade point average (GPA) and a test score index based on SAT or ACT math and verbal scores. These standards are quite low. For example, the minimum SAT score needed for a corresponding 2.0 GPA is a 1010, below the year 2010 median SAT score of 1017 for all seniors taking the test that year. Even more indicative of remarkably low standards for eligibility, the minimum SAT score of 400 needed for a corresponding 3.550 GPA and above is actually the minimum score a tester can receive for the SAT by merely showing up and handing in a blank form.

A 2000 qualitative study by Benson relayed detailed descriptions from Black male high school athletes who described their academic experiences as inadequate or non-existent. These athletes were given grades they never earned for classes they rarely attended. With a high school GPA so subjective (grade inflation) and so inconsistent, the standardized test score must be used more honestly to predict college success. The Knights Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (1991) recommended that student-athletes should not be considered for enrollment at a college or university unless the student athletes demonstrate a reasonable promise of being successful at that institution in a course of study leading to an academic degree. In order to better correlate the determination of eligibility with standards-based values, I recommend that the standardized test score indices for the NCAA Division I Sliding Scale be enhanced so to fall within the mean

interquartile range of the normal admission scores for the middle 50% of all Division I institutions. This measure would exclude the academically selective colleges and universities with the lowest acceptance rates, such as Ivy League schools and other elite schools, from consideration while including the many Public and Land-grant universities that dominate many of the NCAA Division I sports.

There are members of the Black community who continue to assert that using standardized test scores as part of eligibility for Black student-athletes is racially biased (Rosen, 2000). In order to address the issue of the possible disparate discriminatory impact of standardized testing, the NCAA, in conjunction with the major FBS conferences, should establish funding programs that provide additional assistance (tutoring/SAT prep coursework) to all high school students who have registered through the clearinghouse but are unlikely to meet the new initial eligibility standards. This would provide student-athletes who may not meet eligibility standards the opportunity to become eligible while placing the onus on the student-athletes themselves. It would also show a more serious intent on the part of the NCAA when considering academic progress in meeting requirements and standards.

Freshmen Year Ineligibility

Another policy recommendation that can be put forward from the results of the study is for the NCAA to reinstate policy that makes freshmen college student-athletes ineligible to play during their freshmen year. A study by Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, and Terenzini (1995) found that the academic performance of freshmen football and men's basketball student-athletes was well below the academic performance of other male student-athletes and non-athlete students. In fact, cognitive ability in both reading and mathematics' ability declined for football and men's basketball student-athletes. The researchers' study found these freshmen male student-athletes lacked the time management skills needed for academic success and were likely influenced by

football and basketball subculture that placed a lower value on academic achievement than on athletic achievement.

Freshmen year of college is a stressful, yet important time for social and academic adjustment and integration in the campus (Lubker & Etzel, 2007). Freshmen ineligibility would, in a sense, red-shirt these student-athletes for the year while still providing them with four years of eligibility beginning in their sophomore year. Freshmen student-athletes would continue to train and practice with their sport squads, but they would not be able to compete with their teams or even participate on the sidelines. It would be especially vital that freshmen student-athletes not travel to away competitions that interfere with their scheduled courses or coursework. This would place tremendous emphasis on their student role in their “student-athlete” status on campus and provide them with greater potential to integrate both academically and socially on their college campus. It is highly likely that a “forced” opportunity to focus on academics the first year on campus would especially help Black male college student-athletes who, as noted previously in this study, are often seen as lacking in their motivation for academic success. As students first, they would attend games as a student-spectator, especially away games. This would limit their absences from classes and allow them to have greater time for studying and preparing for class.

According to the summary of findings from the NCAA 2010 GOALS and SCORE Studies of the Student-Athlete Experience Division 1 FBS football players report that they spend over 40 hours a week on athletics and an additional 40 hours a week on academics during in-season. This provides further substantiation for making freshmen student-athletes ineligible since this amount of time commitment just to athletics and academics allows no real time for freshmen adjustment and social integration into the campus environment.

Restrict Offseason Training

Another NCAA policy change recommendation that would likely help Black male college-student to persist to graduation is to suspend or greatly diminish informal competitions and rigorous off-season training for all student-athletes on all athletic squads. In a recent series of three studies by Scott, Paskus, Miranda, Petr, and McArdle (2008) that investigated the academic performance of college student-athletes both during their season of competition and their off-season the performance of student-athletes was shown to be better for off-season coursework than for in-season. The difference was even more significant for highly visible and time-consuming sports such as football, as well as among those college-student athletes who were academically under-prepared when they first entered college. As mentioned previously, a 1987 American Institute for Research study (as cited in Person & Lenoir, 1997) noted that Black male student-athletes are quite often academically underprepared for college; they score in the lowest quartiles in both standardized testing and their high school grades prior to beginning college. Also noted earlier, findings from the NCAA 2010 GOALS and SCORE Studies of the Student-Athlete Experience Division 1 FBS football players report that they spend over 40 hours a week on athletics during in-season. The report also noted that 22% of Division I football student-athletes would prefer to spend less time on athletics. Undoubtedly, Black male student-athletes, especially those playing football, may benefit from this off-season policy that allows them to focus on their academics with greater time availability and with less distractions from required informal competitions and rigorous off-season training.

Institutional and Athletic Department Policy Recommendations

An institutional level policy recommendation is that all Division I FBS institutions implement formalized mentoring programs for student-athletes that utilize faculty and staff from both inside and outside the athletic department. The study results indicate that institutions of

higher education should continue to develop and improve support programs that address the overall experiences of Black male student-athletes and contribute to their successful academic endeavors on campus. The NCAA currently offers student-athlete affairs programs and grants to its member institutions that are designed to provide life skills support to promote the overall development and well-being of college student-athletes (NCAA, n.d.b). However, more personalized institutional mentoring programs can likely help Black male college student-athletes find greater academic success by helping them successfully integrate both academically and socially.

A mentoring relationship can provide health and emotional support that centers on developing a strong self-image (Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001). Faculty mentors can especially help Black male student-athletes integrate both socially and academically into their college campus by spending time with them outside of class time (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). Informal discussions on academic topics and special social events can help to create a bond that helps student-athletes focus more on their academic development and success. This informal contact between faculty members and students can help to build confidence, motivation, and collaboration.

Congruence also exists within the literature regarding greater academic and social success in college for student-athletes who have mentoring professionals from the same race or ethnicity serving as role models in their lives (Campbell & Campbell, 2007). Campbell and Campbell noted that by pairing student-athletes with mentors of similar race or ethnic backgrounds, mentoring becomes especially effective for Black male student-athletes. They suggested that student-athletes in these types of mentoring relationships are more likely to persist and often hold more deep-rooted commitments to their careers and lives after sports.

Further Directions for Research

This study found evidence that there are some significant differences in the graduation success rates (GSR) between male student-athletes. Black male student-athletes have significantly lower GSR than White male student-athletes. Due to this disparity, understanding the distinctive academic and social issues affecting the graduation success rates of Black male college student-athletes is of great importance within and across higher education, and this gap should continue to be highly scrutinized by higher educational leaders and policy makers, leaders in the Black social community, and the media until the difference becomes negligible.

In spite of the robust attempts made by the NCAA to address the academic success and persistence of college student-athletes through measures like Proposition 48, Proposition 16, the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) and the Academic Progress Rate (APR), academic integrity and other issues affecting college student-athletes should continue to be examined and evaluated (Fountain & Finley, 2009). Benford (2007) suggested that investigating the connections between all the perceived problems of college athletics in a sociological context is the future trend of research in college athletics, and he called this ongoing and cyclical research agenda an enormous task.

There are few centers of research that provide higher education scholars from divergent institutions and distinctive points of view the opportunities to cooperatively investigate these types of issues (Sack, 2009). While the NCAA has undertaken a vast amount of research pertaining to the graduation success of all of its athletes, it can hardly be considered unbiased when reporting the results of that research. Additionally, the data sets released by the NCAA do not afford access to the individual level of data that would provide more exact information on the academic performance of college student-athletes. Athletic reform-minded groups who continually call for changes in policy for college student-athletes might also have limited access

to proper data and narrow perspectives when considering educational research on college student-athletes. Therefore, college student-athlete research consortiums should be formed and organized by state or by athletic conference.

APPENDIX A
FBS INSTITUTION BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE AND CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

Name of Institution	Type	Conference Membership
Arizona State University	Public	Pacific-10
Arkansas State University	Public	Sun Belt
Auburn University	Public	SEC
Ball State University	Public	MAC
Baylor University	Private	Big 12
Boise State University	Public	Mountain West
Boston College	Private	ACC
Bowling Green State University	Public	MAC
Brigham Young University	Private	Mountain West
California State University, Fresno	Public	WAC
Central Michigan University	Public	MAC
Clemson University	Public	ACC
Colorado State University	Public	Mountain West
Duke University	Private	ACC
East Carolina University	Public	Conference USA
Eastern Michigan University	Public	MAC
Florida Atlantic University	Public	Sun Belt
Florida International University	Public	Sun Belt
Florida State University	Public	ACC
Georgia Institute of Technology	Public	ACC
Indiana University, Bloomington	Public	Big Ten
Iowa State University	Public	Big 12
Kansas State University	Public	Big 12
Kent State University	Public	MAC
Louisiana State University	Public	SEC
Louisiana Tech University	Public	WAC
Marshall University	Public	Conference USA
Miami University (Ohio)	Public	MAC
Michigan State University	Public	Big Ten
Middle Tennessee State University	Public	Sun Belt
Mississippi State University	Public	SEC
New Mexico State University	Public	WAC
North Carolina State University	Public	ACC
Northern Illinois University	Public	MAC
Northwestern University	Private	Big Ten
Ohio State University	Public	Big Ten
Ohio University	Public	MAC
Oklahoma State University	Public	Big 12
Oregon State University	Public	Pacific-10
Pennsylvania State University	Public	Big Ten
Purdue University	Public	Big Ten

Rice University	Private	Conference USA
Rutgers, State Univ of New Jersey, New Brunswick	Public	Big East
San Diego State University	Public	Mountain West
San Jose State University	Public	WAC
Southern Methodist University	Private	Conference USA
Stanford University	Private	Pacific-10
Syracuse University	Private	Big East
Temple University	Public	MAC
Texas A&M University, College Station	Public	Big 12
Texas Christian University	Private	Mountain West
Texas Tech University	Public	Big 12
Troy University	Public	Sun Belt
Tulane University	Private	Conference USA
U.S. Air Force Academy	Public	Mountain West
U.S. Military Academy	Public	CSFL
U.S. Naval Academy	Public	CSFL
University at Buffalo, the State University of New York	Public	MAC
University of Akron	Public	MAC
University of Alabama at Birmingham	Public	Conference USA
University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa	Public	SEC
University of Arizona	Public	Pacific-10
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville	Public	SEC
University of California, Berkeley	Public	Pacific-10
University of California, Los Angeles	Public	Pacific-10
University of Central Florida	Public	Conference USA
University of Cincinnati	Public	Big East
University of Colorado, Boulder	Public	Pacific-10
University of Connecticut	Public	Big East
University of Florida	Public	SEC
University of Georgia	Public	SEC
University of Hawaii, Manoa	Public	WAC
University of Houston	Public	Conference USA
University of Idaho	Public	WAC
University of Illinois, Champaign	Public	Big Ten
University of Iowa	Public	Big Ten
University of Kansas	Public	Big 12
University of Kentucky	Public	SEC
University of Louisiana at Lafayette	Public	Sun Belt
University of Louisiana at Monroe	Public	Sun Belt
University of Louisville	Public	Big East
University of Maryland, College Park	Public	ACC
University of Memphis	Public	Conference USA
University of Miami (Florida)	Private	ACC
University of Michigan	Public	Big Ten
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	Public	Big Ten
University of Mississippi	Public	SEC

University of Missouri, Columbia	Public	Big 12
University of Nebraska, Lincoln	Public	Big Ten
University of Nevada	Public	WAC
University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Public	Mountain West
University of New Mexico	Public	Mountain West
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	Public	ACC
University of North Texas	Public	Sun Belt
University of Notre Dame	Private	Big East
University of Oklahoma	Public	Big 12
University of Oregon	Public	Pacific-10
University of Pittsburgh	Public	Big East
University of South Carolina, Columbia	Public	SEC
University of South Florida	Public	Big East
University of Southern California	Private	Pacific-10
University of Southern Mississippi	Public	Conference USA
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Public	SEC
University of Texas at Austin	Public	Big 12
University of Texas at El Paso	Public	Conference USA
University of Toledo	Public	MAC
University of Tulsa	Private	Conference USA
University of Utah	Public	Pacific-10
University of Virginia	Public	ACC
University of Washington	Public	Pacific-10
University of Wisconsin, Madison	Public	Big Ten
University of Wyoming	Public	Mountain West
Utah State University	Public	WAC
Vanderbilt University	Private	SEC
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University	Public	ACC
Wake Forest University	Private	ACC
Washington State University	Public	Pacific-10
West Virginia University	Public	Big East
Western Kentucky University	Public	Sun Belt
Western Michigan University	Public	MAC

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Donna L. Domikaitis Matthews was born to Stan and Rhoda Domikaitis in 1962 in Oak Lawn, Illinois. The youngest of three children, Donna grew up in Chicago and graduated from Luther High School South in 1980. Upon completion of her high school diploma, she attended and participated on the varsity volleyball team at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. She left West Point before finishing her degree and attended the University of Illinois at Chicago. Shortly thereafter, she married a military officer and “joined” the Army. She spent over 20 years providing philanthropic assistance to many military and educational organizations as she lived all over the country and the world.

Donna received her bachelor of science degree in mathematics from Methodist (College) University in Fayetteville, North Carolina in 1990. She immediately began her professional career as a high school mathematics teacher and a volleyball and soccer coach. In 1997, Donna received her master of education in mathematics degree from Campbell University in Buies Creek, North Carolina. Since then she has taught at several community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and universities across the south. She is currently a professor of mathematics at the Oviedo Campus of Seminole State College of Florida.

Donna was a member of the 2007 LEAD cohort at the University of Florida and completed her doctorate in higher education administration and policy in December of 2011.