

A MIXED METHODS EXPLORATORY STUDY OF BLACK MALE STUDENT
ATHLETES' EXPERIENCES AT A HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY

by

JOSEPH NEHEMIAH COOPER

(Under the Direction of Billy Hawkins)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and college experiences of Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University (HBU) in the southeastern United States. An HBU was selected for this study, both because of its unique educational environment and because there is a dearth of research on student athletes' experiences at these institutions. This mixed methods exploratory study involved an institutional document review, a Student Athlete College Experiences Questionnaire (SACEQ), three focus group interviews, and four in-depth individual interviews. A concurrent triangulation exploratory design allowed qualitative and quantitative data to be collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and integrated at the interpretation phase (Creswell, 2009). Participants in this study were Black male student athletes who participated in football and/or men's basketball at the targeted HBU. Data was analyzed using an interpretive interactionism paradigmatic stance to attain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants (Denzin, 2001). Additionally, institutional theory (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) was applied to highlight key institutional practices at an HBU that

contributed to Black male student athletes' academic achievement and positive college experiences.

INDEX WORDS: Black student athletes, academic achievement, interpretive interactionism, institutional theory, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs)

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DEDICATION

First, I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Without Him I am nothing, but with Him I can accomplish things beyond human measure. Thank you for your unconditional love, unwavering grace, and endless mercy. The purpose of my life is to honor you in everything I do. I also dedicate this dissertation to my Mom. It is because of your unconditional love, support, and guidance over the years that I have reached this point in my life. I love you more than words can express. Thank you for being the greatest Mom ever.

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“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” (Romans 5: 1-5) (NIV)

I would like to thank first my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You are my Heavenly Father and my everything. I thank you and praise you for everything you have done and continue to do in my life. I also thank my Mom for her unconditional love, support, and guidance. You have always been and continue to be my inspiration. I thank my brother, Adam, for being the best brother in the world. Your unwavering love, support, and prayers have kept me grounded. I love you more than you know. I want to thank both of my grandmothers, Mama Jo and Mama, most importantly for providing me with a solid spiritual foundation and for always showing me how to lean on the Lord. You are my angels and I am eternally grateful to have you in my life. I want to thank my father for showing me that growth and change are possible and for teaching me the importance of having a forgiving spirit.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Let us build institutions that are not only designed to meet the immediate problems caused by the vicissitudes of white supremacy, but let us also establish institutions for eternity. Let us build for perpetuity” (Carruthers, 1999, p. 273)

Historically, the structure of intercollegiate athletics at many Division I predominantly White institutions (PWIs) represented a microcosm of the broader United States society (Sage, 1998). In other words, the problems Black male athletes¹ faced at these institutions reflected widespread social, economic, political, and educational inequalities facing Blacks² within the broader U.S. society (Edwards, 1980). A common theme associated with these inequalities is the historical and contemporary practice of racism in the United States (Brooks & Althouse, 2000; Coakley, 2009; Edwards, 1973; Sage, 1998; Sailes, 2010b; Wiggins & Miller, 2003). According to Coakley (2009), racism refers to the “attitudes, actions, and policies based on the belief that people in one racial category are inherently superior to people in one or more other categories” (p. 281). Racism against Blacks has been a societal norm in the U.S. since 1619, when European settlers enslaved Black Africans on U.S. soil. Nearly 400 years later, racism continues to

¹ The term “athlete,” as opposed to “student” or “student athlete,” is intentionally used when referencing Black males who participate in Division I football and/or men’s basketball to underscore the researcher’s stance that the structure of intercollegiate athletics at Division I institutions overemphasizes athletic performance at the expense of academic development.

² The researcher uses the term “Black” instead of “African American” to describe the racial rather than the ethnic group (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). The term “African American” will be used only when cited from a specified reference. Definitions retrieved from Humes, K. R., Jones, N. A., & Ramirez, R. R. (2011). Overview of Race and Hispanic origin: 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>

infiltrate U.S. social institutions, including the primary, secondary, and postsecondary educational systems (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2006).

In spite of the significant strides made by the Civil Rights Movement and the milestone *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) ruling, *de facto* racism remains present in the U.S. educational system. More specifically, racism occurs on two distinct levels within U.S. educational institutions: institutional and cultural (Hawkins, 2010). *Institutional racism* results from a set of systematic practices embedded the educational pipeline that produces disparate outcomes for ethnic minorities. Examples of institutional racism include culturally biased college admission tests (e.g., the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT)), funding disparities between public and private schools, and discrepancies between the number of college preparatory courses offered at suburban versus urban schools. *Cultural racism* is characterized as the values and norms created by the dominant group (i.e., White Anglo-Saxons in the U.S.) in conjunction with the subordination of the values and history of non-dominant groups (e.g., Black Americans). An example of cultural racism is the lack of emphasis on and recognition of Black contributions in U.S. history curricula. When Black students encounter these forms of racism, also referred to as cultural dissonance, they are less likely to perform well academically (Gallien, 2005).

At the nexus of two major social institutions, academics and athletics, at U.S. educational institutions lies the racist belief that Black males are athletically gifted, yet academically deficient (Edwards, 1973; Hawkins, 2010; Lapchick, 1984; Sage, 1998; Sellers, Kuperminc, & Waddell, 1991; Singer, 2005; Smith, 2009; Wiggins, 2000). This longstanding racist myth of Black intellectual inferiority is embedded in U.S. institutional

arrangements (e.g., educational, economic, media, etc.) as well as social practices (e.g., sports, art, music, etc.) (Carruthers, 1999). For years, some scholars promoted the theory of social Darwinism to justify the notion of White intellectual superiority (Comstock, 1912; Jensen, 1969; Jones, 1998; Stone, 1908; Van Evrie, 1870). Herrnstein and Murray (1994) promulgated the Social Darwinism theory in their controversial book titled *The Bell Curve*, which suggested that an “inequality of endowments” between human beings, and particularly between those of different racial groups, was an indisputable fact of life (p. 58).

Subsequently, several scholars conducted studies on Black athletes and attributed their athletic success to genetic predispositions (Entine, 2000; Hoberman, 1997). However, these fallacious stereotypes did not account for various contributing factors associated with athletic success, such as hard work, personal determination, perseverance, and environmental/socio-structural influences (Sailes, 2010a). These stereotypes also provided the illusion that Black males possessed only athletic skills, thus justifying their overrepresentation in certain sports (e.g., football, basketball, and track) and their underrepresentation in classrooms at U.S. institutions of higher education (Harper, 2006; Harper, Williams, & Blackmon, 2013; Harrison, Azzarito, & Burden, 2004; Hunt, Ivery, & Sailes, 2010; Martin, Harrison, Stone, & Lawrence, 2010). The combination of the Black male intellectual inferiority and physical superiority stereotypes is typified in the dumb jock theory (Edwards, 1984; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Hawkins, 2010; Sailes, 2010a; Smith, 2009). Despite the fact the dumb jock theory has yet to be supported by scientific research, the pervasive acceptance of this theory in U.S. society has contributed to negative academic outcomes, limited personal development, and poor psychological

adjustments for Black male athletes at U.S. institutions of higher education (Benson, 2000; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Singer, 2008).

A majority of the research on Black male athletes has focused on those who attend Division I PWIs (Adler & Adler, 1991; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Eitzen & Purdy, 1986; Hawkins, 2010; Sellers, 1992; Sellers et al., 1991; Smith, 2009; Wiggins, 1991). This is understandable given the public visibility and money generated by the football and men's basketball programs at these institutions. The major Division I PWI conferences, also known as Bowl Championship Series (BCS) conferences in football, include the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pacific Athletic Conference (PAC) 12, and Southeastern Conference (SEC). Similar to Blacks in the broader U.S. society, Black male athletes at these institutions encounter various forms of racial discrimination, social isolation, academic neglect, and athletic exploitation, as well as limited leadership opportunities (Cooper, 2012). Thus, some researchers have suggested that the campus climates at many Division I PWIs are not conducive to Black male athletes' academic achievement or holistic development (Adler & Adler, 1991; American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989; Benson, 2000; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Sellers, 1992; Singer, 2005).

Moreover, several critics of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) have argued that the practice of athletic exploitation has contributed to negative developmental outcomes for Black athletes (Adler & Adler, 1991; Benson, 2000; Edwards, 2000; Sellers, 2000; Singer, 2005). Polite (2011) defined exploitation as "the unfair treatment or use of, or the practice of taking selfish or unfair advantage of, a person or situation, usually for personal gain" (p. 2). In this exploitive relationship, the

NCAA and its member institutions view and treat Black male athletes as necessary commodities for revenue generation with little concern for their academic or personal development (Hawkins, 2010). This practice directly contradicts and undermines the educational mission of these institutions to promote academic excellence and foster holistic student development. Therefore, the practice of athletic exploitation serves as an indictment of the current structure of intercollegiate athletics at many U.S. institutions of higher education (Funk, 1991; Hawkins, 2010; Lapchick, 1984; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Smith, 2009; Wolff & Keteyian, 1990).

Since the inception of the NCAA in 1906, a major problem facing its member institutions has been the challenge of preserving academic integrity while fielding competitive athletic programs. More specifically, Black male athletes at NCAA institutions have persistently graduated at lower rates in comparison to their student athlete counterparts (Lapchick, 2010a, 2010b; NCAA, 2011a, 2011b). Concurrently, Black males have also been overrepresented in the NCAA's two largest revenue-generating sports, football and men's basketball. For example, in 2004, Black males represented 30.5% of all male athletes in Division I sports, 54.6% of football teams, and 60.8% of men's basketball teams; yet they only comprised 10.4% of all male undergraduates at these institutions (Harper, 2006). In a study of 50 U.S. public flagship universities, Harper (2006) found that only 24% (12 out of 50) of these institutions graduated more than half of their Black male athletes within six years. Similarly, 26% (13 out of 50) of these institutions graduated less than one-third of Black male athletes. Additional findings revealed an 18.9 percentage point gap between six-year graduation rates of White male student athletes and Black male athletes at 43 public flagship

institutions. The preponderance of Black male athletes in the two largest revenue-generating sports, coupled with their low graduation rates, raises doubts about whether these institutions are providing them with well-rounded educational experiences or simply engaging in athletic exploitation (Brooks & Althouse, 2000; Edwards, 2000; Hawkins, 2010; Sailes, 2010b; Smith, 2009).

Such statistics indicate that these institutions were not successful in cultivating positive learning environments in which Black male athletes could thrive academically. A more recent study conducted by the NCAA (2011a) published the following graduation success rates (GSR) from a Division I entering cohort from 2004: overall student athletes (82%), White student athletes (87%), African American student athletes (68%), White male student athletes (83%), African American male student athletes (62%), White female student athletes (92%), and African American female student athletes (80%). Despite graduating over half of all African American male student athletes, the graduation rates for this group still lagged behind all other student athlete demographics by at least 18 percentage points.

Even at the Division II level, the academic success rates (ASR) (the Division II measure of student athletes' graduation success rates) revealed similar disparities along racial and gender lines. In a study of 286 Division II institutions, the ASR among the 2001-2004 entering cohorts for Black male student athletes³ was 48% compared to 72% for White male student athletes and 73% for all student athletes (NCAA, 2011b). More

³ The term "student athlete" is used intentionally when referencing Black students who participate in intercollegiate athletics at non-Division I institutions to underscore the researcher's stance that these individuals are viewed and treated more as students first and athletes second. This term is distinct from the term "athlete" because these Black students are more likely to be enrolled at the institution for purposes besides of athletics compared to Black males who contribute to the revenue generation of Division I football and men's basketball at PWIs.

specifically, the ASR for the same cohorts for Black male football and men's basketball athletes were 60% and 54%, respectively.

In contrast to PWIs, HBCUs have been viewed as safe havens for Black students to develop intellectually, socially, and psychologically (Allen, 1986; Fleming, 1984; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010). Although currently more college-bound Black students attend PWIs, the retention rates of Blacks at HBCUs have been greater (Spence, 2005). Furthermore, HBCUs represent only three percent of U.S. institutions, yet graduate nearly 20%, or one-fifth, of Blacks who earn undergraduate degrees (Allen & Jewel, 2002; Allen, Jewel, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Nettles & Perna, 1997; United Negro College Fund, 2012). A recent United Negro College Fund (UNCF) report found that HBCUs graduate over 50% of Black professionals, over 50% of Black public school teachers, and 70% of Black dentists (United Negro College Fund, 2012). Additional findings from the report indicate that 50% of Blacks who graduate from HBCUs pursue graduate or professional degrees. Given the record of educational accomplishment among students at HBCUs, research is needed to explore whether Black male student athletes have more holistic and academically successful college experiences within these unique educational environments.

The discouraging racial gaps in graduation rates at PWIs undermine the mission of the NCAA and its member institutions to enhance educational experiences for all student athletes. The mission statement of the NCAA identifies its intention "to be an integral part of higher education and to focus on the development of our student athletes" (NCAA, 2013, p. 1). An NCAA advertising campaign declares that its member

institutions prepare student athletes for professional careers other than sports; however, the persistently low graduation rates of Black male student athletes across Divisions indicate these student athletes are not receiving an optimal education at NCAA institutions. If graduation is the benchmark for academic success, then the NCAA and its member institutions are failing in their mission of providing educational advancement for all student athletes.

In addition to the annual NCAA reports (e.g. GSR and ASR reports), The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) annually highlights the racial and gender trends of NCAA graduation rates. Recently, TIDES published articles on the graduation rates for the 2010 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament Teams and the 2009-2010 Bowl-bound college football teams (Lapchick, 2009, 2010). Although Black athletes demonstrated slight improvements compared to previous years, the overall results still showed a significant racial disparity between the graduation rates of Black and White athletes. A more recent TIDES study revealed that among the Sweet 16 teams in the 2011 NCAA men's basketball tournament, the graduation rates of Black and White male basketball athletes were 57% and 97%, respectively (Lapchick, 2011). This 40-percentage point disparity between Black and White male basketball athletes is immensely troubling and suggests that race remains a mitigating factor in the academic achievement of Black male athletes at Division I PWIs (Benson, 2000; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Comeaux & Jayakumar, 2007; Lawrence, Harrison, & Stone, 2009; Sellers, 1992).

Despite the wealth of research on Black male athletes at Division I PWIs, there is a dearth of research on Black male student athletes at Historically Black Colleges and

Universities (HBCUs) (American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989; Brown, 2004; Person & LeNoir, 1997). Moreover, findings from the limited research available indicate that Black male student athletes at HBCUs experience more positive developmental outcomes compared to their Black male athlete counterparts at PWIs. These positive developmental outcomes include higher levels of academic achievement, social engagement, positive self-identity, cultural awareness, appreciation for diversity, and positive relationships with faculty, staff, and peers. To address the problem of low academic achievement among Black male student athletes it is imperative to conduct research that highlights their voices and lived experiences at all types of educational institutions.

Statement of the Problem

It is impossible to address the problem of low academic achievement among Black male student athletes without taking into account their experiences. Various factors influence college students' academic experiences and achievement, including faculty-student relationships, institutional demographics, and peer support (Bonner, 2010). Researchers must seek a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between Black male student athletes' precollege experiences, commitments during college, and the social systems embedded in these educational institutions (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Therefore, examining the experiences of Black male student athletes at institutions such as HBCUs is pivotal to gaining a more comprehensive understanding of not only the unique challenges they face, but also the key institutional practices that contribute to their academic achievement and holistic development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and college experiences of Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University (HBU) in the southeastern United States.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this investigation:

1. What are the motivations for attending a Historically Black University for Black male student athletes?
2. How do Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University make meaning of their holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social)?
3. What are the key influences associated with the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University?

Significance of Study

The persistently low graduation rates of Black male student athletes undermine the educational mission of the NCAA and its member institutions (Lapchick, 2010a, 2010b; NCAA, 2011a, 2011b). The statistics on Black male student athletes' graduation rates across divisional membership (i.e., Divisions I and II) contradict the NCAA's mission of serving as integral part of student development at institutions of higher education (NCAA, 2013). Furthermore, the increasing revenues generated by football and men's basketball, the two sports in which Black male student athletes are consistently overrepresented, raise significant concerns about the unethical practices of academic neglect and athletic exploitation at these institutions (Brooks & Althouse, 2000; Edwards,

2000; Hawkins, 2010; Sailes, 2010b; Smith, 2009). The significance of this dissertation study lies in the generation of new knowledge to improve Black male student athletes' academic achievement. Only a limited number of studies have focused on identifying key factors related to positive academic outcomes for Black male student athletes, and nearly all of those studies were conducted at Division I PWIs (Harrison & Boyd, 2005; Harrison, Comeaux, & Plecha, 2006; Martin & Harris III, 2006; Martin, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2010; Martin, Harrison, Stone, et al., 2010).

Moreover, even fewer studies have examined the nexus between the institutional culture of HBCUs and Black male student athletes' developmental outcomes in college (American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989; Brown, 2004; Person & LeNoir, 1997). The collective findings from these limited studies suggest that HBCUs provide positive learning environments in which Black student athletes can achieve academic success and holistic development. Since their inception, HBCUs have excelled at educating Black students regardless of their academic preparedness, test scores, socioeconomic status, or environmental circumstances (Allen & Jewel, 2002; Kim, 2002; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Nettles & Perna, 1997; Palmer & Gasman, 2008).

The unique contribution of HBCUs in the education of Black students is their ability to provide "effective academic remediation, institutional support, and culturally relevant curricula and environmental cues that minimize the effect of differential precollege preparation" (Brown & Davis, 2001, p. 44). These institutions actively promote cultural empowerment through their mission statements, curricula, and institutional practices (Allen et al., 2007). In addition, athletic participation at HBCUs

has also served as an integral component of Black student athletes' educational experiences (Charlton, 2011; Person & LeNoir, 1997).

In light of the academic success achieved by students at HBCUs, there is a need for research on key institutional policies and practices at HBCUs that produce positive developmental outcomes for Black male student athletes. The purpose of this study was to identify key influences associated with academic achievement and positive college experiences for Black male student athletes at an HBU in the southeastern United States. In contrast to a deficit theory approach, which suggests that individual traits and behaviors are the primary reason for academic underperformance, this study seeks to identify key institutional characteristics that enhance Black male student athletes' success in college.

This mixed methods exploratory study will examine the holistic experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. This study will also highlight effective institutional programs (e.g., summer bridge), services (e.g., student athlete academic support services), and relationships (e.g., faculty-student athlete interactions) that contribute to positive academic and psychosocial outcomes for Black male student athletes. The findings from this study will provide useful information to all institutions of higher education about effective strategies and best practices aimed at maximizing Black male student athletes' academic achievement and positive college experiences.

Definition of Terms

Black/African American

A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups in Africa, and who identifies as Black or African American.

White

A person having origins of any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East, and who identifies as Caucasian or white.

Ethnic Minority/Minority

A group of people in the United States who do not represent the politically dominant voting majority of the total population, or who numerically comprise a small percentage of the U.S. population, including Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, North American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and Asians/Asian-Americans.

Institutions of Higher Education

Postsecondary schools in the United States that offer at least one of the following: associate's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, education specialist degree, or doctor of philosophy degree or their equivalents.

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

Institutions of higher education in the United States whose student population is at least 50% White.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Institutions of higher education in the United States established prior to 1964 with the purpose of providing educational opportunities to Black Americans and whose student population is at least 50% Black.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement will be defined by the following estimated cumulative college grade point average ranges: Very High (3.5 or higher), High (3.00-3.49), Moderate (2.50-2.99), Low (2.00-2.49), and Very Low (1.99 or lower).

Athletic Participation

Athletic participation will be defined as participation by a student athlete on the football and/or men's basketball team at the selected institution.

Key Influences

Key influences refer to institutional practices (programs, services, relationships, policies, etc.), demographics (gender, socioeconomic status, etc.), relationships (family, friends, etc.), or personal traits (academic self-efficacy, motivation, positive self-identity, etc.) that contribute to academic achievement and/or positive college experiences.

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

A national governing body for collegiate-level athletics comprised of nearly 1,200 institutions of higher education, created to preserve competitive balance, academic integrity, and amateurism for its institutions and student athletes.

NCAA Division I

NCAA member institutions that sponsor at least 14 sports (at least seven for men and seven for women, or six for men and eight for women), compete in a minimum number of contests against Division I opponents (the number varies by sport), and offer a minimum amount of financial aid but do not exceed established maximums. All Division I institutions offer athletic scholarships. There are currently 335 Division I members, 66% of which are public institutions and 34% of which are private.

Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS)

NCAA Division I member institutions that offer at least 16 NCAA sponsored athletic teams (including football) and participate in the postseason bowl system rather than a playoff to determine a national champion for football. FBS members must meet

the highest standards of sports sponsorship, football scheduling, and overall financial aid. In addition, FBS members must meet minimum attendance standards for football. There are currently 120 FBS members.

Football Championship Subdivision (FCS)

FCS members determine their football champion through an NCAA playoff. FCS schools typically have smaller football stadiums than FBS schools. There are currently 118 FCS members.

Division I Subdivision

Division I programs that do not sponsor football. There are currently 97 Division I Subdivision members.

Division II

NCAA member institutions that sponsor an intermediate-level division of competition, which offers an alternative to both the highly competitive level of intercollegiate athletics offered in Division I, and the non-scholarship level offered in Division III. Division II schools must offer at least 10 sports with a minimum of four men's and four women's sports at coeducational institutions. Scheduling is highly based on regionalization. Division II schools range in size from fewer than 2,500 students to over 15,000 students, with the average enrollment around 4,500. There are currently 302 Division II members (281 active and 21 advancing through the membership process). Division II offers athletic grants-in-aid; however, very few student athletes receive full athletic grants-in-aid. Public universities comprise 52% and private institutions comprise 48% of Division II membership.

Division III

NCAA member institutions that sponsor a division of competition that offers an alternative to both the highly competitive level of intercollegiate athletics offered in Division I and the intermediate level of competition offered in Division II. Division III institutions do not offer athletic grants-in-aid to student athletes. Division III members offer an average of 8.1 men's sports and 8.9 women's sports. Currently there are 447 Division III members (432 active and 15 provisional/reclassifying), comprised of 20% public institutions and 80% private institutions.

Rating Percentage Index (RPI)

The RPI is an NCAA tool used to measure an athletic team's performance for postseason qualification and seeding.

Student Athlete

A student who participates in an NCAA-sponsored varsity intercollegiate athletic team, except on a football and/or men's basketball team at a Division I BCS institution.

Athlete

A student who participates on a football and/or men's basketball team at a Division I BCS institution.

Athletics Grant-In-Aid

A grant, scholarship, tuition waiver, or other financial assistance from a college or university that is awarded based on a student's athletic ability.

Academic Progress Rate (APR)

An NCAA Division I academic measurement tool that calculates the eligibility of current student athletes receiving athletics grants-in-aid divided by the total retention

points possible.

Graduation Success Rate (GSR)

An NCAA academic measurement tool that measures graduation rates at Division I institutions and includes students transferring into institutions. The GSR excludes student athletes who leave their institutions before graduation provided they would have been academically eligible to compete had they remained. Additional allowable exclusions include those who either die or become permanently disabled and those who leave school to join the armed forces or foreign services or to attend a church mission.

Academic Success Rate (ASR)

An NCAA academic measurement tool that measures graduation rates at Division II institutions and includes freshmen who were recruited to the institution but did not receive athletically related financial aid. The ASR does not include students who leave an institution while they were academically eligible to compete.

Federal Graduation Rate (FGR)

A federal academic measurement tool that calculates a six-year proportion of student athletes who received athletics grants-in-aid and graduated from an institution divided by the total number of student athletes who entered the institution on athletics grants-in-aid during the same period.

Adjusted Graduation Gap (AGG)

A four-class average of adjusted federal graduation rates (FGR) with part-time student graduation rates removed, for the purpose of providing a more realistic comparison of reported NCAA Division I football athlete graduation rates with the adjusted full-time student graduation rate.

Bowl Championship Series (BCS)

A five-game production of college football designed to promote the top eight teams in the country, with the top two competing in the national championship game. The BCS is comprised of the six major Division I athletic conferences including the ACC, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, PAC 12, and SEC.

Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA)

An NCAA Division II athletic organization of historically Black institutions based on mid-eastern and southeastern U.S. regional geography, founded in 1912. The 10 current member institutions of the CIAA include Bowie State University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University, Livingstone College, St. Augustine's College, St. Paul's College, Shaw University, Virginia State University, and Virginia Union University.

Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC)

An NCAA Division I athletic organization of historically Black institutions based on mid-eastern and southeastern regional geography, founded in 1969. The 12 current member institutions of the MEAC include Bethune-Cookman University, Coppin State University, Delaware State University, Florida A&M University, Hampton University, Howard University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Morgan State University, Norfolk State University, North Carolina A&T State University, South Carolina State University, and Winston-Salem State University.

Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC)

An NCAA Division II athletic organization of historically Black institutions, founded in 1913. The current 13 members of the SIAC include Albany State University,

Benedict College, Claflin University, Clark Atlanta University, Fort Valley State University, Kentucky State University, Lane College, LeMoyne-Owen College, Miles College, Morehouse College, Paine College, Stillman College, and Tuskegee University.

Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC)

An NCAA Division I athletic organization of historically Black institutions, founded in 1920. The 10 current member institutions of the SWAC include Alabama A&M University, Alabama State University, Alcorn State University, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Grambling State University, Jackson State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Prairie View A&M University, Southern University, and Texas Southern University.

Delimitations

A delimitation of this study is the focus on one problem associated with Black male student athletes, which is their persistently low academic achievement at NCAA member institutions. This study is also delimited to a sample of current Black male football and basketball student athletes at one HBU in the southeastern United States. Their unique position as Black male student athletes participating in the NCAA's two largest revenue-generating sports at an HBU enabled them to address the research questions of this study. Additionally, the research questions and variables of interest in this study primarily focused on the participants' experiences in college and the institutional practices associated with their academic achievement and college experiences. Thus, this approach limited the researcher's ability to investigate in-depth additional influences such as certain pre-college demographics, personality traits, etc.

Furthermore, the theoretical perspectives in this study delimited the researcher's emphasis on individual differences among the participants. Data collection methods and

analyses were delimited to an institutional document review, a Student Athlete College Experience Questionnaire (SACEQ), three semi-structured focus group interviews, and four semi-structured in-depth individual interviews. Qualitative data analysis methods were delimited to a thematic analysis of institutional documents and interview transcripts. Quantitatively, data analysis methods were delimited to descriptive and correlational analyses of the participants' responses on the SACEQ. As a result, the findings of this study limited the researcher's ability to predict causal relationships between variables.

Limitations

One limitation associated with this study was the use of estimated college GPA as a measure academic achievement. Identifying learning outcomes and experiences of student athletes should not be limited to a GPA; however, previous studies of student athletes often use GPAs, GSRs, or APRs as a measure of academic achievement (Astin, 1993a, 1993b; Harper, 2006; Lapchick, 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Person & LeNoir, 1997). In addition, due to legal restrictions associated with the Buckley Amendment to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), the researcher was unable to access participants' academic records.

Due to time and resource constraints, the case study research design limited the researcher's examination of the phenomena to one point in time at one specific location. Thus, the transferability of the findings is limited. Similarly, the use of purposeful sampling as opposed to random sampling techniques also limited the generalizability of the findings. The use of a constructed SACEQ rather than a pre-reliable and pre-validated instrument could limit the researcher's confidence in inferences. In addition, the researcher's subjectivity as a Black male former athlete who grew up the southeastern United States may contribute to potential bias during the data collection and analysis

phases of this study. Lastly, findings from this study do not provide an all-inclusive solution to the complex challenges facing Black male student athletes at institutions of higher education in the United States.

Summary

Chapter One presents an overview of the problem facing the NCAA and its member institutions with regard to the academic achievement of Black male athletes and student athletes. This chapter also highlighted possible explanations for the academic underperformance of Black male athletes and suggested the role HBCUs may play in enhancing their academic achievement. Previous literature on Black male student athletes focused on their experiences at PWIs. However, there is a dearth of research on the impact of the unique educational environments at HBCUs on Black male student athletes' holistic college experience (overall, academic, athletic, and social) and academic achievement. The current study seeks to fill the void of research on Black male student athletes' experiences at HBCUs.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Institutions of higher education seek to educate and empower their students, and to equip them to serve as productive citizens of society. Nevertheless, Black male student athletes face many challenges in U.S. educational institutions. Understanding these challenges requires knowledge of the history of Black participation in intercollegiate athletics. Historically, racism in United States limited Black participation in nearly every facet of mainstream society, including intercollegiate athletics (Wiggins, 2000). For example, prior to the 20th century, Black athletes were largely excluded from White organized sports. The treatment of Black athletes during this period reflected the social status of Blacks in the broader U.S. society. In sports as in most other contexts, Blacks encountered various forms of injustice, including racial discrimination, social exclusion, and economic exploitation (Spivey, 1983). However, the emergence of Black involvement in intercollegiate athletics was a culmination of numerous events such as the evolution of Black intellectual history, the impact of the Civil Rights movement, and the significance of the Black protest movement. In fact, before widespread integration in the 1960s, a majority of Black athletes were stars at HBCUs (Hunt, 1996; Wiggins, 1991, 2000; Wiggins & Miller, 2003). In addition, Black athletes not only excelled athletically, but they also did not have problems graduating or assimilating at HBCUs (Polite, 2011).

Following World War I, the U.S. demographic landscape changed drastically as southern Blacks migrated to urban cities in the North (Wiggins, 1991). This population shift led an increasing number of Black students to enroll at Northern colleges and

universities. The number of Black students at PWIs in the North increased from 1,400 in 1924 to 2,538 in 1932 (Franklin & Moss, 1988). Consequently, increasing numbers of skilled Black athletes began competing in intercollegiate athletics at these institutions. Black athletes such as Jesse Owens (Ohio State University; track and field), Oze Simmons (University of Iowa; football), Fritz Pollard, Jr. (University of North Dakota; football), and Jackie Robinson (University of California at Los Angeles; baseball, basketball, football, and track and field) shined at PWIs. All of these athletes were revered for their athletic prowess and physical gifts, while their academic abilities received little to no attention (Wiggins, 1991).

After World War II, several significant events occurred in the United States that forced racial integration at U.S. educational institutions (Harris, 2000). The passage of the Government Issue (G.I.) Bill in 1944 provided an opportunity for Black veterans to attend college. Similarly, President Truman established a committee to study the problems in higher education, particularly racial inequalities. The goal of this committee was to devise effective methods to end discrimination in higher education, and specifically inequalities in educational opportunities (Franklin & Moss, 1988). Shortly thereafter, the milestone *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) decision mandated the desegregation of public educational institutions in the United States (Harris, 2000). This legislation led to increased academic and athletic opportunities for Blacks across the nation. Subsequently, Black athletic participation began to grow in sports such as football, baseball, track and field, and basketball (Wiggins, 1991).

During the 1960s, several legislative changes that had been enacted went unenforced, and many Blacks began to express their frustration (Harris, 2000). Peaceful

protests in the form sit-ins began to occur at institutions and businesses across the U.S. particularly in the South. At the same time, Black athletes continued to excel in intercollegiate athletics. In 1960, Oscar Robertson earned his third college basketball Player of the Year award. In 1961, Ernie Davis became the first Black to earn the coveted Heisman Trophy. In 1963, Loyola University (Illinois) started four Black players on their men's basketball team that won the national championship. In 1969, Lew Alcindor, later known as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, led the formidable UCLA Bruins to their third straight college basketball national championship and earned the first Naismith College Player of Year award. These athletes gained tremendous media attention not only for their athletic accomplishments, but also for their willingness to confront larger social inequities facing Blacks in the U.S.

By the mid-1960s most intercollegiate athletic conferences had been completely desegregated (Harris, 2000). In 1967, the prominent SEC joined the ACC and Southwest Conference (SWC) in fully integrating their athletic teams. Despite integration, however, Black athletes continued to experience racial discrimination, social isolation, and athletic exploitation (Wiggins, 2000). As a result, Black athletes began to protest racial stacking (a practice that involved the assignment of players to positions solely based on their race), racial stereotyping, limits on their social lives, and other forms of mistreatment forced upon them by their institutions and Athletic Departments (Harris, 2000). From the mid-1970s to the present day, Black college athletes continue to face unequal treatment from coaches, faculty, staff, and peers (Benson, 2000; Eitzen, 2000; Harris, 2000; Singer, 2008).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Prior to the Civil War, educational opportunities for Blacks in the United States were practically non-existent (Gutek, 1986; Hawkins, 2010; Henderson & Kritsonis, 2007; Hikes, 2005; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). For example, Virginia passed a law in 1819 that prohibited teaching or reading to Blacks. Georgia passed a similar law in 1831, making it illegal for Whites to teach Blacks to read or write. In 1832, Mississippi proclaimed it unlawful for five or more Blacks to be gathered together at any given time, to dissuade Blacks from learning to read (Gutek, 1986). Before the Civil War, it has been documented that only 28 Blacks earned college degrees, primarily from Northern colleges (Willie, Grady, & Hope, 1991).

Although legalized racism was present throughout the United States, the North was more progressive than the South in providing educational opportunities for Blacks (Hikes, 2005). As a result, the first Black colleges were founded in the North (Cheyney in 1830; Lincoln in 1856; and Wilberforce in 1856) by Christian missionaries (Branson, 1978). In 1865, the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era began with the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation, which not only legally ended the practice of slavery in the United States but also put forth large-scale efforts to create schools specifically for freed slaves (Browning & Williams, 1978). HBCUs were initially supported and funded by various organizations such as the Quakers, Presbyterians, American Missionary Association (AMA), African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) church, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen's societies, and Abandoned Lands (which was formed by federal legislation passed on March 3, 1865) (Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Hawkins, 2010; Walther, 1994).

Despite this initial progress in establishing Black educational institutions, these institutions were separate from and unequal to PWIs in nearly every way (resources, funding, institutional infrastructure, etc.), perpetuating the myth of White intellectual superiority (Fleming, 1984; Hikes, 2005; Schwaneger, 1969; Wilson, 1994). In 1877, the withdrawal of federal troops from the South started a trend of repression that ended the benevolence of Reconstruction (Fleming, 1984). Laws were enacted to mandate the disenfranchisement of Blacks and policies were established to limit Blacks' educational opportunities to vocational training (Browning & Williams, 1978). More specifically, local and political leadership in the South limited the mission of Black colleges (Fleming, 1984). The institutional missions were limited in their scope of curriculum. For example, the majority of the curriculum at these institutions was focused on vocational trades rather than a broad range of fields such as the liberal arts. The resistance to Black educational and economic advancement reflected the state of race relations in the United States during the late 19th century (Hine et al., 2006).

However, in 1890, Congress passed the landmark Morrill Land Grant Act, which required all states to either provide separate educational facilities for Blacks or admit them to existing institutions (Fleming, 1984). Consequently, increasing numbers of HBCUs were established, primarily in the South. All but six HBCUs were founded in former slave states (Ladson-Billings, 2012). Many of these institutions were established primarily as teacher-training schools for Black women (Fleming, 1984). Sixteen Black colleges were established to educate Blacks in areas such as mechanical arts and agricultural sciences. From 1854 and the mid-1900s, the number of HBCUs increased from one to over 100 (Franklin & Moss, 1988; Freeman & Cohen, 2001). As a result,

from 1865 through the 1960s a majority of Blacks who received a college education were educated at HBCUs (Palmer & Young, 2010).

Despite the increase in Black student enrollment at PWIs since the 1960s, HBCUs today continue to educate Black students and serve as pillars of hope for the Black community (Allen et al., 2007; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Palmer & Young, 2010). A recent report by the United Negro College Fund (2012) found that 50% of Blacks who graduated from HBCUs pursued graduate or professional degrees. Moreover, HBCUs graduated over 50% of Black professionals, including over 50% of Black public school teachers and 70% of Black dentists. Over 30% of the degrees held by Blacks in the natural sciences and over 30% of the degrees held by Blacks in mathematics were awarded by HBCUs. Even today, HBCUs represent sites of opportunity for Black students, who are disproportionately declined admission to well-funded PWIs (Nettles & Perna, 1997; United Negro College Fund, 2012).

The Uniqueness of HBCUs

HBCUs are disproportionately responsible for fulfilling the role of educating, empowering, and equipping Black students to serve as productive citizens of society. Specifically, as provided by the “special mission” of HBCUs, these institutions offer educational opportunities to students who otherwise might not be able to attend college due to social, financial, or academic barriers (Allen, 1992, p. 28). HBCUs are distinct from many PWIs in their ability to create effective learning environments in which Black students are educated regardless of their precollege experiences (e.g., academic preparedness, socioeconomic status, etc.) (Allen & Jewel, 2002; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Kim, 2002; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Palmer & Gasman, 2008).

The HBCU learning environment consists of culturally relevant pedagogy that focuses on student-centered learning, the development of cultural competence, and the promotion of sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). These innovative pedagogical strategies create positive affective, cognitive, and spiritual outcomes for Black students (Gallien, 2005). HBCUs also teach diversity awareness by offering multicultural curricula that provide Black students with exposure to various cultures. As institutional guardians, HBCUs disseminate social, cultural, and intellectual capital, which translates into positive college experiences and post-college career mobility (Hirt, Strayhorn, Amelink, & Bennett, 2006).

HBCUs serve multiple purposes for Black students, including leadership development, access, quality education, cultural preservation, national conscience, diversity awareness, and economic mobility (Davis, 2006). At HBCUs, Black students have the opportunity to experience leadership development (e.g., student government, campus organizations, fraternities/sororities, etc.) in an environment that reinforces both positive self-awareness and cultural empowerment. Previous studies on Black students' experiences at HBCUs revealed that these institutions served as cultural safe havens where Black students felt accepted, motivated, and supported (Allen, 1985, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975). HBCUs provide access to many Black students who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Nettles & Perna, 1997).

Similarly, the faculty and staff at HBCUs are more than teachers; they also serve as mentors and role models who have a stake in every student's holistic development (Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, & Strayhorn, 2008). Cultural preservation at HBCUs

involves traditional events such as homecoming, football classics, Afrocentric celebrations (e.g., Kwanzaa programs), etc. Such events have historic and cultural value for Blacks because HBCUs were established during a time when Blacks were excluded from nearly every aspect of mainstream U.S. society (Davis, 2006). Thus, the institutional practices at HBCUs were, and remain, symbolic of the united hope, cultural pride, and collective perseverance of African Americans (Craig, 2006).

Additionally, HBCUs raise national conscience among the U.S. society through the consistent production of Black graduates across a range of professional disciplines (Davis, 2006). In contrast, PWIs often enroll Black athletes at higher rates than Black non-athlete students, yet the graduation rates for Black athletes have consistently been dismal (Edwards, 2000). The poor outcomes seen in Black male athletes' graduation rates and their overrepresentation in the two largest revenue-generating NCAA sports raises concerns about whether Black male student athletes at Division I PWIs are truly developing academically, or whether they are recruited by these institutions primarily to generate revenue (Edwards, 1984; Funk, 1991; Hawkins, 2010; Sailes, 2010b; Singer, 2008; Smith, 2009). Another purpose HBCUs serve to Blacks is diversity awareness through offering multicultural curricula, which provide Black students with valuable exposure to different cultures.

In contrast, HBCUs focus on providing economic mobility for Black students. Contrary to the claims of some critics of HBCUs, several researchers have found that these institutions serve as purveyors of economic and social capital for their students as well as for the communities in which they are located (Brown & Davis, 2001; Constantine, 1995; Davis, 2006). Within a White Anglo-Saxon dominated society,

possessing various forms of capital (social, human, and cultural) is essential for survival (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). One of the primary pathways to economic advancement in the United States is through education. More specifically, earning not only a bachelor's degree, but also advanced degrees, increases an individual's chances for economic advancement. Data from a recent U.S. Census report revealed that individuals with a college degree earned nearly twice as much as those with a high school diploma or the equivalent (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2011; Wilson, 2007). Notably, despite constituting only three percent of U.S. institutions, HBCUs graduate nearly 20% or one-fifth of Blacks who earn undergraduate degrees (Allen & Jewel, 2002; Allen et al., 2007; Nettles & Perna, 1997; United Negro College Fund, 2012). If educational attainment is a barometer for economic advancement, then HBCUs continue to serve as purveyors of economic and social capital for a large number of Black Americans (Allen et al., 2007; Brown & Davis, 2001; Constantine, 1995).

Additional studies have found that Black graduates of HBCUs experience higher post-college economic returns than Black graduates of PWIs (Constantine, 1995; Morse, Sakano, & Price, 1996; Mykerezzi & Mills, 2008; Price, Spriggs, & Swinton, 2011). Constantine (1995) analyzed data from a national longitudinal study of the Class of 1975 to determine the future wages of Black students who attended HBCUs. Findings indicated that future wages for Black graduates of HBCUs were 38% higher than wages for Black graduates of PWIs. Similarly, Mykerezzi and Mills (2008) found that after the initial year of work, wages for Black graduates of HBCUs increased at faster rates than wages for Black graduates of PWIs.

Morse et al. (1996) investigated the welfare effects of attending the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (an HBCU), the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (a PWI), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (a PWI). Although all three schools revealed positive welfare effects, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University had the highest welfare effects among the three schools. In other words, Black graduates of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University experienced higher relative surplus per dollar of appropriation than Black graduates of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro or the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Findings suggested the HBCU in this study facilitated greater economic mobility for Black students than the larger, better-funded PWIs.

More recently, Price et al. (2011) analyzed data from the National Survey of Black Americans and found that Black graduates of HBCUs experienced more positive labor market and psychological outcomes than Black graduates of PWIs. On average, Black graduates of HBCUs experienced superior long-run labor market outcomes relative to Black graduates from PWIs. Additional findings indicated Black graduates of HBCUs had higher permanent earnings compared to Black graduates of PWIs. HBCUs have a comparative advantage in cultivating confidence, self-esteem, and a more positive self-image among Black college students (p. 106). Graduates of HBCUs thus experienced more positive psychological outcomes, which correlated indirectly with enhanced earnings.

In addition, the familial environments at HBCUs provide positive self-identities, meaningful social networks, and valuable professional skills for Black students (Harris, 2012). Unlike at PWIs, Black students at HBCUs experience an environment where

Black history and culture are celebrated, valued, and emphasized (Douglas, 2012).

Albritton (2012) explained how HBCUs served as “sites of resistance, empowerment, and social uplift” designed to liberate Blacks from racial oppression in a White Anglo-Saxon capitalist society (p. 3). Similarly, Freeman and Cohen (2001) described how HBCUs culturally empower Black students through “(a) providing students with an understanding of African American historical and cultural accomplishments, (b) creating an accepting environment, (c) reinforcing students’ sense of self, (d) preparing students to negotiate race in education and work, and (e) developing personal and professional networks” (p. 588). Hence, HBCUs continue to cultivate positive educational environments where Black students can thrive intellectually, psychosocially, and personally (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Palmer & Young, 2010).

Intercollegiate Athletics at HBCUs

Intercollegiate athletic programs were first established at HBCUs in the late 19th century to provide athletic opportunities for aspiring Black athletes who were excluded from intercollegiate athletics at PWIs (Wiggins, 2000). On December 27, 1892, the first HBCU intercollegiate football game was held between Biddle College (now Johnson C. Smith University) and Livingstone University. Biddle College won 4-0. Initially, these athletic teams and competitions were highly informal and unstructured. For example, it was common for professors to participate on teams with students as well as for athletes to compete on both intercollegiate and professional teams in their respective sports. This lack of structure led to various issues such as widespread injuries and imbalanced athletic competitions. Similar to athletic programs at PWIs, these programs began as informal

student-led events and evolved into highly organized and institutionally controlled programs.

The evolution of HBCU athletic programs led to the creation of HBCU athletic conferences (Wiggins, 2000). In 1906, a group of leaders from various HBCUs met in Washington, D.C. to discuss ways to address the pressing issues associated with informal athletic programs (Borican, 1963). As a result, the Inter-Scholastic Athletic Association of the Middle Atlantic States was established as the first HBCU athletic conference. Shortly thereafter, a number of HBCU athletic conferences began to emerge across the U.S. including the Colored (now Central) Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) in 1912, the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA) in 1913, the Southwestern Athletic Association (SWAA) in 1920, the South Central Athletic Association (SCAA) in 1923, the Middle Atlantic Athletic Association (MAAA) in 1931, and the Midwestern Athletic Association (MWAA) in 1932 (Chalk, 1976).

Leading organizers of these conferences included Charles H. Williams of Hampton (CIAA), E. M. Walker of Haven Teachers College (MS) (SCAA), J. C. Williams of Cheyney (PA) Teachers College (MAAA), R. B. Atwood of Kentucky State College (MWAA), W. B. Metcalf of Talladega College (AL) (SIAA), E.C. Silsby of Talladega College (AL) (SIAA), B.T. Harvey of Morehouse College (SIAA), and D. C. Fowler of Texas College (SWAA). Many of these conferences sponsored major team sports including football, basketball, track and field, baseball, volleyball, and tennis (Wiggins, 1991, 2000; Wiggins & Miller, 2003).

During these formative years, football was the most popular sport among HBCU athletic programs (Borican, 1963; Chalk, 1976; Wiggins, 1991, 2000; Wiggins & Miller,

2003). For example, on November 29, 1894, 6000 fans attended the Thanksgiving Day football game in Nashville, Tennessee between Howard University and Lincoln University (PA), which Lincoln won by a score of 6-5 (Chalk, 1976). In subsequent years, thousands of students, faculty, alumni, and fans continued to attend these games to support their respective institutions. Such HBCU athletic events created a unique platform and sense of solidarity among those who attended (Archer & Watson, 2005). In addition to the institutional camaraderie, the high attendance at these games was also a result of the exceptional Black athletes who participated in these contests. Before Black athletes received international recognition for their athletic abilities, they were stars at HBCUs (Hunt, 1996; Wiggins, 1991, 2000; Wiggins & Miller, 2003).

Moreover, during the early 20th century, local support from Black media outlets also played a pivotal role in the increased popularity of these HBCU athletic events (Borican, 1963). In 1918, Frank A. (Fay) Young founded the first permanent Black newspaper sports section in the *Chicago Defender*, which provided national media coverage for HBCU athletic programs. Additional popular Black sports-conscious newspapers included the *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Afro-American*, *Kansas City Call*, *Cleveland Call-Post*, *Michigan Chronicle*, *Norfolk Journal*, *Amsterdam News* (New York), *Houston Informer*, *Atlanta Daily World*, and *Los Angeles Sentinel* (Borican, 1963, pp. 92-93). Charles J. Smith, III (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) alumnus), Collie Nicholson (Grambling State University alumnus), and Earl S. Clanton, III (Tennessee State University alumnus) were among the most famous Black college sports publicists during the mid-20th century. In the 1950s, *JET* magazine became the first Black publication to promote an interracial All-America team. These

media outlets provided well-deserved attention to HBCU athletic programs during a time when mainstream White-controlled media ignored them (Borican, 1963).

Yet the primary reason HBCU athletic events were so popular among the Black community was that they represented Black cultural expression, unity, and empowerment (Archer & Watson, 2005). For example, during the early 20th century, athletic contests such as basketball games were played at magic boxes (Klores, 2008). These magic boxes were multipurpose indoor venues used for various entertainment purposes. For example, before athletic contests at magic boxes, dinner events would be held before the game and immediately following the game the court would be transformed into a dance floor. These events were more than routine athletic competitions, but rather community gatherings that celebrated Black cultural unity. Given Black exclusion from the White-controlled, mainstream U.S. society, these events provided Blacks with an environment in which they could express their Black cultural heritage without fear of racial discrimination and cultural oppression. In other words, these HBCU athletic events served as sites of resistance against White oppressive practices in the United States (Ashe, 1988; Gems, 1995; George, 1992; Henderson, 1939; Lanctot, 1994; Lomax, 1998; Miller, 1995; Peterson, 1970; Rayl, 1996; Rogosin, 1983; Ruck, 1987; Wiggins, 2000).

Armstrong (2008) identified five central themes related Blacks' attendance at HBCU athletic events: 1) Black cultural symbolism, 2) family appeal, 3) social interactions, 4) promotions, and 5) entertainment. HBCU athletics and the surrounding events (e.g., pageants, step shows, music concerts, band competitions, etc.) signify the unique connection between "school pride, cultural celebration, and athletic tradition" (Lillig, 2009, p. 45). Similar to other forms of Black cultural expression (e.g., Black

slave dancing in the antebellum south, the popularity of jazz during the early 20th century), HBCU athletic events served as a form of Black cultural liberation in a White Anglo-Saxon capitalist U.S. society (Wiggins & Miller, 2003). This liberation was manifested in the fact that Blacks owned, managed, and supported these institutions and events. At HBCUs Blacks held such positions as presidents, faculty, administrators, athletic directors, coaches, athletes, consumers, and business owners (Armstrong, 2001, 2008; Klores, 2008). The critical mass of Black solidarity symbolized the promise Black Americans possessed when committed to the cause of collective racial uplift (Archer & Watson, 2005; Klores, 2008; Lillig, 2009; Wiggins & Miller, 2003).

Black Athletic Success at HBCUs

Before integration in the mid-20th century, several Black star athletes emerged from HBCUs (Klores, 2008). At these institutions, Black athletes not only experienced an empowering educational environment, but also a place where they could develop their athletic talents. In fact, HBCU athletic teams were arguably more talented than many PWI athletic teams. Great teams such the dominant Tuskegee football teams of the 1920s, which won 46 consecutive games and the undefeated Morgan State men's basketball teams of the 1930s exemplified the wealth of Black athletic talent at these institutions. Another primary example of Black athletic dominance at HBCUs occurred on March 12, 1944. In a secret game, the unheralded North Carolina College for Negroes (now North Carolina Central University) basketball team dominated the all-White Duke University men's basketball team 88 to 44. To the Duke players' surprise, they realized the best basketball team in the state was from an HBCU. This victory was symbolic of

Black athletic greatness when granted the opportunity to compete on a level playing field (Klores, 2008).

A major reason Black athletes excelled at these institutions was because of the leadership of several outstanding coaches. Legendary coaches such as John B. McLendon (basketball) of the North Carolina College for Negroes (1941-1952) and Tennessee A & I (now Tennessee State University) (1955-1959); Clarence “Big House” Gaines (basketball) of Winston-Salem State University (1946-1993); Eddie Robinson (football) of Grambling State University (1941-1998); Alonzo “Jake” Smith Gaither (football) of FAMU (1945-1969); Cleveland Abbott (football) of Tuskegee Institute (1923-1955); and Ed Temple (track and field) of Tennessee State University (1950-1993) were household names in the Black community during the mid-20th century (Cahn, 1994; Klores, 2008; Wiggins, 2000). These individuals were more than simply coaches; they were viewed as Black “heroes” (Borican, 1963, p. 88). Their unique coaching styles helped develop their players’ holistically as men and citizens rather than simply as athletes. These coaches made sure their players understood that athletics were a small part of the greater cause of uplifting African Americans in the United States. In spite of working with fewer economic resources than many PWIs, these coaches fostered positive environments for Black athletes to develop and thrive in their respective sports. Furthermore, they provided HBCU athletics with a national visibility that symbolized athletic success as well as Black empowerment (Klores, 2008).

Under the guidance of excellent coaches, many Black athletes at HBCUs went on to accomplish great feats in their respective sports after college. Famous HBCU alumni include Jerry Rice of Mississippi Valley State (three-time Super Bowl Champion (XXIII,

XXIV, XXIX) and heralded as the Greatest NFL Player of All-Time); Edwin Moses of Morehouse (two-time (1976 and 1984) 400m Olympic Gold medalist); Larry Black of NCCU (1972 Olympic 400-meter relay team gold medalist); Walter Payton of Jackson State (Super Bowl XX Champion); Lou Brock of Southern University (two-time (1964 and 1967) MLB World Series Champion); and Donn Clendenon of Morehouse (1969 MLB World Series Champion) (Hunt, 1996; MEAC, 2012; SWAC, 2012). These are just a few of the remarkable athletic accomplishments by HBCU alumni. Along with their athletic success, all of these athletes had a common bond in that they were afforded the opportunity to develop their talents at HBCUs (Hunt, 1996).

In 2008, a documentary called “Black Magic,” directed by Dan Klores, documented the experiences and accomplishments of famous Black basketball players at HBCUs from the early 19th through the early 21st century. This film highlighted HBCU basketball legends including Harold Hunter of the North Carolina College for Negroes (1947-1950), the first Black player to sign an NBA contract; Earl Lloyd of West Virginia State College (WVSC) (1946-1950), the first Black player to play in an NBA game; Al Attles of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (1956-1960), a 1975 NBA Champion; Cleo Hill of Winston-Salem Teachers College (1957-1961), the first player from an HBCU to be chosen in the first round of the NBA Draft when he was selected 8th by the St. Louis Hawks 1961; Bob Dandridge of Norfolk State University (1965-1969), a two-time (1971 and 1978) NBA Champion; Earl “The Pearl” Monroe of Winston-Salem State University (1963-1967), the 1967 NCAA College Division II Player of Year, a 1967 NCAA College Division II Champion, and a 1973 NBA Champion; Richard “Pee Wee” Kirkland of Norfolk State (1967-1969), heralded as a

street basketball legend; and Willis Reed of Grambling State (1961-1964), a 1964 NAIA Champion and two-time (1970 and 1973) NBA Champion. Collectively, the success of these Black athletes demonstrated the effectiveness of HBCUs in terms of recruiting, developing, and producing outstanding basketball players (Klores, 2008).

HBCUs have been successful at producing several star Black female athletes as well. For example, in 1957, Althea Gibson (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University) became the first Black to claim the coveted women's singles title at Wimbledon (SIAC, 2012). In terms of Olympic success, all of the Black female athletes who competed in the Olympics in the early part of the 20th century came from HBCUs (Wiggins, 2000). Black female athletes who took home Olympic gold include Alice Coachman of Tuskegee Institute, the first African American woman to win an Olympic Gold medal in 1948 (high jump); Catherine Hardy of Fort Valley State University (400m relay in 1952); Mildred McDaniel of Tuskegee Institute (high jump in 1956); Wilma Rudolph of Tennessee State University (100m, 200m, and 4 x 100m relay in 1960); Barbara Jones of Tennessee State University (4 x 100m relay in 1952 and 1960); Martha Hudson of Tennessee State University (4 x 100m relay in 1960); Lucinda Williams of Tennessee State University (4 x 100m relay in 1960); and Dannette Young (-Stone) of Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University (400m relay in 1988) (Hunt, 1996; SIAC, 2012; Wiggins, 2000).

Arguably, African American female athletes were more readily accepted in their own community compared to their White female athlete counterparts, which may explain a possible explanation for their strong presence in Olympic sports such as track and field during the mid-20th century (Cahn, 1994; Wiggins, 2000). More recently, in 2010,

Francena McCorory of Hampton University set a U.S. record in the 400m-dash (50.54 seconds) at the 2010 NCAA Indoor Championships (MEAC, 2012). The same year, McCorory was named the U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches (USTFCCCA) Division I National Athlete of the Year. The accomplishments of such phenomenal Black female athletes contributed to the advancement of Blacks, women, and HBCUs in the United States (Cahn, 1994; Wiggins, 2000).

Despite the progress of Black females at HBCUs, it is important to note that these institutions also reflected hegemonic masculine practices that were pervasive in the broader U.S. society (Corbett & Johnson, 2000). Although Black females were afforded athletic opportunities at these institutions, Black male sports were better funded and more widely celebrated. In addition, men held a majority of the leadership positions at both the institutional and conference levels (Chalk, 1976; Hunt, 1996; Wiggins & Miller, 2003). Nonetheless, Black females enjoyed more opportunities than many of their White female counterparts during this time largely because sports were perceived as a masculine endeavor within the U.S. society (Corbett & Johnson, 2000). Therefore, Whites who controlled mainstream institutions (e.g. schools, sport organizations, etc.) did not perceive Black female athletes as a threat to the status quo, which privileged all Whites particularly White males. In some cases, Black female sports participation reinforced the stereotype that they were less feminine than White females. In this way HBCUs simultaneously served as sites of resistance, fostering Black empowerment, and sites of social reproduction, replicating the pervasive dominant ideologies of the U.S. (Wiggins, 2000; Wiggins & Miller, 2003).

HBCU Athletic Conferences

Currently there are 105 HBCUs in the United States, including both private and public two-year and four-year institutions (Thurgood Marshall College Fund, 2012). A majority of these HBCUs are members of one of the following four HBCU athletic conferences: 1) Central Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (CIAA), 2) Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC), 3) Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC), or 4) Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC). Each of these conferences sponsors postseason championships and member institutions are eligible to compete in national postseason championships associated with their respective divisional classification. The MEAC and SWAC are NCAA Division I members and the CIAA and SIAC are NCAA Division II members.

The oldest HBCU athletic conference, the Central (formerly Colored) Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, was established in 1912 (Borican, 1963). The founding fathers of the CIAA were Allen Washington and C.H. Williams of Hampton Institute; Ernest J. Marshall of Howard University; George Johnson of Lincoln (PA) University; W.E. Atkins, Charles Frasher, and H.P. Hargrave of Shaw University; and J.W. Barco and J.W. Pierce of Virginia Union University (CIAA, 2011a). The CIAA charter member schools were Bowie State University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, St. Augustine's Normal School, St. Paul's University, Shaw University, Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, Lincoln (PA) University, and Virginia Union University (Borican, 1963).

As of 2012, the CIAA was the third largest HBCU athletic conference, with 12 member institutions, and was one of the largest Division II NCAA conferences (Hunt,

1996). Current CIAA member institutions include Bowie State University, Chowan University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University, Lincoln University (PA), Livingstone College, St. Augustine's University, Shaw University, Virginia State University, Virginia Union University, and Winston-Salem State University (CIAA, 2011b). The CIAA sponsors 15 sports including men's and women's cross country, volleyball, football, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's indoor and outdoor track and field, men's and women's tennis, golf, baseball, and softball (CIAA, 2011a).

The CIAA has a rich tradition as a pioneer HBCU athletic conference. The first Black intercollegiate football game ever played was between CIAA members Livingstone College and Biddle (now Johnson C. Smith University) in 1892 (CIAA, 2011a). In 1921, the CIAA was the first HBCU athletic conference to join the NCAA and in 1937 became the first HBCU athletic conference to be affiliated with the American Olympic Association (AOA) (Borican, 1963). In 1970, the CIAA was the first HBCU athletic conference to implement the divisional football championship format. More recently, the CIAA Tournament was the first NCAA Division II conference to be televised as part of ESPN's Championship Week (CIAA, 2011a). Approaching its centennial anniversary, the CIAA continues to celebrate what Founder C.H. Williams described as the CIAA's greatest contribution, which is "its pioneer work in promoting clean, vigorous amateur athletics, and high standards of sportsmanship" (Borican, 1963, pp. 95-96).

The youngest HBCU athletic conference is the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC), established in 1970 (Hunt, 1996). The original member schools of the MEAC were Delaware State University, Howard University, University of Maryland Eastern

Shore, Morgan State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, North Carolina Central University, and South Carolina State University (MEAC, 2012). Currently, the MEAC is tied for the largest HBCU athletic conference with 13 member institutions. Current member institutions include Bethune-Cookman University, Coppin State University, Delaware State University, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Hampton University, Howard University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Morgan State University, Norfolk State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, North Carolina Central University, Savannah State University, and South Carolina State University. The MEAC sponsors 13 Division I Football Championship Series (FCS) sports including baseball, bowling, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's cross country, football, men's and women's tennis, men's and women's track and field, softball, and volleyball (MEAC, 2012).

In addition, the MEAC has produced several athletic milestones. On June 8, 1980, the MEAC was accepted into the NCAA's Division I (MEAC, 2012). Since receiving Division I classification, the MEAC has produced automatic bids for the following NCAA championships: baseball (since 1994), men's basketball (since 1981), women's basketball (since 1982), football (since 1996), softball (since 1995), men's and women's tennis (since 1998), and volleyball (since 1994). In 1974, the Morgan State University men's basketball team claimed the NCAA Division II National Championship. In the same year, Howard University won the 1974 NCAA Division I Men's Soccer National Championship. In 1982, the South Carolina State University women's basketball team won the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) National Championship. Also in 1982, the South Carolina State University

women's outdoor track and field team won the AIAW Division II Outdoor Track and Field National Championship. More recently, in 2008, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore defeated Arkansas State 4-2 to claim the first NCAA Championship for the MEAC conference in women's bowling (MEAC, 2012).

The second oldest HBCU athletic conference is the Southern (originally Southeastern) Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC), founded in 1913 (Hunt, 1996). In 1929, the conference changed its name from Southeastern to Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. The founding member institutions of the SIAC were Morehouse College, Alabama State University, Atlanta University, Clark College, Morris Brown College, Talladega College (AL), and Tuskegee Institute. As of 2012, the SIAC was tied with the MEAC as the largest HBCU athletic conference with 13 member institutions. Current SIAC member institutions include Albany State University, Benedict College, Claflin University, Clark Atlanta University, Fort Valley State University, Kentucky State University, Lane College, LeMoyne-Owen College, Miles College, Morehouse College, Paine College, Stillman College, and Tuskegee University. The SIAC sponsors 12 sports, including baseball, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's cross country, football, golf, men's and women's outdoor track and field, men's and women's tennis and volleyball (SIAC, 2012).

In terms of athletic tradition, the SIAC has claimed more than 50 team and individual national championships (Hunt, 1996). In 1978, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, then a member of the SIAC, became the first HBCU to win the NCAA Division I-AA national football championship when they defeated Massachusetts 35-28 in the championship game. In 1993, SIAC members competed for NCAA Division

II championships in eight different sports, which remains a remarkable feat by any institution regardless of division or institutional type. In 1992 and 1993, the women's outdoor track and field teams from Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University claimed back-to-back NCAA Division II National Championships. The SIAC is also home to the longest HBCU football rivalry, between Morehouse and Tuskegee, which began in 1936. In addition, the Tuskegee football program has won 634 games, is the most among all HBCUs (SIAC, 2012).

The third oldest HBCU athletic conference is the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC), founded in 1920 (Hunt, 1996). The "Super Six" charter institutions of the SWAC were Bishop College, Paul Quinn College, Sam Houston College, Prairie View College, Texas College, and Wiley College (Hunt, 1996, p. 183). The founding fathers of the SWAC were C.H. Fuller (Bishop College); Red Randolph and C.H. Patterson (Paul Quinn College); E.G. Evans, H.J. Evans, and H.J. Starns (Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical University); D.C. Fuller (Texas College); and G. Whitte Jordan (Wiley College) (SWAC, 2012).

The SWAC is the fourth largest HBCU athletic conference, with 10 member institutions. Current SWAC member institutions include Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, Alabama State University, Alcorn State, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Grambling State University, Jackson State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical University, Southern University, and Texas Southern University. The SWAC sponsors 19 sports including baseball, men's and women's basketball, baseball, bowling, men's and women's cross country, football, men's and women's golf, men's and women's indoor track and field,

men's and women's outdoor track and field, women's soccer, softball, men's and women's tennis, and volleyball (SWAC, 2012).

HBCU Football Classics and Basketball Tournaments

Since the late nineteenth century, annual Black Football games have been an integral part of the HBCU tradition. In 1924, Alabama State College and Tuskegee Institute played in the first official HBCU classic, the Turkey Day Classic in Montgomery, Alabama. HBCU classic games provide fans with an opportunity to support their teams with a full weekend of events. The events surrounding the HBCU classic games include golf tournaments, step shows, beauty pageants, parades, battle of the band performances, music concerts, and tailgating (Moore, 2012).

Today there are over 50 HBCU classics hosted throughout the U.S. (Ubuntu, 2011). Similar to Division I bowl games, HBCU classics serve as a major revenue-generating source and effective recruitment tool for HBCUs. The funds generated from these popular events contribute to scholarships, student programs, travel, and facility renovations for participating HBCUs (Armstrong, 2001; Brodie, 1991). A handful of HBCU classics have had significant financial success. For example, the Bayou Classic, held annually in New Orleans, features a football game between Grambling State University and Southern University. Over 64,000 fans attend this event annually, resulting in Black consumer spending of over \$55 million. Over a 20-year span, the Bayou Classic has generated an estimated \$230 million in earnings (Armstrong, 2001; Spanberg, 1999).

There are three primary types of HBCU Classics: 1) traditional rivalries, 2) host schools playing a different opponent each year, and 3) events with their own identity

(Ubuntu, 2011). Traditional rivalries involve the same two schools playing annually, typically around Labor Day or Thanksgiving (e.g., the Aggie-Eagle Classic between North Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical State University and North Carolina Central University, played in Labor Day weekend in Raleigh, North Carolina). The second type of classic involves a host school playing a different team every year at a large venue off campus (e.g., the Gateway Classic in Jacksonville, Florida, with Bethune-Cookman University as the host team). The third type of classic involves events with a separate identity where different teams play each other each year (e.g., the HBCU Classic game held in Greenville, South Carolina). This type of classic is usually organized by separate organizations not directly associated with the schools involved (e.g., National Urban League) (Ubuntu, 2011).

One of the most popular HBCU classics is the annual Atlanta Football Classic between Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and Tennessee State University (formerly Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial University), which began in 1989. The classic is known as the “Super Bowl of Black College Football” (Pitts et al., 2007, p. 1). This weeklong event consists of a wide range of cultural events including workshops, seminars, and social activities. From 2003-2006, the estimated attendance during the week was 250,000 per year. This event has been cited as the third largest event in the state of Georgia and accounts for \$30 million in economic impact on an annual basis. This event has rich tradition of bringing people together to socialize and celebrate Black culture (Pitts et al., 2007).

The most successful non-football HBCU athletic event is the CIAA tournament. The tournament started in 1946 with a sellout crowd of 2000 attendees in Washington,

D.C. and grew to a sellout crowd of 20,000 attendees in Raleigh, NC in 2003 (CIAA, 2011a). The CIAA Tournament is the third largest basketball tournament in the U.S., behind only the ACC and Big East tournaments (Hunt, 1996). In 2011, the CIAA tournament was held in Charlotte, N.C. and the weeklong event drew over 190,000 attendees. More importantly, the economic impact of the event was over \$44.3 million.

From 2000-2011, the CIAA generated over \$266.06 million in economic impact for the state of North Carolina and over \$16.5 million in overall scholarship monies for CIAA member institutions. This is quite an accomplishment for a tournament that began with a \$500 budget in 1946. Furthermore, the CIAA tournament is televised to more than 57 million U.S. homes through partnerships with television networks such as ESPN and TV One. As a result, the CIAA has secured \$10.5 million in scholarship funds from corporate sponsorships and an additional \$23 million for other championships and television. The popularity and economic vitality of the CIAA tournament exemplifies the athletic excellence and resourcefulness of HBCU athletic conferences (Hunt, 1996).

Current Trends at HBCUs

Despite the rich history of HBCUs, in recent years some of these institutions have strayed from their founding missions in pursuit of the allure associated with Division I intercollegiate athletics. Prior to integration in the 1960s, a majority of Black students and athletes attended HBCUs (Wiggins, 2000). However, after integration, PWIs began to recruit talented Black students and athletes away from HBCUs. Since PWIs possessed more economic resources than HBCUs, they were able to offer such amenities such as state-of-art facilities (both academic and athletic) and national exposure for athletic events. Although integration signaled a major step forward in terms of racial progress for

the U.S., it negatively affected HBCUs, and particularly those with athletic programs that had previously flourished behind the strong talent pool of Black athletes (Lillig, 2009).

Since the 1960s, HBCUs have struggled to assemble competitive athletic teams to match the talent at Division I PWIs. As a result, many of these institutions have shifted their priorities away from institutional integrity and community uplift to athletic glory and profit-driven motives (Lillig, 2009). Evidence of this shift lies in the number of Division I HBCUs that did not possess the financial infrastructure to support their Division I athletic aspirations (O'Neill, 2008). The athletic budgets of Division I HBCUs are significantly smaller than those of their Division I PWI counterparts. For example, in 2010, the total operating budgets for Delaware State University, one of the most profitable HBCU athletic programs, and the University of Alabama, the 2010 BCS National Champion, were \$12.6 million and \$105.3 million respectively (EADA, 2011).

Due to the lack of revenue, several members of the Division I HBCU conferences have subjected themselves to “guarantee games” with the top Division I BCS schools. Lillig (2009) defined guarantee games as “nonconference matches, usually between high-profile, high-ranking Division I schools from BCS conferences and low-profile, low-ranking schools from non-BCS conferences” (p. 46). The structure of these guarantee games allows Division I BCS schools to guarantee home victories for both football and men’s basketball by defeating lower tier Division I teams (e.g., HBCUs). These games are usually extremely lopsided and an embarrassment for HBCUs. In exchange, the HBCU athletic programs are guaranteed a sum of money, which these schools rely on to support the operation of their athletic programs (Lillig, 2009).

Despite the conspicuous financial upside of these arrangements, these guarantee games also create a host of negative outcomes for HBCUs. For one, this inequitable relationship creates a level of dependency among lower-tier HBCUs and ensures that these programs remain disadvantaged compared to larger and better-funded Division I PWIs (Lillig, 2009). Another consequence of these guarantee games is the losses themselves. More specifically, these big-margin losses lower the Rating Percentage Index (RPI) of the participating HBCUs, which further contributes to their struggles in terms of competing for profitable post-season tournaments. For example, the MEAC and the SWAC are consistently among the conferences with the lowest RPIs in the NCAA's Division I.

Moreover, the psychological impact of these dismal losses negatively affects the student athletes (O'Neill, 2008). Former Alcorn State basketball player Troy Jackson described in an interview with ESPN's Dana O'Neill (2008) the team's psyche after a blowout loss: "You just get beat up mentally . . . You start believing, 'Man, we can't win. We're never going to win a game,' and it carries over into the conference season. The losing, it just eats at you" (p. 1). Furthermore, these HBCUs, which are already financially strained, have to travel long distances on buses to play these games. The extensive travel time results in missed class time for the student athletes, which contributes to less time spent on academically related tasks (O'Neill, 2008). Collectively, the negative outcomes associated with guarantee games are in stark contrast to the rich legacy of academic integrity and athletic pride associated with HBCU athletic programs during the early and mid-20th century (Lillig, 2009).

In addition to these disconcerting trends, several HBCUs have been sanctioned for low APRs in recent years. Of the 103 institutions penalized for low APRs for the 2009-2010 APR reporting year, 33 were HBCUs (NCAA, 2011c). In 2012, HBCUs accounted for nearly half (13 out of 27) of the institutions that were subjected to level one and level three APR penalties (NCAA, 2012). The following HBCU athletic teams were banned from postseason play for the 2012-2013 season because of low APRs: Mississippi Valley State University (men's basketball), University of Arkansas Pine Bluff (men's basketball), Hampton University (football), North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (football), and Texas Southern University (football). Similar to the negative financial trends associated with HBCU athletic programs, these alarming rates of academic mediocrity contradict the founding missions of these institutions.

Major reasons cited by HBCU advocates for low graduation rates are a lack of resources (human, fiscal, and facility) and the high turnover rate within the Athletic Department and at the presidential level (NCAA, 2011c). Floyd Kerr, athletics director at Morgan State University, identified the importance of the "three layers of support and three layers of accountability" with the coach, the Athletic Department, and the president (NCAA, 2011c, p. 1). According to Kerr, the high turnover rates contributed to a lack of consistency in leadership, which in turn had an adverse impact on the overall effectiveness of the institution. Similarly, the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2008) cited the following reasons for the low graduation rates of Black students: 1) many students enrolled at HBCUs were first-generation college students from low-income families, 2) lack of financial resources at many of these institutions, and 3) the

large number of enrolled students who were academically underprepared for college-level course work.

These unique challenges are pertinent to note when evaluating HBCUs, particularly in comparison to other NCAA member institutions, regarding such factors as APR rates. Acknowledging these trends emphasizes the need to examine effective strategies and best practices associated with Black male student athletes' academic achievement. Identifying the causes of academic underperformance is the first step in this process. The second step is identifying, developing, and enhancing programs designed to improve academic achievement. The voices and experiences of Black male student athletes are important components that have been missing from both current policy and existing scholarly literature. The purpose of this study is therefore to listen to Black male student athletes in order to identify key influences associated with their academic achievement and positive college experiences.

Black Male Student Athletes' Experiences at HBCUs

Most research on Black athletes in college has focused on those who attended major Division I PWIs (Adler & Adler, 1991; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Eitzen & Purdy, 1986; Hawkins, 2010; Sellers, 1992; Sellers et al., 1991; Smith, 2009; Wiggins, 1991). Approximately one out of every nine Black male college students at four-year PWIs is an athlete (Person & LeNoir, 1997). More specifically, Black male athletes have consistently been overrepresented in the two largest revenue-generating sports of football and men's basketball at Division I PWIs (Edwards, 1984; Funk, 1991; Hawkins, 2010; Sailes, 2010b; Singer, 2008; Smith, 2009). Common findings from previous research revealed that Black male athletes who participated in football and men's basketball were

more likely to enter college academically underprepared (American Institutes for Research, 1989; Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1985; Sellers, 1992; Shulman & Bowen, 2001) and less likely to achieve academic success compared to their college student counterparts (Ervin, Saunders, Gillis, & Hogrebe, 1985; Gaston-Gayles, 2005; Purdy et al., 1985; Shulman & Bowen, 2001).

In addition, Black male athletes at PWIs encountered negative stereotypes associated with their race, gender, and athletic status (Anderson, 2000; Sage, 1989; Sailes, 2010a). These pervasive negative stereotypes at PWIs depicted Black males as athletically gifted, yet intellectually inferior (Edwards, 2000; Hawkins, 2010; Smith, 2009). In other words, their primary purpose at these institutions was to generate revenue for the Athletic Departments as opposed to developing their academic and personal skills (Edwards, 1985; Hawkins, 1999, 2010; Rhoden, 1989; Sellers, 2000; Singer, 2005; Smith, 2009). Consequently, the prevalence of these racist stereotypes within discursive practices at PWIs have contributed to negative academic outcomes, limited personal development, and poor psychological adjustments for Black male athletes (Benson, 2000; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Singer, 2008).

Despite the abundant documentation of Black athletes at PWIs, there is a dearth of scholarly research on Black male student athletes' experiences at HBCUs (American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989; Brown, 2004; Person & LeNoir, 1997). In 1989, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted one of the first major studies that examined the experiences of Black student athletes at HBCUs (American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989). The study extracted data from a previous study (American Institutes for Research, 1988) on the experiences of Division I intercollegiate athletes and

specifically examined the experiences of Black student athletes at NCAA Division I institutions, including both HBCUs and PWIs. Key findings from this study revealed that Black student athletes at HBCUs reported higher levels of academic achievement and social engagement. Black football and men's basketball players at PWIs (institutions with less than 4% Black undergraduate enrollment) were more likely to report feeling different from other students, feeling they lacked control over their lives, and feeling isolated from other students.

At PWIs with the smallest Black undergraduate populations, 51% of Black football and basketball players reported racial isolation and 33% reported racial discrimination (American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989). Similarly, Black football and men's basketball players at PWIs expressed more difficulty discussing their personal problems with coaches and teammates than Black football and men's basketball players at HBCUs. This was the first major study commissioned by the NCAA designed to examine the experiences of Black student athletes. Findings from this study further supported the idea that HBCUs provided better learning environments than PWIs for Black students to experience positive developmental outcomes academically, socially, and psychologically (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Palmer & Young, 2010).

Person and LeNoir (1997) conducted a study of 31 African American male student athletes from 11 institutions, including both HBCUs and PWIs. They found that faculty-student interactions were more frequent at HBCUs than PWIs. This finding is consistent with previous research that suggested the caring faculty at HBCUs cultivated a nurturing environment in which faculty-student interactions were routine (Harper, Carini,

Bridges, & Hayek, 2004; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Spence, 2005). This is an important finding because the nature and extent of faculty-student interactions has been associated with positive academic and psychosocial outcomes for college students (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Pascarella, Edison, Hagedorn, Nora, & Terenzini, 1996; Tinto, 1987). In another study, Brown (2004) studied academic self-concept, Black identity, and athletic identity among African American male student athletes at a Division I PWI and an HBU. Results indicated African American male student athletes at the HBU earned higher cumulative GPAs than those at the PWI. Brown (2004) also suggested that effective integration into the academic culture, positive perceptions of institutional support, stronger peer relationships, and effective study habits are the key factors related to African American male student athletes' academic achievement.

In addition to these scholarly studies, a critically acclaimed ESPN documentary titled "Black Magic" documented the experiences of famous Black basketball players at HBCUs from the early 19th through the early 21st century (Klores, 2008). In-depth interviews highlighted the impact of the institutional culture at HBCUs on Black former athletes. For example Earl Lloyd, a former standout basketball player at West Virginia State College (WVSC) from 1946-1950, described in the film how graduation day was especially emotional for him and his classmates because of their deep love for their institution. He explained that he and his classmates did not want to leave WVSC because of the meaningful relationships they established there and the school's nurturing, familial environment. Similarly, Ben Jobe, former basketball star basketball player at Fisk University (1951-1954) and former head basketball coach at six HBCUs (Alabama

A&M, Alabama State University, South Carolina State, Southern University, Talladega College, and Tuskegee University) affectionately referred to Black leaders at HBCUs as “gatekeepers” rather than presidents. As gatekeepers, they are committed to the holistic development of Black students. These gatekeepers were more concerned about helping students graduate and preparing them for life after college than about focusing narrowly on their athletic talents.

Collectively, these findings and commentaries indicate the effectiveness of HBCUs in cultivating positive educational environments for Black student athletes (American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989; Brown, 2004; Klores, 2008; Person & LeNoir, 1997). Since their inception, HBCU athletic programs have provided for Black student athletes a place where they could not only develop their athletic talents, but also acquire a meaningful education. The familial environment at HBCUs is embedded in Black cultural values. Black student athletes at HBCUs, similar to Blacks in the broader United States, have overcome significant challenges to attain high levels of success both on and off the playing fields. The story of Black student athletes at HBCUs is symbolic of the unwavering spirit and strength of the Black community. This inextricable bond between HBCUs and the Black community has persisted for centuries and will continue to serve as a beacon of hope for Blacks in the United States.

Theoretical Framework: Institutional Theory

Institutional theory emerged as a reaction to the behavioral revolution during the mid-20th century, which perceived collective political and economic behavior as the summative result of individual choice (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). The lack of emphasis on social context and the malleability of social institutions proved to be problematic in

the effort to fully explain and address major social problems across societies (March & Olsen, 1976; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). As a result, numerous disciplines began to take a greater interest in institutions and their impact on social and political life.

Institutional theory has been applied in areas such as economics (Alchian & Demsetz, 1972; Coase, 1960; Grossman & Hart, 1987; Nelson & Winter, 1982; North, 1981, 1990; Posner, 1981); politics (Moe, 1987; Shepsle, 1986); international relations (Keohane, 1984, 1988; Krasner, 1983; Young, 1986); and organizational theory and sociology (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Powell and DiMaggio (1991) highlighted how the primary aim of institutional theory is to examine how institutional arrangements, social processes, and cultural contexts influence social behaviors and actions. The authors also provided a basic definition of institutional theory:

This perspective emphasizes the ways in which action is structured and order made possible by shared systems of rules that both constrain the inclination and capacity of actors to optimize as well as privilege some groups whose interests are secured by prevailing rewards and sanctions. (p. 11)

Institutional theory provides a context for examining the process of institutionalization. Institutionalization is a phenomenological process in which social relationships and actions are taken for granted and shared beliefs constrain individual behaviors and actions (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Zucker, 1983). Through institutionalization, institutional meanings become taken for granted and even invisible (Hatch & Zilber, 2012). This taken-for-grantedness insures the power of institutions because it eliminates the need for explicit social control or justification and makes newcomers susceptible to institutional

norms, since institutional actions are carried out naturally (Jepperson, 1991; Zilber, 2002; Zucker, 1977, 1987). As an institution gains prominence, structures and procedures become synonymous with uncontested meanings (Zilber, 2002). Sociological institutionalists critically examine how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence individual behaviors and actions. Furthermore, institutionalization involves a cognitive process whereby normative obligations are treated as social facts and taken-for-granted scripts, rules, and classifications are interwoven within institutions (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

Using institutional theory as a theoretical framework, the researcher examined the interplay between key institutional actors, actions, and meanings at an HBCU (Zilber, 2002). *Institutional actors* at HBCUs include faculty, administrators, staff, and students. *Institutional actions* include both formal policies (e.g., mission statements, academic policies, etc.) and informal practices (e.g., faculty-student interactions, peer relationships, etc.) that reinforce institutionalized scripts. *Meanings* involve actors' interpretations of institutional actions and the actors' subsequent social behaviors. Actors exhibit *institutional agency* through interpretations and behaviors that either reproduce or resist institutional actions. The degree of the actors (e.g. Black male student athletes) exhibit agency determines the extent to which institutional meanings are used as political resources (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Understanding the dialectal relationship between actors, actions, and meanings at an HBCU can provide deeper insight into effective institutional practices that contribute to positive learning outcomes for Black male student athletes (Charlton, 2011; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Zilber, 2002).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a historical background of the development of HBCUs. The establishment of HBCUs reflected the perseverance of Black Americans in spite of facing significant social challenges in a White Anglo-Saxon capitalist U.S. society. Similarly, the emergence of Black athletes at HBCUs and the birth of HBCU athletic conferences revealed the strength and perseverance of the Black community. Events such as HBCU classics reflect the significant amount of human, social, and economic capital among Blacks in the United States.

This chapter also highlighted the limited research on Black student athletes' experiences at HBCUs. The collective findings from previous studies and commentaries indicate clearly that HBCUs provide effective learning environments in which Black student athletes can experience positive developmental outcomes. Lastly, the researcher introduced institutional theory as theoretical lens through which to examine the key institutional actors and practices at an HBCU that contribute to the academic achievement and positive college experiences of Black male student athletes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and college experiences of Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University (HBU)⁴ in the southeastern United States. This study examined the nexus between the various elements of Black male student athletes' overall, academic, athletic, and social experiences at an HBU in an effort to identify key institutional characteristics (e.g., programs, services, and relationships) related to their academic achievement and various aspects of their college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social). Additional variables such as motivation for attending an HBU, pre-college demographic background, and commitment to academic major were also investigated. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology used in the current study.

Site Selection

Northern Central University⁵ (NCU) was established in the early 20th century as an HBU, designed specifically to provide educational opportunities for Blacks. Currently, NCU is a four-year public university in the southeastern U. S. with a student enrollment of over 4,500. NCU's mission statement focuses on providing students with a well-rounded liberal arts education to equip them with the skills necessary to excel in the world beyond college. This preparation includes an emphasis on technology and

⁴ The acronym "HBU" is used to refer to the specific institution involved in the current study rather than the "HBCU" acronym, which will be used to refer to Historically Black schools more generally.

⁵ To insure the anonymity of the institution and participants in this study, directional institutional pseudonyms were assigned to each institution based on its geographical location within its state in the southeastern U.S.

involves both traditional and non-traditional learning experiences. The core purposes of NCU include teaching, research, creative expression, and public service. NCU offers bachelors, master's, education specialist, and associate's degrees in a wide range of majors including business, criminal justice, education, fine arts, humanities, nursing, public administration, and the natural and social sciences.

Viewed through an institutional theoretical lens (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991), the core institutional actions (formal policies and informal practices) at NCU prioritize high quality instruction from key institutional actors including faculty, administrators, and staff (Zilber, 2002). The institution prides itself on providing quality educational opportunities to students from various backgrounds, particularly those from underserved populations. Interpersonal relationships, particularly between institutional actors (e.g., students, faculty, staff, administrators, and members of the local community), are also emphasized as an important part of the institution's mission (Zilber, 2002).

NCU is a member of the NCAA's Division II. Division II members offer fewer sports, operate with significantly smaller budgets, and do not possess the lucrative television contracts and sponsorships of Division I institutions (Sack & Stauirowsky, 1998). Division II athletic programs seek to promote a balanced approach to academic and athletic responsibilities, emphasizing "students are recognized for their academic success, athletic contributions, and campus/community involvement" (NCAA, 2011d, p. 1). In contrast to the corporate professional model of major Division I athletic programs, Division II institutions reflect a true amateur model, whereby academics is the first priority and extracurricular involvement in athletics is viewed as ancillary. At the Division I level, the corporate professional model values athletic revenue generation as a

primary motive, whereas the academic development and overall well-being of student athletes is secondary, if considered at all.

Consistent with the Division II mission, NCU promotes a “student first” mantra. Specifically, the mission statement of the NCU Athletics Department promotes institutional integrity through academic and athletic success. The Athletics Department endorses the notion that athletics is a vital part of the institution’s educational agenda and enhances student athletes’ educational experience. The Athletics Department has a rich history of athletic success at both the conference and national levels. The Athletics Department also promotes athletics as a form of entertainment and a social outlet for the institution and surrounding community. NCU offers a total of 11 varsity men’s and women’s sports.

NCU’s Academic Support Services is committed to maximizing the potential of every student athlete both academically and athletically. Its mission is to assist student athletes in maintaining a healthy balance between the two roles and to provide quality institutional support that fosters academic achievement and personal and career development. The institutional actions of the NCU Academic Support Services emphasize supporting students’ academic progress towards degree completion and maintaining their athletic eligibility through quality academic support (Zilber, 2002).

The NCU Academic Support Services works with the NCU Athletic Department, faculty, and staff to evaluate student athletes’ academic progress. The use of interim reports and constant communication serves to monitor this progress. The NCU Academic Support staff also work with other campus departments to plan student athletes’ class schedules, academic advising appointments, academic mentoring and other

academic support, athletic study hall participation, degree progress, first-year orientation and transition, at-risk student monitoring, and overall professional development. The primary goals of NCU's Academic Support Services are to recruit, retain, and graduate student athletes who are prepared to excel in life after college. NCU Academic Support Services also oversees an honor society that recognizes upper class students who earn a 3.4 GPA or higher.

Participants and Sampling

The participants (N=57) in this study included 49 football and 8 men's basketball student athletes at a four-year HBU in the southeastern United States. This represents a 50.4% response rate (57 participants out of 113 total number of eligible Black football and men's basketball student athletes at NCU) to the SACEQ. Due to scheduling conflicts, not all eligible Black male football and men's basketball student athletes were available to participate in the study. Yet it is important to note that all eligible and available participants (N=57) consented and completed the SACEQ. Because the roster for the football team is significantly larger than that of the men's basketball team, more football than basketball student athletes were included in the sample. The data was collected during the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 academic semesters.

Purposeful sampling was used to target the specific institution and identify participants who met the study criteria (Gratton & Jones, 2010; Patton, 2002). The institution had to meet three criteria: 1) it had to be recognized as an HBCU in the United States, 2) it had to be a member of the NCAA's Division II, and 3) it had to sponsor both football and men's basketball. The purposeful sampling technique allowed the researcher to identify individuals who could best address the research questions and provide rich

details about the key influences related to their academic achievement and college experiences (Patton, 2002).

For the purposes of this study, only Black football and men's basketball student athletes were targeted. The first reason for this purposeful sampling is that football and men's basketball are the two largest revenue-generating sports for the NCAA and its member institutions (Brooks & Althouse, 2000; Edwards, 2000; Hawkins, 2010; Sailes, 2010b; Smith, 2009). Therefore, the argument about athletic exploitation pertains directly to these two sports. Secondly, Black male student athletes have persistently graduated at lower rates compared to their student athlete counterparts (Lapchick, 2010a, 2010b; NCAA, 2011a, 2011b). In fact, Black female student athletes consistently post high graduation rates; thus the problem of low academic achievement specifically pertains to Black male student athletes, particularly those involved in football and men's basketball (Harper, 2006, 2012; Lapchick, 2010a, 2010b; NCAA, 2011a, 2011b).

Participants were therefore selected based on the following criteria: 1) self-identify as Black, 2) participate as a varsity football and/or men's basketball student athlete, and 3) be currently enrolled as a full-time student at the HBU. The focus group participants (n=17) included nine football and eight men's basketball student athletes. Following the focus group interviews, the in-depth interview participants (n=4) included two football and two men's basketball student athletes (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Roulston, 2010).

Paradigmatic Stance: Interpretive Interactionism

Interpretive interactionism is a paradigmatic stance that involves the process of interpreting social worlds, meanings, and representations (Denzin, 2001). In contrast to

the positivistic paradigm, the interpretive interactionism stance argues that social worlds must be examined through the interpretation of subjective human experience. This stance rejects claims of objective reality and resists causal explanations and methods of analysis, instead viewing the lived experiences of individuals as complex. The current study involves an examination of everyday life sociologies (e.g., Black male student athletes' holistic college experiences) and social organizational problems (e.g., the academic achievement gap) (Denzin, 2001). Thus, the researcher sought to answer questions of what, why, and how social experiences are viewed and shaped by interacting individuals.

Within the interpretive interactionism framework, the researcher aimed to clarify how interpretations and understandings were manifested and applied, and how they provided meanings to Black male student athletes in the specific context of an HBU (Denzin, 2001). In other words, the researcher attempted to fulfill what Denzin (2001) described as the task of social science researchers: "We must grasp, understand, and interpret correctly the perspectives and experiences of those persons who are served by applied programs if we are to create solid and effective programs" (p. 3). Through meaningful descriptions and interpretations of the social processes experienced by Black male student athletes at an HBU, the researcher sought to provide an in-depth analysis of their holistic college experiences. In addition, the researcher sought to explain why certain circumstances exist and persist (e.g., Black male student athletes who experienced positive developmental outcomes).

The interpretive interactionism paradigmatic stance allowed the researcher to identify various definitions of the problem under examination (Denzin, 2001). For example, this study highlighted Black male student athletes' perceptions of key

influences that contributed to their academic achievement and experiences in college. Similarly, the interpretive interactionism paradigmatic stance allowed the researcher to evaluate the validity of assumptions about the problem. A common explanation for Black male student athletes' academic underperformance, as conceptualized by deficit theory, is that academic underperformance is largely based on individual traits and behaviors. In contrast, the current study focused on the impact of institutional culture on Black male student athletes' academic achievement and college experiences.

Additionally, the paradigmatic stance provided the researcher with an opportunity to identify strategic points of intervention into social situations (Denzin, 2001). For example, during the focus group and in-depth individual interviews the researcher asked questions pertaining to the participants' experiences with pre-college orientation programs as well as undergraduate academic support services to examine effective strategies and points of intervention that resulted in positive developmental outcomes for them. The interpretive interactionism paradigmatic stance also enabled the emergence of alternative viewpoints of the problem. The current study included the emergence of perspectives that are commonly overlooked and thus provide a new way of examining the problem of Black male student athletes' academic underachievement. Lastly, the paradigmatic stance exposed the limits of statistics and statistical evaluations by applying qualitative methods such as interpretive approaches. Unlike quantitative measures, the focus group and in-depth individual interviews allowed the researcher to ask probing questions about the participants' holistic experiences at an HBU as well as to create a forum for reiterative reconstructions of knowledge and meaning (Denzin, 2001).

Using the interpretive interactionist framework, the researcher aimed to understand how Black male student athletes make meaning of their holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social) (Denzin, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). More specifically, the researcher sought to examine the relationship between Black male student athletes' academic achievement and the institutional culture at an HBU (Denzin, 2001). The inclusion of Black male student athletes from two different sports (e.g., football and men's basketball) and across different GPA ranges (e.g., 1.99 or below to 3.50-4.00) allowed the researcher to highlight the multiple lived experiences of the participants. Therefore, the convergent findings strengthened the researcher's confidence in inferences because they revealed commonalities across sports, GPA ranges, academic classifications, and pre-college backgrounds (Greene, 2007). Additionally, the researcher used the institutional theoretical framework to analyze the interplay between institutional actors, actions, and meanings as evidenced in the participants' responses (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Zilber, 2002).

The interpretive interactionism and institutional theory approaches share a focus on interpretive meanings, social processes, and cultural contexts (Denzin, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Meanings relate to interpretations and understandings possessed by individuals (in this case, Black male student athletes) within a social context (an HBU). Social processes involve interactions (e.g., between faculty and students) and relationships (e.g., coach-student athlete relationships). Cultural contexts refer to specific milieus shaped by shared meanings, values, and beliefs. Using qualitative forms of inquiry the researcher identified the shared interpretive meanings of institutional culture among Black male student athletes at an HBU. The multiple

interpretations and experiences of the participants were analyzed for convergent themes as well as divergent responses. The emergent themes or patterns shared across participants from different sports, GPA ranges, academic classifications, pre-college backgrounds, and other variables highlighted key institutional factors that contributed to their academic achievement and college experiences.

Once the qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed independently, the researcher integrated the data. Although the Results section is organized into sections by methodological approach, the Discussion section includes integrated findings across each method (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). For example, one of the pilot study themes of “Not Just a Number” was an in vivo coding theme that represented the participants’ perception that their professors valued them holistically at their HBU. Concurrently, convergent SACEQ results were interwoven under each emergent theme. The emphasis was placed on the qualitative findings while the quantitative results served the purpose of corroboration.

More specifically, in the discussion section each research question was addressed with the emergent themes from the qualitative data, while the SACEQ findings were included based on convergence. The following statements are an example of integrated findings from the pilot study: Drew, a senior basketball player, expounded on the uniqueness of the HBCU environment and how it influenced his college experiences:

I mean it's safe to say there is really no other experience like the HBCU experience. It's a different feeling . . . you feel a sense of proud history . . . like you're a part of something that's big, especially with it being at an HBCU. So, it's definitely a positive thing to remember the rest of your life.

Interestingly, 77.1% of SAQ participants ($M=1.56$; $SD=1.18$) attended a predominantly Black high school. In addition, 89.6% of SAQ participants ($M=3.15$; $SD=.583$) reported being satisfied with their overall college experience at the HBU. Within this type of educational environment, these participants might have felt comfortable and supported.

Throughout the analysis phase, the researcher used inductive reasoning based on participants' responses from interviews and SACEQ data, and deductive reasoning based on previous literature. In addition, the selection of descriptive statistics and correlation analyses reflected the researcher's interpretive interactionism paradigmatic stance. In other words, the researcher contended that causes and effects do not exist without mitigating and circumstantial influences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2002). Therefore, causal statistical analyses such as an analysis of variance (ANOVA) or regression models were not appropriate for the current study. Furthermore, the study was exploratory in nature; hence, its aim was to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena rather than to identify predictive relationships. Since interpretive interactionism asserts that phenomena can only be understood within a specific context and findings cannot be generalized, the researcher presents this study as a contribution to the literature on the phenomena and an effort towards consensus (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2002).

Research Design

This concurrent triangulation exploratory design involved the simultaneous collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, with the quantitative findings serving as a complement to the emergent qualitative themes (Creswell, 2009). The use of multiple methods of inquiry into the same phenomena enhanced the researcher's

confidence in inquiry inferences following data analysis (Greene, 2007). Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of the mixed methods design. The primary purpose of employing mixing methods in this study was triangulation (Greene, 2007; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). According to Greene et al. (1989), researchers use triangulation to seek “convergence, corroboration, correspondence of results from the different methods” (p. 259).

For the purposes of this study, a document review, SACEQ, three semi-structured focus group interviews, and two in-depth interviews were applied to identify key influences associated with the phenomena of academic achievement and college experiences among Black male student athletes at an HBU. The facets of the phenomena investigated in this study included Black male student athletes’ motivations for attending an HBU, their holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social), and aspects of their college experiences associated with their academic achievement. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to varying degrees to investigate various aspects of the phenomena. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the connection between the research questions, paradigmatic emphases, and research methods.

The mixing of methods occurred at every stage of the research process. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006), there are three stages or phases to a research study: 1) the conceptualization stage, 2) the experiential stage, and 3) the inferential stage. The conceptualization phase involves the development of research purposes and questions. The purpose of this study was to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and college experiences of Black male student

athletes at an HBU in the southeastern United States. This mixed methods research purpose incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods. The use of terms such as “associated” generally indicate the use of quantitative methods of measurement such as chi-square, crosstabs, correlations, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and regression analyses. Conversely, the term “experiences” is often examined using qualitative approaches such as interviews, participant observations, document analyses, and ethnographies. The intentional inclusion of these terms in the research purpose along with the incorporation of mixed method approaches with each research question signified the mixing of methods at the conceptualization stage.

The next stage in the research process is the experiential stage, which involves methodological operations such as data collection and analysis (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). For this study, during the data collection stage mixing occurred concurrently, as the institutional document review, SACEQ, and interview data were collected at the same time. The document review initiated the beginning of the data collection process. During the same period, the SACEQ was administered to the participants and immediately following the submission of the SACEQ, participants for the focus group and in-depth individual interviews were solicited. The focus group interviews were conducted after the collection of the SACEQs. Similarly, the in-depth individual interviews were performed after the focus group interviews. Results were analyzed using techniques consistent with their respective paradigmatic principles to ensure methodological integrity (Greene, 2007).

The final stage of a research study is the inferential stage (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). The inferential stage involves explaining the study’s findings as well as relating

these findings to previous research, theories, and explanations associated with the research topic. In this stage, data from both methods were mixed and integrated to identify convergent and divergent findings. This mixed methods study prioritized the emergent qualitative themes from the focus group and in-depth interviews for research questions one and two. The quantitative data was used primarily to provide descriptive information and to highlight any convergence with the emergent qualitative themes. In the event of divergence between findings, the researcher provided explanations using deductive and inductive reasoning (Gratton & Jones, 2010). For research question three, the findings from both qualitative and quantitative methods were weighted equally since the nature of the research question incorporated purposeful inquiry from multiple methods. Similar to the integration of findings from research questions one and two, the researcher sought data convergence from each method and provided explanations for any divergence (Greene, 2007).

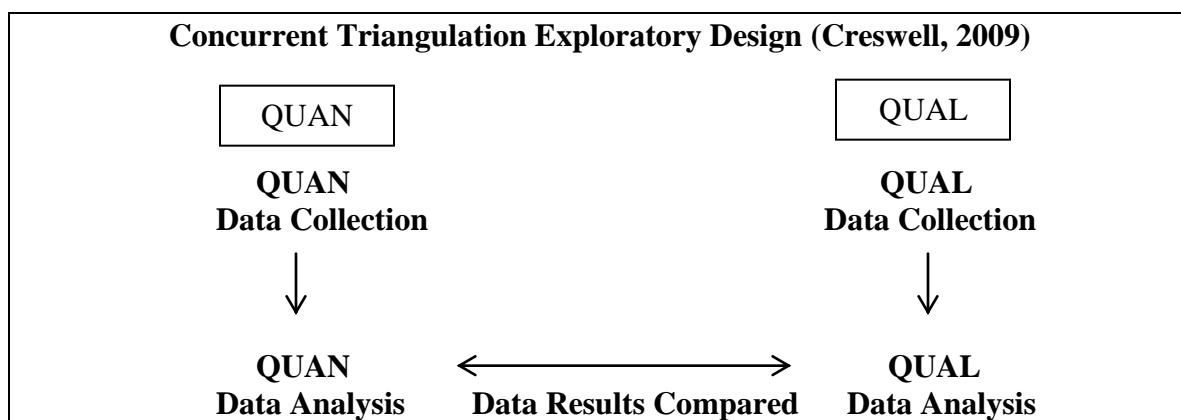


Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Mixed Methods Design

Research Question	Paradigmatic Emphasis	Methods
1. What are the motivations for attending an HBU for Black male student athletes?	QUAL + quan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group interviews • In-depth individual interviews • SACEQ
2. How do Black male student athletes at an HBU make meaning of their holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social)?	QUAL + quan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group interviews • In-depth individual interviews • Document review • SACEQ
3. What aspects of Black male student athletes' college experiences are associated with their academic achievement at an HBU?	QUAL + QUAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group interviews • In-depth individual interviews • Document review • SACEQ

Figure 2: Research Questions with Paradigmatic Emphases and Methods

Table 1: Data Collection Instruments Table

Instrument	Key Topics Covered
Document Review Institutional Mission Statement Athletic Department Archives Academic Policies	Institutional Background Athletic Department Structure Academic Support Services
SACEQ 53 items with 26 sub-items 10 sections 63 Likert Scale Type Questions 6 Multiple Choice Questions 8 Open Ended Questions 2 Yes/No Questions	Sport Participation Background Motivations for Attending an HBU Commitment to Academic Major Frequency and Type of Experiences Academic Experiences Athletic Experiences Social Experiences
Focus Group Interview Semi-structured 8 Pre-Determined Questions Additional Probing Questions	Motivations for Attending an HBU Overall Experiences Academic Experiences Athletic Experiences Social Experiences
In-depth Individual Interview Semi-structured 13 Pre-Determined Questions Additional Probing Questions	Motivations for Attending an HBU Personal Background Overall Experiences Academic Experiences Athletic Experiences Social Experiences

The use of a mixed methods approach allowed the researcher to incorporate multiple data collection and analytical methods across paradigmatic stances, offsetting weaknesses within each method and strengthening confidence in the researcher's inferences (Greene, 2007). Each methodological approach made a unique contribution to the exploration of the phenomena. The institutional document review provided an understanding of the institution's mission and core values (Bowen, 2009). This method also allowed the researcher to identify specific approaches (e.g., structural arrangements, policies, programs, and services) the institution designed and implemented to meet its stated objectives.

The SACEQ was used in the current study to ascertain various descriptive information regarding the participants' background as well as to identify patterns associated with their college experiences and academic achievement (Fink, 2009). The descriptive statistics provided the researcher with demographic information (e.g., pre-college background, perceptions of college experiences, attitudes towards academics, personal role identities, and behavioral patterns) for the larger sample of participants (N=57) as well as the focus group (n=17) and in-depth individual interview participants (n=4). Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the study, the SACEQ was used to identify possible associations between the participants' college experiences and their academic achievement. Both the descriptive and correlational data provided a more comprehensive examination of the collective experiences of the participants.

The focus group interviews were incorporated to allow an in-depth exploration of the collective experiences of a smaller group of participants (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). The focus group interviews added significant value to the study in two primary

ways. First, they allowed the researcher to examine the prevalence of shared meanings, values, norms, and experiences across participants from different sports (football and men's basketball) (Kitzinger, 1995). In addition, the focus group interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to probe the participants for elucidation on key topics of interest. Similarly, the in-depth individual interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of how individual participants perceived their holistic experiences in college. The one-on-one interview setting created an environment in which participants could openly discuss their experiences and perceptions without the influence of others (Roulston, 2010).

Collectively, these approaches provided the desired contextual richness for the examination of Black male student athletes' experiences at an HBU. In the current study, the researcher conducted a multi-level investigation including a macro-level analysis of the institution (institutional document review), a meso-level analysis of the participants' collective experiences (SACEQ and focus group interview), and a micro-level analysis of the participants' individual experiences (in-depth individual interviews) to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. Additionally, the multiple forms of triangulation including theoretical (interpretive interactionism and institutional theory), data (football and men's basketball student athletes across academic classifications and academic achievement levels), and methodological (institutional document review, SACEQ, focus group interview, and in-depth individual interview) enabled the researcher to identify key areas of convergence and, more importantly, strengthened the researcher's confidence in inferences (Greene, 2007).

Data Collection

Institutional Document Review

A review of relevant documents was conducted to provide rich descriptions of the HBU's campus identity, organizational structure, and stated core values. Bowen (2009) defined a document review as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material" (p. 27). The following institutional documents were analyzed: 1) the institutional mission statement, 2) the Athletic Department mission statement, 3) the Academic Support Services mission statement, 4) the Student Athlete Handbook, and 5) the Athletic Department compliance guidelines.

The researcher analyzed these documents for common themes related to the institution's academic and athletic expectations. In concert with the institutional theory (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991), the researcher triangulated the institutional document review findings with the qualitative interviews and SACEQ data to highlight the interplay between key institutional actions (e.g., formal policies), actors (e.g., students, faculty, administrators, and staff), and meanings (e.g., interpretations and actions) (Zilber, 2002). Thus, the institutional document review enhanced the researcher's ability to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and college experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU.

Procedures for document review. The first phase of the data collection process involved submitting all research documents to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the institution in which the researcher was enrolled. After receiving IRB approval, the researcher submitted all research documents to the IRB at the targeted HBU. Upon

receiving IRB approval at the HBU, the researcher conducted a document review of key institutional documents (e.g., institutional mission statements, Athletic Department archives, and academic policies) to provide rich contextual information about the targeted HBU.

Student Athlete College Experiences Questionnaire (SACEQ)

The Student Athlete College Experiences Questionnaire (SACEQ) was used to collect descriptive information and identify key influences associated with Black male student athletes' academic achievement and holistic college experiences at an HBU (Gratton & Jones, 2010). The SACEQ is a 53-item instrument with 26 sub-items designed to measure the background characteristics and level of positive college experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU (see Appendix A). The SACEQ contains 63 five-point Likert scale questions (interval level), 6 multiple-choice questions (ordinal level), 8 open-ended questions (non-ratio fill-in-the blank), and two yes/no questions (nominal level) (Fink, 2009).

The researcher constructed the initial SACEQ from a review of established models designed to measure various facets of college students' developmental processes as well as instruments specifically designed to measure college student athletes' experiences and athletic identity (American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989; Astin, 1993a, 1993b, 1999; Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Martin, Eklund, & Mushett, 1997). Both deductive (theoretical guidance) and inductive (insights from the data) reasoning processes were used in the development of the SACEQ (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

The purpose of this instrument for the current exploratory study was to provide descriptive data to corroborate the emergent qualitative themes (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, identifying statistically significant findings was not the primary goal for inclusion of the SACEQ in the current study. The researcher also understood that an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) would need to be conducted to accurately measure the level of internal consistency of SACEQ items (Fink, 2009). In addition to validating the instrument, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) would need to be performed to establish construct and convergent validity. Both procedures, EFA and CFA, require larger sample sizes than are available in the current study. As a result, the statistical inferences are limited, but serve the intended descriptive purpose for the current study.

Independent variables. The independent variables in this study included: (a) race (item 47); (b) family background (item 49); (c) family socioeconomic status (item 48); (d) high school GPA (item 50); (e) high school racial demographics (item 51); (f) role identities (items 43-46); (g) level of commitment to major (items 9-11); (h) professional sport career goal (item 5); (i) motivations for attending an HBU (item 6); (j) junior college transfer status (item 4); (k) classification in school (item 52); (l) primary college choice (item 7); (m) current academic major (item 8); (n) primary sport in college (item 1); (o) primary sport in high school (item 3); (p) athletic position in college (item 2); (q) frequency and type of involvement in college (items 12-15) (r) academic experiences in college (items 16-25); (s) athletic experiences in college (items 26-33); and (t) social experiences in college (items 34-42).

Dependent variables. The one dependent variable in this study was the participants' estimated cumulative college GPA. The researcher recognizes that

academic achievement can be measured in a multitude of ways aside from estimated GPA. Yet for the purposes of this study college GPA served as an appropriate measure for academic achievement, because GPA is the among the most common outcome variable used in studies examining college students' academic achievement (Astin, 1993a, 1993b; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1987). Additionally, previous studies on student athletes have used estimated cumulative college GPA as a measure of academic achievement (Comeaux, 2005; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Settles, Sellers, & Damas, 2002). The researcher did seek to retrieve and verify the participants' academic records; however, due to the legal restrictions associated with the Buckley Amendment to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, the researcher was unable to access this information.

Quantitative data validity and reliability. Validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of statistical test scores from a specific instrument (American Educational Research Association, 1999). Fink (2009) defined validity as the accuracy of the information offered by a questionnaire. The content validity of the SACEQ was established through a pilot study. Feedback from pilot study participants allowed the researcher to refine the SACEQ to include relevant items and constructs that related to Black male student athletes' holistic experiences in college and to their academic achievement. Content validity was also reflected in the fact that the SACEQ's construction was influenced by previous instruments designed to measure college student development (Astin, 1993a, 1993b, 1999), student athletes' experiences (American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989), and level of athletic identity (AIMS) (Brewer et al., 1993; Martin et al., 1997).

Reliability is the extent to which measurements are repeatable, such that any difference in results is due to random error (Cortina, 1993; Nunnally, 1967). In other words, reliability refers to the consistency of specific measurements when the testing procedure is repeated on a population of individuals or groups (American Educational Research Association, 1999). An individual's obtained score and the average score of a group will always reveal at least a small amount of measurement error. The critical information in determining reliability includes the identification of the primary sources of error, and the degree of generalizability of scores across alternate forms, scorers, administrations, or other related dimensions. Reliability information can be reported in terms of variances or standard deviations of measurement errors, in terms of one or more coefficients, or in terms of item response theory (IRT) based test information functions (American Educational Research Association, 1999).

A pilot study was conducted with 48 Black football (n=42) and men's basketball (n=6) student athletes from an HBU in the southeastern United States to establish SACEQ content validity and item reliabilities (Fink, 2009). Feedback from the pilot study participants provided useful information for instrument refinement for the current study. Specifically, the researcher was able to identify issues of clarity and time needed to complete the SACEQ. For example, based on the feedback from the pilot study, the researcher included items 13, 14, and 15 to distinguish between the frequency and type of activities the student athletes participated in during their athletic season compared to their off-season. In addition, the researcher noted that the time needed to complete the SACEQ ranged from 15 to 30 minutes.

Cronbach's (1951) alpha was used to test the reliability of the SACEQ constructs (Cortina, 1993). Several studies have cited the use of .70 as the benchmark alpha score for exploratory measures with regard to identifying a strong item covariance, thus indicating the construct has been captured sufficiently (Churchill, 1979; Hinkin, 1998; Nunnally, 1978). Cortina (1993) recommended the .70 as a requirement for new instruments; however, only through the appropriate use of factor analysis can the internal consistency accurately be measured (Hinkin, 1998). Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the following SACEQ constructs: 1) academic experiences, 2) athletic experiences, 3) social experiences, 4) Black racial identity, and 5) motivations for attending an HBU (see Table 2) (Cortina, 1993).

Table 2: Pilot Study Reliabilities for the Student Athlete College Experience Questionnaire (SACEQ) Constructs

Construct	# of items	Cronbach's Alpha⁵
Academic Experiences	10-17	.77
Athletic Experiences	18-22	.35
Social Experiences	23-28	.01
Black Racial Identity	29-31	.89
Motivations for Attending an HBU	32-38	.60

Based on the results and feedback from the pilot study, the SACEQ was revised for the current study. A major revision of the SACEQ involved the creation of three sub-constructs (engagement, relationships, and satisfactions) within each of the three core SACEQ constructs (academic experiences, athletic experiences, and social experiences). The following revisions were made for each construct: a) academic experiences (8 initial items modified to 14 revised items, including 5 engagement items, 4 relationship items, and 5 satisfaction sub-items), b) athletic experiences (5 initial items modified to 12

revised items including 4 engagement items, 3 relationship items, and 5 satisfaction sub-items), and c) social experiences (6 initial items modified to 12 revised items including 4 engagement items, 4 relationship items, and 4 satisfaction items).

Additional changes to the SACEQ included the creation of a separate section for frequency and type of activities performed in-season (items 12-13e) and out-of-season (items 14-15e). The revised SACEQ also included the following additions: the sport participation section (items 1-5), one addition to the motivation for attending an HBU section (sub-item 6g), the commitment to academic major section (items 9-11), two additions to the personal role identities section (items 44 and 46), and one addition to the demographic information section (item 47).

The ranges for the following items were also adjusted to include five multiple-choice responses: estimated household income (item 5 from initial SACEQ and item 48 on revised SACEQ), high school GPA (item 4 on initial SACEQ and item 50 on revised SACEQ), academic classification (item 1 on initial SACEQ and item 52 on revised SACEQ), and college GPA (item 6 on initial SACEQ and item 53 on revised SACEQ). The items pertaining to primary college choice (item 32 from initial SACEQ to item 7 on revised SACEQ), family background (item 3 from initial SACEQ to item 49 on revised SACEQ), and racial make-up of high school (item 2 from initial SACEQ to item 51 on revised SACEQ) were converted from multiple-choice questions on the initial SACEQ to open-ended questions on the revised SACEQ. Lastly, items from the initial SACEQ pertaining to the athletic impact on academics (item 21 from initial SACEQ), campus residency status (item 26 from initial SACEQ), and Black racial identity (items 29-31

from initial SACEQ) were removed due to their lack of relevance and pilot study feedback.

Procedures for SACEQ administration. Following the document review, the recruitment process ensued. Recruitment began with the researcher sending out an email to the athletic director at the targeted HBU (see Appendix E). The researcher also contacted the athletic director by telephone to confirm data collection logistics (see Appendix F). Prior to beginning the data collection, the researcher informed all participants about the purpose and nature of the study, and participants were informed that their participation was voluntary. After written consent was received, the SACEQ was administered (see Appendix B). Participants were provided with a hard copy of the SACEQ, a pencil to provide their responses, and a copy of the consent form for their records. The time of completion for the SACEQ lasted 15 to 20 minutes.

Focus Group Interviews

One of the primary data sources for this study involved focus group interviews. Kitzinger (1995) defined focus groups as “a form of interview that capitalizes on communication between research participants in order to generate data” (p. 299). Focus groups are particularly useful for analyzing specific groups (e.g., football and/or men’s basketball student athletes) and identifying areas of consensus and/or dissent (Patton, 2002). Focus groups provide an opportunity for dialectical conversations to take place between multiple individuals in a single setting and may result in the reiterative construction of new knowledge (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005).

Similar to other forms of qualitative inquiry, focus groups allow researchers to answer questions of what as well as how. In addition, focus groups provide the

researcher with the opportunity to document and analyze participants' various forms of communication, such as "day to day interaction, including jokes, anecdotes, teasing, and arguing" (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299). Accessing this type of data is extremely beneficial for understanding the participants' perceptions and lived experiences. The key topics discussed during the focus group interview included the participants' motivations for attending an HBU; their holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social) and key aspects of their college experiences that were associated with their academic achievement (see Appendix C).

Procedures for the focus group interviews. After the administration and collection of the SACEQs, participants were recruited from each sport (football and men's basketball) for the focus group interviews (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). After participants were selected, the researcher coded their SACEQ to identify each participant's estimated GPA and to ensure representativeness across the GPA scale (e.g., 1.99 or below; 2.00-2.49; 2.50-2.99; 3.00-3.49; 3.50-4.00). These ranges were decided based on previous literature that measured college student academic achievement via GPA (Astin, 1993a, 1993b; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The purpose of selecting Black male student athletes from various GPA ranges was to provide a representative sample of the participants and their college experiences from each sport (football and men's basketball). However, the participants' responses were analyzed based only on their sport participation and not on their estimated cumulative GPA. Emergent themes from the focus group and in-depth individual interviews will therefore highlight common responses among all participants, and no distinction will be made between participants based on estimated GPAs.

The purposeful sampling of participants from the two targeted sports across different GPA ranges allowed the researcher to benefit from a level of homogeneity as well as heterogeneity among focus group participants (Patton, 2002). Cox and Blake (1991) explained how focus group “decision quality is best when neither excessive diversity nor excessive homogeneity are present” (p. 51). The authors described how diverse groups (e.g., based on culture, attitude, personality, experiences, etc.) possess a broader and richer range of experiences to draw from to address a specific problem.

Similarly, Gibbs (1997) suggested that if a group is too homogenous in regard to certain characteristics (e.g., academic achievement or experiences), diverse opinions and experiences might not be revealed. Fern (1983) also found in a review of studies on focus groups that heterogeneous focus groups were advantageous when the researcher seeks to elicit a wide range of information or creative discussion related to a topic. Thus, in an effort to enhance the researcher’s understanding of a wide range of Black male student athletes’ experiences at HBUs and a range of key influences associated with their academic achievement, the use of estimated GPA as one measure of heterogeneity was used to select a diverse group of participants for the qualitative interviews.

However, Gibbs (1997) also argued that if a group is too heterogeneous, the differences between participants could significantly influence individual contributions. As a result, the researcher recruited participants from the same athletic teams to reduce the influence on individual contributions. In addition to their self-identified racial group, the participants also shared a common experience as student athletes in the two largest revenue-generating sports of football and men’s basketball, which led to increased levels of comfort and openness during the focus group interview.

Thus, the unit of analysis was the participants' sport participation rather than their estimated cumulative college GPA. In concert with the aims of qualitative inquiry, the analysis focused on identifying shared experiences among the participants as well as investigating differences between and within participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The representative sample across GPA ranges enabled the researcher to examine the impact of institutional influences among a diverse group of student athletes (Kitzinger, 1995). The focus group interviews were recorded using both audio and video recorders. Focus group interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour.

In-Depth Individual Interviews

Another form of primary data for this study was the information retrieved from in-depth individual interviews. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) described interviews as effective methods for eliciting rich descriptions of participants' lived experiences. More specifically, in-depth individual interviews allow the researcher to engage in personal dialogue with the participants about their lived experiences in a one-on-one setting. Individual interviews are particularly advantageous because they create an environment in which the researcher can probe the participant for responses without the influence of other participants (Roulston, 2010). Similar to the focus group interviews, the key topics discussed in the in-depth individual interviews were the student athletes' motivations for attending an HBU, their holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social), and key aspects of their college experiences that are associated with their academic achievement (see Appendix D).

Procedures for the in-depth individual interviews. Immediately following the focus group interviews, the researcher solicited four participants for in-depth individual

interviews. Two football and two men's basketball student athletes were selected for these interviews. Similar to the focus group interviews, the unit of analysis was the participants' sport participation. Selected participants were diverse in terms of sport participation, academic classification, academic majors, and estimated college GPA. These measures of diversity enhanced the researcher's understanding of Black male student athletes' experiences at an HBU. The in-depth individual interviews were audiotaped for transcription. The in-depth interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes.

Qualitative data quality and trustworthiness. Triangulation is one method researchers utilize to enhance the data quality and credibility of research findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2002; Roulston, 2010). The term originated from the topography field and initially was used in the military and navigation sciences; however, the term is now widely accepted in the field of social sciences (Decrop, 1999). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) defined triangulation as a multi-method approach used by researchers to achieve better or more accurate results. According to Greene et al. (1989), triangulation "seeks convergence, corroboration, correspondence of results from the different methods" (p. 259). Given the complex nature of the phenomena of interest, the researcher applied multiple methods to examine the same phenomena (Greene, 2007). The components of the phenomena investigated in this study included Black male student athletes' motivations for attending an HBU, holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social), and influences associated with their academic achievement.

Two primary types of triangulation were used in this study: data triangulation and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2002; Roulston, 2010). Data

triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources in a single study. The multiple data sources involved in this study were Black male student athletes from two different sports, football and men's basketball. Methodological triangulation is the use of multiple methods to examine a specific problem or area of inquiry (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2002). The multiple methods in this study included the institutional document review, SACEQ, three focus group interviews, and four in-depth individual interviews. A primary purpose of using triangulation is to test for consistency. Although different methods may not generate the same results, the inconsistencies between findings may provide meaningful insight into the relationship between the methodological approaches and the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2002).

To maintain quality in qualitative inquiry, the researcher also provided a detailed subjectivity statement and employed member checking (also known as member validation) of transcripts, an audit trail, and detailed transcriptions (Roulston, 2010). The detailed subjectivity statement described the researcher's experiences and perspectives prior to and during the study. The subjectivity statement identified potential bias the researcher may have based on his positionality in relation to the phenomena under study. The process of member checking or member validation involved the verification of findings with participants. The researcher provided participants with transcripts of the interviews and analyses and asked for feedback. The findings of the study are therefore co-constructed based on the interpretations of both the researcher and the participants, enhancing data trustworthiness.

The researcher also documented an audit trail of procedures, interpretations, and revisions (e.g., memos) conducted throughout the study. The audit trail allowed the

research process to be transparent to readers who may want to replicate the procedures and provided readers with an opportunity to review materials used and decisions made throughout the research process. Lastly, in the final write-up, the researcher included detailed descriptions, including contextual information, so readers can readily identify the researcher's interpretations and the data in which they are grounded (Roulston, 2010).

Researcher's Subjectivity Statement

The inspiration for my research stems from my life experiences as a Black/African American⁶ male and former athlete. During my youth, a significant part of my self-identity was connected to my athletic abilities and accomplishments. It was not until my playing days were over that I came to the realization that being an athlete was only a small part of my identity. In my professional experiences working with young Black males, I have learned that many of them shared similar experiences in regards to self-identifying primarily as athletes. As a mentor, I personally connected with my mentees when they described their aspirations of becoming professional athletes as well as their frustrations with being treated differently by others because of their race, ethnicity, and gender. As a researcher, I also began to identify common themes in the literature and media coverage of Black male athletes. These common themes included experiences with racial discrimination, social isolation, academic neglect, economic deprivation, and limited leadership opportunities.

These trends caused me to question the socialization patterns of young Black males in the United States. I concluded that the underlying problem lies in the fact that young Black males are socialized to be athletes at the expense of their intellectual and

⁶ The researcher intentionally uses the terms "Black/African American" to emphasize his self-identification as a member of the Black racial group and the African American ethnic group.

psychosocial development. A key example of this socialization is evident at many institutions of higher education in the U.S. where Black males are overrepresented in the two largest NCAA revenue-generating sports of football and men's basketball, yet significantly underrepresented in the general student body, where they also post the lowest graduation rates among all student athletes. I contend that this paradox is reflective of broader systemic inequalities within U.S. society based on historical patterns of racial discrimination, exploitation, and marginalization of ethnic minorities, and particularly Black males.

My personal background (age, race, ethnicity, and gender) and experiences (social, academic, and athletic) will enable me to connect and identify with my participants in a unique manner. My research interests are a byproduct of my personal background and experiences. The fact that I am a Black/African American male plays a significant role in my research interest in Black male student athletes. In addition, my experiences as a former athlete provide me with a particular interest in examining the impact of sports participation on academic achievement, self-identity, and post-college career mobility. I fully acknowledge, accept, and embrace my unique positionality as a researcher of Black male student athletes.

Along the same lines, my analysis will inevitably be influenced by my subjectivities. In response to potential bias associated with my research, I will use rigorous research methods such as data, theoretical, and methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility of my findings. A goal of my research is to empower those who are disadvantaged by current social structures, arrangements, and practices. Thus, my subjectivities strengthen my research rather than constrain it. Through my lived

experiences and my work with others who share similar experiences, we seek to provide a different narrative of who we are. This narrative will be positive in nature and celebrate our collective strength, uniqueness, and perseverance.

Data Management

All documents analyzed for the document review were retrieved online. All reported findings from the document review were paraphrased and summarized in an effort to ensure institutional confidentiality. The focus group interviews were recorded using both audio and video recorders. Once interviews were transcribed, both the audio and videotapes were destroyed. The in-depth individual interviews were recorded using an audio recorder. Similar to the focus group interviews, once in-depth interviews were transcribed the audiotapes were destroyed. Concerning the SACEQ data, all data was coded with numbers that only the research team can link to individually identifiable information.

At no point did the participants reveal their names to the primary researcher. Participants' identities were kept confidential via indirect identifiers (e.g., numeric codes). These codes were necessary for the researcher to identify participants for the focus group and the in-depth individual interviews. Once SACEQ data were entered in SPSS and analyses were performed, the researcher erased the files from the computer. All hard copies of the SACEQ were locked in a secure file cabinet in a locked room only accessible to the co-primary researchers. Electronic files were secured via a password-protected memory card. The coded data were maintained in a different location. All data files were stripped of individually identifiable information and the key to the code was destroyed upon completion of this study.

Data Analysis

A set of descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation tests were computed to examine the relationship between a set of independent variables (academic, athletic, and social experiences in college) and the dependent variable (estimated cumulative college GPA) (Fink, 2009). Descriptive statistics provided useful information about the frequencies and percentages of responses for each item and section of the SACEQ. The Pearson product-moment correlations allowed the researcher to determine the degree of association between two variables (e.g., estimated cumulative college GPA and academic experiences in college).

Qualitative data from the institutional document review, three semi-structured focus group interviews, and four semi-structured in-depth individual interviews were inductively and deductively analyzed using procedures of a thematic analysis (also referred to as content analysis) (Biddle, Markland, Gilbourne, Chatzisarantis, & Sparkes, 2001; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Patton, 2002; Scanlan, Ravizza, & Stein, 1989; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991). The purpose of a thematic analysis is to examine the data in a sequential manner that starts with the raw data, moves to first-order then to the second-order themes, and ends with general dimensions or emergent themes (Biddle et al., 2001). Similar to an inductive content analysis, a thematic analysis was particularly useful for ensuring that the emergent themes were grounded in the participants' lived experiences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Scanlan et al., 1989). However, the thematic analysis used in this study differs from an inductive content analysis in that deductive reasoning was applied during the latter stages of analysis to ensure that meaningful inferences were logically connected (Patton, 2002).

The thematic analysis used in this study involved four stages: 1) open coding, 2) axial coding, 3) comparative coding, and 4) selective coding (Biddle et al., 2001; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Patton, 2002; Scanlan et al., 1989; Scanlan et al., 1991). The open coding process involved multiple line-by-line analyses of the raw data and the identification of an exhaustive list of codes for the participants' responses to each interview question. The researcher quantized the open codes by tabulating the frequencies of each code within the transcript to cross-reference the previously identified themes (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

The use of quantizing data via frequencies serves as a useful technique to ensure that the most meaningful themes are identified and supported by response patterns (Andersen, Williams, Aldridge, & Taylor, 1997; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Krane, Anderson, & Stean, 1997; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In addition, during this stage and throughout the coding process, the researcher composed memos to document his thoughts, as well as revisions and transitions in coding refinement (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In vivo coding, a process whereby codes are conceptualized via the participants' verbatim words, was also applied to ensure that emergent themes were embedded in data (Martin, Harrison, Stone, et al., 2010; Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

The axial coding process consisted of the clustering of open codes into specific categories (Gratton & Jones, 2010). At this point, codes were merged and divergent codes were separated for further analysis. Next, the comparative coding stage involved analyzing codes and categories for patterns across all the interviews or documents (i.e., all three focus group interviews and all four individual interviews were comparatively analyzed for common patterns). The researcher sought explanations in the codes through

inductive (e.g., researcher's experiences, open codes, and axial categories) and deductive (e.g., guiding conceptual frameworks and previous literature) reasoning. Additionally, the data was further reduced via thematic clustering.

The final stage of selective coding involved the identification of emergent themes supported by the data. This selective coding process also consisted of separating "poorly developed categories" from the more salient themes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 14). In addition, divergent statements that were contradictory to the researcher's reasoning were analyzed for explanation. Collectively, these analytical procedures ensured that confirmation bias was reduced and final inferences were grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Gratton & Jones, 2010).

Institutional Document Review Analysis

The first data collection procedure performed in this study was a review of institutional documents. The purpose of conducting an institutional document review was to provide a description of the historical, social, and cultural context of the HBU in this study. The institutional document review included an analysis of the following documents: 1) the institutional mission statement, 2) the Athletic Department mission statement, 3) the Academic Support Services mission statement, 4) the Student Athlete Handbook, and 5) the Athletic Department's compliance guidelines. The researcher conducted a thematic analysis of the selected institutional documents to identify key themes. This thematic analysis included open, axial, comparative, and selective coding processes (Biddle et al., 2001; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Patton, 2002; Scanlan et al., 1989; Scanlan et al., 1991).

The open coding process involved a line-by-line coding of each institutional document. During this process, inductive coding was applied to ensure that the data was grounded in the documents (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). An example of an open code from the institutional mission statement is “total development of students.” This open code indicated the main concept from the line related to the institution’s focus on enhancing students’ holistic development. The researcher also quantized the data during the open coding phase to assist with the organization of data as well as to cross-reference code frequencies with developing themes (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The open coding process resulted in 421 open codes. The following numbers of codes were assigned for each institutional document: 1) 72 open codes from the institutional mission statement, 2) 22 open codes from the Athletic Department’s mission statement, 3) 17 open codes from the Athletic Department Academic Support Services mission statement, 4) 274 open codes from the Student Athlete Handbook, and 5) 36 open codes from the Athletic Department’s compliance guidelines.

The axial coding process involved the clustering of open codes into separate categories. An example of an axial code from the institutional mission statement is “high quality and comprehensive educational experience.” This axial code was comprised of a cluster of 43 open codes related to the institution’s commitment to providing a well-rounded educational environment filled with various learning opportunities such as study abroad, internships, etc. The axial coding process condensed the 421 open codes into 34 axial codes. The following code reductions were performed for each document: 1) 72 open codes reduced to four axial codes for the institutional mission statement, 2) 24 open

codes reduced to four axial codes for the Athletic Department mission statement, 3) 17 open codes reduced to two axial codes for the Academic Support Services mission statement, 4) 274 open codes reduced to 21 axial codes for the Student Athlete Handbook, and 5) 36 open codes reduced three axial codes for the Athletic Department's compliance guidelines.

Next, the comparative coding process involved the analysis of open and axial codes across all institutional documents for key patterns. This process resulted in the identification of three comparative codes. The first cluster of comparative codes included eight axial codes (108 open codes) related to the developing theme of a "wholesome academic environment." Each code in this cluster highlighted key features of the academic environment including majors offered, academic programs, diversity of institutional staff, etc.

The second cluster of comparative codes included 12 axial codes (172 open codes) related to the developing theme of the "total development of students." This cluster was comprised of codes related to specific values, services, and programs--such as extracurricular activities and community service opportunities--promoted to enhance the holistic development of students. The third cluster of comparative codes included 14 axial codes (147 open codes) related to the developing theme of the "Athletic Department as an integral part of the university's overall program." This third cluster of codes included terms and phrases related specifically to the Athletic Department's policies and their connection to the university mission, such as behavioral expectations and academic and athletic responsibilities of student athletes.

Lastly, the selective coding process involved analyzing the comparative codes for the most salient themes and specific conceptualizations of these themes. In this process, the most salient themes were tested for relevance, cohesiveness, and representativeness (Patton, 2002). From this process, the following three emergent themes were identified: 1) comprehensive educational experience, 2) total student development, and 3) educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program.

Focus Group Interview Analysis

The third set of data collection involved three focus group interviews. The first was comprised of an integrated group of four football and four men's basketball student athletes. The second included four men's basketball student athletes and the third included five football student athletes. The purpose of the focus group interviews was to examine of the collective college experiences of Black male football and men's basketball student athletes at an HBU.

The focus group interviews addressed the following research topics related to the current study: 1) motivations for attending an HBU, 2) overall college experiences, 3) academic experiences in college, 4) athletic experiences in college, 5) social experiences in college, and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement. The researcher conducted a comprehensive thematic analysis of each focus group separately and then compared the emergent themes at the interpretation phase. The thematic analysis of the focus group interviews involved open, axial, comparative, and selective coding processes (Biddle et al., 2001; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Patton, 2002; Scanlan et al., 1989; Scanlan et al., 1991).

The first phase of thematic analysis involved an open coding process. This process involved a line-by-line coding of the transcripts to identify the nature and frequency of the participants' responses. An inductive coding technique called *in vivo* coding was applied by citing the exact words from the participants for each open code (Martin, Harrison, Stone, et al., 2010; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). This process ensured that emergent themes were grounded in the participants' responses (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, in response to the question about the participants' motivation for attending an HBU, the open code of "Winning athletic program," was identified from the first focus group interview. This open code reflected that the participant's motivation for attending an HBU was related to the institution's athletic tradition. Open codes were also quantized to document the frequency and order in which responses were stated (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Quantizing qualitative data is a useful technique to document how emergent themes were identified through response patterns across multiple participants (Andersen et al., 1997; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Krane et al., 1997; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

The open coding process for the first focus group interview resulted in 387 open codes. Each category comprised of the following numbers of open codes: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (40 open codes), 2) overall college experiences (85 open codes), 3) academic experiences in college (54 open codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (105 open codes), 5) social experiences in college (48 open codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (55 open codes).

For the second focus group, 267 open codes were identified. Each category comprised of the following numbers of open codes: 1) motivations for attending an HBU

(24 open codes), 2) overall college experiences (50 open codes), 3) academic experiences in college (36 open codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (70 open codes), 5) social experiences in college (35 open codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (52 open codes).

For the third focus group, 440 open codes were identified. The following open codes were assigned for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (25 open codes), 2) overall college experiences (83 open codes), 3) academic experiences in college (60 open codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (122 open codes), 5) social experiences in college (62 open codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (88 open codes).

Next, the axial coding process involved organizing the open codes within each category into smaller clusters of axial codes for each focus group interview separately. The axial coding process involved two phases, initial and secondary. During this process, open codes related to similar concepts were merged. For example, the 40 open codes related to the motivations for attending an HBU in the first focus group interview were organized and reduced to five initial axial codes. The five codes related to motivations for attending an HBU category were “Last resort” (5 open codes), “Athletic program” (four open codes), “HBCU experience” (16 open codes), “Teachers at an HBCU understand where you are coming from” (seven open codes), and “Out of place at a PWI” (eight open codes).

The initial phase in the axial coding process for the first focus group interview reduced the 388 open codes to 57 initial axial codes. The following code reductions were performed for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (40 open codes

reduced to five initial axial codes), 2) overall college experiences (85 open codes reduced to nine initial axial codes), 3) academic experiences in college (54 open codes reduced to eight initial axial codes), athletic experiences in college (106 open codes reduced to 19 initial axial codes), social experiences in college (48 open codes reduced to eight initial axial codes), and key influences associated with academic achievement (55 open codes reduced to nine initial axial codes).

The secondary phase in the axial coding process involved further reduction of axial codes into larger clusters related to similar themes. For example, related to the athletic experiences category the axial clusters of “It’s all about time management” (18 open codes) and “If you don’t get the grades you can’t play” (seven open codes) were merged because both clusters related to the idea of participants balancing their responsibilities as students first and athletes second. The result of the secondary axial coding process for the first focus group interview was a reduction of 57 initial axial codes to 18 secondary axial codes.

The following code reductions were performed for each category: 1) motivations from attending an HBU (five initial axial codes reduced to three secondary axial codes), overall college experiences (nine initial axial codes reduced to four secondary axial codes), academic experiences in college (eight initial axial codes reduced to two secondary axial codes), athletic experiences in college (19 initial axial codes reduced to six secondary axial codes), social experiences in college (eight initial axial codes reduced to two secondary axial codes), and key influences associated with academic achievement (nine initial axial codes reduced to three secondary axial codes).

For the second focus group, the initial axial coding process resulted in the reduction of 267 open codes to 38 initial axial codes. For the overall college experiences category, the 50 open codes were reduced to five initial axial codes. The five initial axial codes related to participants' overall college experiences were "Great experience" (three open codes), "Different for me" (19 open codes), "You don't feel like you're out there alone" (12 open codes), "I just like it" (eight open codes), and "It's what you make it" (eight open codes). The following code reductions were conducted for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (24 open reduced codes to seven initial axial codes), 2) overall college experiences (50 open codes reduced to five initial axial codes), 3) academic experiences in college (36 open codes reduced to four initial axial codes), athletic experiences in college (70 open codes reduced to eight initial axial codes), social experiences in college (35 open codes reduced to four initial axial codes), and key influences associated with academic achievement (52 open codes reduced to 10 initial axial codes).

The secondary phase of the axial coding process involved the reduction of 38 initial codes to 12 secondary axial codes. For example, related to the academic experiences category, the initial axial clusters of "Professors are easy to talk to" (five open codes), "You're their children" (20 open codes), and "They expect you to do what you're supposed to do" (four open codes) were merged because all codes related to the actions of the participants' professors. The following code reductions were performed for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (seven initial axial codes reduced to three secondary axial codes), overall college experiences (five initial axial codes reduced to two secondary axial codes), academic experiences in college (four initial axial

codes reduced to two secondary axial codes), athletic experiences in college (eight initial axial codes reduced to two secondary axial codes), social experiences in college (four initial axial codes reduced to three secondary axial codes), and key influences associated with academic achievement (10 initial axial codes reduced to four secondary axial codes).

The initial axial coding process for the third focus group resulted in the reduction of 440 open codes to 63 initial axial codes. For the academic experiences category, the 60 open codes were reduced to seven initial axial codes. The 11 initial axial codes related to the participants' academic experiences were "Professors are trying to help you" (26 open codes), "Some professors are in it for themselves" (2 open codes), "Some teachers treat me like a regular student" (6 open codes), "Football is a different responsibility" (14 open codes), "Maintaining a 3.0 average" (2 open codes), "Two classmates will help me get my grades up" (2 open codes), and "Average students don't know what football players go through" (7 open codes).

The following code reductions were conducted for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (25 open codes reduced to five initial axial codes), 2) overall college experiences (83 open codes reduced to seven initial axial codes), 3) academic experiences in college (60 open codes reduced to seven initial axial codes), athletic experiences in college (122 open codes reduced to 19 initial axial codes), social experiences in college (62 open codes reduced to 11 initial axial codes), and key influences associated with academic achievement (88 open codes reduced to 13 initial axial codes).

The secondary phase of the axial coding process involved the reduction of 63 initial codes to 22 secondary axial codes. For example, related to the athletic experiences

category, the initial axial clusters of “It also has a back set [negative consequences]” (seven open codes), “Got discouraged when I was redshirted” (five open codes), “Don’t have time for a social life” (two open codes), “More rigorous” (11 open codes), and “Didn’t see the field much besides special teams” (two open codes) were merged because all codes related to negative aspects of the participants’ athletic experiences.

The following code reductions were performed for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (six initial axial codes reduced to two secondary axial codes), overall college experiences (seven initial axial codes reduced to two secondary axial codes), academic experiences in college (seven initial axial codes reduced to four secondary axial codes), athletic experiences in college (19 initial axial codes reduced to six secondary axial codes), social experiences in college (11 initial axial codes reduced to three secondary axial codes), and key influences associated with academic achievement (13 initial axial codes reduced to five secondary axial codes).

Following the axial coding process, the comparative coding process involved the analysis of axial codes within each category across all three focus group interviews for common patterns. More specifically, the clusters of axial codes within each category for each respective focus group interview were compared for areas of additional convergence based on broader themes. For example, regarding the motivations for attending an HBU category, the axial code clusters of “A sense of connection” (31 open codes) from the first focus group interview, “The experience” (15 open codes) from the second focus group interview, and “Like home” (16 open codes) from the third focus group interview were merged because both clusters of codes related to unique aspects of HBCUs (e.g., being surrounded by people of their own race, familiar with cultural norms, etc.).

The following code mergers were conducted across all three focus group interviews: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (six secondary axial codes reduced to three comparative codes), overall college experiences (eight secondary axial codes reduced to three comparative codes), academic experiences in college (nine secondary axial codes reduced to five comparative codes), athletic experiences in college (14 secondary axial codes reduced to five comparative codes), social experiences in college (nine secondary axial codes reduced to four comparative codes), and key influences associated with academic achievement (11 secondary axial codes reduced to five comparative codes).

The final phase of the thematic analysis involved the selective coding process, whereby themes were identified as more or less salient. For example, related to the social experiences category, the comparative code theme of “It’s easy to get along with people” (63 open codes) was identified as the most salient. Conversely, the comparative code themes of “Everything restricted” (five open codes), “No organizations” (12 open codes), and “Thinking about a fraternity” (three open codes) were identified as less salient.

The selective coding process ensured that emergent themes were supported by the response patterns across all focus group interviews. As a result, the following emergent themes were identified for each category: 1) “A sense of connection” (62 open codes) (motivation for attending an HBU), 2) “You’re not alone when you come to an HBCU” (202 open codes) (overall experiences), 3) “You’re their children” (112 open codes) (academic experiences in college), 4) “It’s all about time management” (172 open codes) (athletic experiences in college), 5) “It’s easy to get along with people” (115 open codes)

(social experiences in college), and 6) “Just sticking with it” (99 open codes) (key influences associated with academic achievement).

In-Depth Interview Analysis

The fourth set of data collection for the current study involved four in-depth individual interviews. These interviews were conducted with two football and two men’s basketball student athletes. The purpose of the in-depth individual interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the personal backgrounds, individual perceptions, and lived experiences of a group of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The in-depth individual interviews were designed to examine the following research topics related to the current study: 1) motivations for attending an HBU, 2) personal background, 3) academic experiences in college, 4) athletic experiences in college, 5) social experiences in college, and 6) key influences associated with their academic achievement. Similar to the analysis of the focus group interviews, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis of each in-depth individual interview separately and contrasted the emergent themes at the interpretation phase. The thematic analysis of the in-depth individual interviews was comprised of open, axial, comparative, and selective coding processes (Biddle et al., 2001; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Patton, 2002; Scanlan et al., 1989; Scanlan et al., 1991).

The open coding process included line-by-line coding of each individual interview transcript to identify the interviewees’ perceptions related to the research questions for the current study. During the open coding process, in vivo coding was applied to ensure that the participants’ exact words were used to conceptualize each open code (Martin, Harrison, Stone, et al., 2010; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). This form of inductive coding allowed the emergent themes and researcher’s inferences to be

grounded in the interviewees' responses (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). An example of an open code is "Feels like home at NCU." This open code was stated by Bobby (individual interviewee #1) when describing his motivation for choosing to attend an HBU. An example of an open code from the second in-depth individual interview is "Father pushed me to come," which relates to Mason's (individual interviewee #2) statement that his father was one of his primary motivations for attending an HBU.

Similar to the thematic analysis of the focus group interviews, the researcher quantized the open codes to capture the frequency and order of responses to specific inquiries (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The process of quantizing qualitative data is helpful in identifying emergent themes through the volume of responses related to a particular topic for each interviewee, as well as across multiple interviewees (Andersen et al., 1997; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Krane et al., 1997; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The open coding process for the first in-depth individual interview with Bobby resulted in 295 open codes. The following numbers of open codes were identified for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (48 open codes), 2) personal background (54 open codes), 3) academic experiences in college (25 open codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (87 open codes), 5) social experiences in college (43 open codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (38 open codes).

The open coding process for the second in-depth individual interview with Mason resulted in 162 open codes. The following numbers of open codes were identified for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (18 open codes), 2) personal background (41 open codes), 3) academic experiences in college (22 open codes), 4)

athletic experiences in college (36 open codes), 5) social experiences in college (18 open codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (27 open codes).

The open coding process for the third in-depth individual interview with Kyle resulted in 177 open codes. The following numbers of open codes were assigned for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (26 open codes), 2) personal background (24 open codes), 3) academic experiences in college (27 open codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (41 open codes), 5) social experiences in college (26 open codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (23 open codes).

For the fourth in-depth individual interview with Marcus, the open coding process resulted in 134 open codes. The following numbers of open codes were identified for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (11 open codes), 2) personal background (43 open codes), 3) academic experiences in college (12 open codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (29 open codes), 5) social experiences in college (15 open codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (24 open codes).

Following the open coding process, the researcher conducted an axial coding process of the open codes. This process involved categorizing the open codes into smaller clusters. For each topic of inquiry, open codes related to a common theme were merged. Both inductive reasoning (personal experience and interviewees' responses) as well as deductive reasoning (review of relevant literature) were applied during the axial coding process (Patton, 2002).

The axial coding process for the first in-depth individual interview with Bobby reduced the 295 open codes to 25 axial codes. For example, for the first in-depth individual interview with Bobby, the 48 open codes related to his motivations for

attending an HBU were organized and reduced to three axial codes. The three axial codes related to motivations for attending an HBU were “Environment around me” (16 open codes), “More out of place at PWI” (22 open codes), and “Junior college [JUCO or two year college] PWI” (10 open codes). The following code reductions were performed for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (48 open codes reduced to three axial codes), 2) personal background (54 open codes reduced to three axial codes), 3) academic experiences in college (25 open codes reduced to three axial codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (87 open codes reduced to seven axial codes), 5) social experiences in college (43 open codes reduced to six axial codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (38 open codes reduced to five axial codes).

For the second in-depth individual interview with Mason, the axial coding process reduced 162 open codes to 19 axial codes. For example, the 41 open codes related to the personal background category were organized and reduced to three axial codes. The three axial codes for the personal background category were “Good environment growing up” (36 open codes), “Didn’t have a problem doing the wrong thing outside of academics” (two open codes), and “Saying my name wrong” (three open codes). The following code reductions were performed for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (18 open codes reduced to three axial codes), 2) personal background (41 open codes reduced to three axial codes), 3) academic experiences in college (22 open codes reduced to four axial codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (36 open codes reduced to four axial codes), 5) social experiences in college (18 open codes reduced to three axial codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (27 open codes reduced to two axial codes).

The axial coding process for the third in-depth individual interview with Kyle reduced 175 open codes to 20 axial codes. For example, the 27 open codes for the academic experiences in college category were reduced and organized into three axial codes. The three axial codes for the academic experiences in college category were “Time management” (18 open codes), “Athletic class” (four open codes), and “Least favorite class” (five open codes). The following code reductions were performed for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (26 open codes reduced to four axial codes), 2) personal background (24 open codes reduced to four axial codes), 3) academic experiences in college (27 open codes reduced to three axial codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (41 open codes reduced to four axial codes), 5) social experiences in college (26 open codes reduced to three axial codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (23 open codes reduced to two axial codes).

For the fourth in-depth individual interview with Marcus, the axial coding process reduced 134 open codes to 16 axial codes. For example, for the athletic experiences category the 29 open codes were reduced into two axial code clusters. These two axial code clusters were “Fun experience” (20 open codes) and “You’re going to lose sleep” (nine open codes). The following code reductions were performed for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (11 open codes reduced to two axial codes), 2) personal background (43 open codes reduced to five axial codes), 3) academic experiences in college (12 open codes reduced to two axial codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (29 open codes reduced to two axial codes), 5) social experiences in college (15 open codes reduced to three axial codes), and 6) key influences associated with academic achievement (24 open codes reduced to two axial codes).

Next, the comparative coding process involved an in-depth analysis of the axial codes across all four individual interviewees (Biddle et al., 2001; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Patton, 2002; Scanlan et al., 1989; Scanlan et al., 1991). This process allowed the researcher to investigate areas of convergence and divergence across all in-depth individual interviews. More specifically, the comparative coding process enabled the researcher to connect the patterns of responses to broader themes related to the phenomena under investigation.

Through the comparative coding process, the axial codes related to motivations for attending an HBU were clustered together. For example, the axial clusters of “You don’t get the social life that you get at a Historically Black College” (22 open codes) from Bobby’s interview, “People you can relate to” (nine open codes) from Mason’s interview, “There’s nothing like an HBCU community” (17 open codes) from Kyle’s interview, and “I feel like it’s home” (nine open codes) from Marcus’ interview were merged because they all related to the participants’ positive perceptions of the unique campus culture at NCU.

The result of the comparative coding process was a reduction of 80 axial codes to 18 comparative codes. The following code reductions were performed for each category: 1) motivations for attending an HBU (12 axial codes reduced to five comparative codes), 2) personal background (15 axial codes reduced to four comparative codes), 3) academic experiences in college (12 axial codes reduced to four comparative codes), 4) athletic experiences in college (17 axial codes reduced to seven comparative codes), 5) social experiences in college (14 axial codes reduced to seven comparative codes), and 6) key

influences associated with academic achievement (11 axial codes reduced to five comparative codes).

The final process of the thematic analysis involved the selective coding process, which required the researcher to analyze each category for the most and least salient themes. For example, the most salient theme related to key influences associated with academic achievement was, “It’s an all-around effort at an HBCU” (64 open codes). In contrast, the theme “First year I didn’t attend peer tutors or study hall” (three open codes) was labeled as less salient. The selective coding process not only ensures that emergent themes are supported by the frequency of responses within and across interviews, but also guarantees that each theme is conceptualized by an appropriate *in vivo* code.

At the conclusion of the selection coding process, the following emergent themes were identified for each category: 1) “I feel like it’s home” (51 open codes) (motivation for attending an HBU), 2) “Good environment growing up” (129 open codes) (personal background), 3) “It’s challenging” (45 open codes) (academic experiences in college), 4) “It’s our brotherhood” (113 open codes) (athletic experiences in college), 5) “You’re known on campus more” (71 open codes) (social experiences in college), and 6) “It’s an all-around effort at an HBCU” (64 open codes) (key influences associated with academic achievement).

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the researcher’s methodology for the current study. This mixed methods study was designed to provide an in-depth examination of the phenomena within a specific context. The multiple theoretical approaches employed in this study provided the researcher with a comprehensive lens

with which to examine the complex lived experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. Rigorous data collection and analytical methods also enhanced the researcher's findings and the study's implications. The detailed description of methodological procedures demonstrates the researcher's commitment to transparency and scientific integrity.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and college experiences of Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University (HBU) in the southeastern U.S. To address this purpose, the following research questions were investigated: 1) What are the motivations for attending a Historically Black University for Black male student athletes? 2) How do Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University make meaning of their holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social)? and 3) What are the key influences associated with the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University? The findings from this study provide useful information for all U.S. institutions of higher education about effective institutional practices at an HBU that contributed to Black male student athletes' academic achievement and positive college experiences.

This chapter provides an overview of the data analysis and results for the current study. The chapter is divided into five sections. Given the mixed methods nature of this study, data retrieved from each method was analyzed independently, and thus initially presented in a manner consistent with each methodological tradition. Section I includes a description of the emergent themes from the institutional document review. These themes highlight the stated missions, values, and policies of NCU and its Athletic

Department. The results from the institutional document review added contextual richness to the study.

Section II presents statistical results from the SACEQ analyses including descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability results for the SACEQ constructs (academic experiences, athletic experiences, and social experiences), and Pearson product-moment correlations. The SACEQ results provided descriptive demographic information for the sample and revealed key patterns associated with the participants' holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social). Section III provides an overview of the emergent themes from the three focus group interviews. Section IV provides a description of the emergent themes from the in-depth individual interviews. Both the focus group and in-depth individual interviews provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions and lived college experiences as Black male student athletes at an HBU. Section V provides a summary of the results.

Section I: Institutional Document Review Themes

Comprehensive Educational Experience

The first emergent theme of a "comprehensive educational experience" refers to NCU's commitment to providing a well-rounded educational environment with a multitude of academic programs and services for its students. The NCU mission statement emphasizes the institution's goal of optimizing students' development and preparing them for productive careers and community involvement after college. The stimulating and challenging academic environment at NCU is specifically designed to enhance students' personal development, social responsibility, and cultural enrichment.

The NCU faculty and staff accomplish this goal by promoting high quality teaching, research, creative expression, and public service. Moreover, NCU offers bachelor's, master's, and education specialist degrees. The broad-based curriculum at NCU includes majors in the humanities, fine arts, social sciences, and sciences. Within these academic disciplines, NCU provides students with a wealth of learning opportunities through specialized training in areas such as health care services, community development, human disabilities, cultural enhancement, business and economic development, international trade, and entrepreneurship. Additional components of NCU's "comprehensive educational experience" include technologically advanced academic programs, outstanding undergraduate research endeavors, study abroad opportunities, undergraduate and graduate student internships, service-learning programs, and developmental pre-professional experiences.

In concert with the wide range of academic programs, NCU also creates a "comprehensive educational experience" for its students through its commitment to the cultivation of meaningful relationships between students and faculty, staff, administrators, and community leaders. For example, each institutional document emphasized one-on-one instruction between faculty and students. The low student-to-teacher ratio at NCU creates an academic climate conducive to building strong positive faculty-student relationships.

Similarly, the NCU institutional documents revealed the institution's dedication to establishing a diverse educational culture. A common message present through each institutional document was NCU's commitment to creating and maintaining cultural, ethnic, racial, economic, and gender diversity among faculty, staff, and the student body.

True to its founding mission, NCU places a special emphasis on providing quality educational opportunities for underserved populations, particularly African-Americans. In an effort to meet the needs of underserved populations, NCU offers a plethora of scholarships, financial aid, grants, and loans. The Athletic Department also champions NCU's pledge to uphold diversity through the promotion of a gender-equitable sports program.

NCU also values inter-institutional collaborations in areas such as teaching, research, and service. The expressed purpose of these collaborations is to meet the needs of NCU students, faculty, and staff. An example of this commitment to inter-institutional collaborations is found in the NCU Athletic Department's Academic Support Services mission statement. According to the mission statement, the NCU Athletic Department's academic support staff coordinates with the university's academic advising office, counseling services, career development office, faculty, and staff to effectively monitor each student athlete's academic progress. This type of intentional, coordinated effort demonstrates the institution's commitment to meeting the needs of its students.

NCU also promotes inter-institutional collaborations throughout the state, region, and nation to foster students' growth and development. The NCU mission statement emphasizes the faculty's responsibility to conduct and disseminate impactful scholarly research that can be applied to specific needs within the broader U.S. society. Across all the selected institutional documents, NCU revealed a commitment to delivering a "comprehensive educational experience" by providing a range of academic disciplines, programs, and services for its students.

Total Student Development

The second emergent theme of “total student development” epitomizes NCU’s focus on cultivating the holistic development of each student. The NCU mission statement expresses the institution’s goal of educating students to become responsible and productive citizens in society. NCU accomplishes this mission by acknowledging and embracing the unique needs of its students. For example, NCU recognizes that African-American males face distinct challenges within the U.S. educational system. In response to these challenges, NCU established an educational center specifically designed to address the needs of African-American males. This center includes educational, research, intervention, and service programs aimed at improving academic and developmental outcomes for African-American males. These programs reflect NCU’s commitment to improving the quality of life for its students.

Another primary objective of NCU is to graduate marketable students who are equipped with the skills and tools necessary to become leaders in the community and create positive change in society. NCU accomplishes this objective by providing students with various extracurricular opportunities, such as student government, student publications, sororities and fraternities, and academic clubs and societies. In addition to promoting academic achievement, each of these programs assists students in developing leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking skills. NCU also cultivates “total student development” by promoting positive attitudes and behaviors. For example, the NCU Student Athlete Handbook emphasizes that all student athletes are representatives of the university. As NCU representatives, student athletes are expected to exemplify

sportsmanship, integrity, self-discipline, ethical conduct, and personal responsibility at all times, both on and off the playing field.

The institutional documents also revealed that student athletes fulfill a unique role at NCU, encompassing the dual responsibilities of being a student first and an athlete second. With regard to their student responsibilities, student athletes are expected to attend classes, complete all assignments on time, participate in class discussions and projects, study diligently, learn instructors' names, use the Academic Achievement Center, visit the library, and enhance their technological skills. Athletic responsibilities for student athletes include attending all practices and games, complying with team rules, maintaining a high level of physical fitness, and demonstrating discipline and pride in individual and team performances. NCU acknowledges that student athletes face unique challenges such as additional time commitments, physical demands, and increased public visibility. As a result, NCU promotes an environment in which student athletes are encouraged to do their best, but more importantly to seek out help when they need it. NCU's student support services and Athletic Department work together to ensure student athletes' needs are met.

NCU also cultivates "total student development" by promoting community service. The NCU Athletic Department requires each student athlete to participate in a minimum number of community service hours each semester, completed on a team-sponsored basis. The team-sponsored community service activities include mentoring, tutoring, and school visits. NCU views community service as an institutional obligation and as an opportunity for students to build character and a lifelong commitment to serving others.

Along the same lines, the NCU Athletic Department's policies also require student athletes to abide by a code of conduct. This code of conduct includes engaging in positive behaviors such as respecting others (e.g., officials, coaches, athletes, opponents, and the media), demonstrating sportsmanlike conduct, and "winning with class and losing with dignity." Collectively, NCU's stated missions and policies focus on assisting student athletes with their development and maturation through a successful transition from high school to college and beyond. The institutional documents reflect NCU's commitment to holistically developing students by helping them set and attain personal goals, cultivate their professional skills, develop mental and physical stamina, build self-confidence, exhibit strong leadership, and improve the local community through service.

Educationally-Based Intercollegiate Athletic Program

The third emergent theme of an "educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program" refers to the unique role NCU athletics fulfills as an integral part of the university's mission. The NCU athletics program contributes to the university's objectives of education, research, and service. More specifically, NCU athletics serves as a link between the university and the community. Both the university and community place a high value on athletics as a form of institutional promotion and cultural empowerment. NCU athletics enhances the quality of campus and community life by providing shared entertainment, social activities, and institutional pride. In addition, NCU possesses a rich athletic tradition including championships at both the conference and national levels in multiple sports. This athletic success has enhanced the prestige of both the university and the local community.

The “educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program” at NCU also includes a comprehensive academic support system that involves a systematic partnership between academic departments and the Athletic Department. All student athletes are required to meet with their respective academic department for advisement and registration for classes. The academic advisors work closely with student athletes to create an educational plan that is consistent with the student athlete’s life goals and objectives. Once a plan is developed, the academic department communicates with the student athlete’s coach and Athletic Department compliance staff to ensure that all parties are aware of the student athlete’s academic track. In addition to class scheduling, these departments collaborate for academic advising, academic mentoring, academic monitoring, athletic study halls, freshman orientation, and transition, tutorial programs, assisting at-risk students, and career development.

The NCU Athletic Department also works closely with faculty and staff to monitor student athletes’ academic progress towards a degree. Interim progress reports are exchanged between faculty, academic support staff, and the Athletic Department to ensure that student athletes are meeting academic expectations throughout the semester. Another form of inter-departmental communication involves each student athlete’s personal responsibility for communicating with faculty about class time missed for athletics. Collectively, these systematic collaborations facilitate the academic success, personal achievement, and professional development of all student athletes. In other words, the campus culture at NCU fosters excellence on and off the field among its student athletes through institution-wide partnerships and collaborations.

NCU's "educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program" also involves structuring programs that contribute to student athletes' overall educational, physical, mental, and social well-being. In compliance with NCAA Division II rules, NCU restricts the amount of time student athletes can spend on athletically related activities. During the off-season, student athletes are limited to eight hours per week and no more than two hours of individual skill instruction per week of athletically related activities. Student athletes are also required to have two days off per week during the off-season. In season, student athletes are limited to four hours per day and 20 hours per week of athletically related activities. All competition days are considered three hours regardless of the actual time of the event. Student athletes are also required to have one day off per week during the season. Travel days can be considered days off as long as no other athletically related activities take place on that day. Student athletes are also required to attend 10 hours per week of mandatory study hall both in and out of season.

In a concerted effort to develop successful student athletes, NCU prioritizes recruiting, enrolling, and retaining student athletes who are capable of academic success and demonstrate a desire and motivation to graduate. As an NCAA Division II institution, NCU promotes a "student first" mantra. NCU policies explicitly value student achievement and personal development above athletic performance. For example, the NCU Academic Support Services mission statement emphasizes the Athletic Department's commitment to helping student athletes reach their full potential inside and outside the classroom. Through well-coordinated institutional efforts, student athletes are encouraged to pursue excellence. More specifically, the NCU Athletic

Department achieves success through effective institutional control, strategic long- and short-term planning, and responsible accountability management.

Another component of NCU's "educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program" is the institution's prioritization of academic achievement. All student athletes at NCAA member institutions must meet certain academic standards to be eligible to participate in intercollegiate athletics. All student athletes must also be registered for at least 12 academic hours per semester. To maintain satisfactory progress toward a degree at NCU and maintain eligibility for the following season, a student athlete must pass 24 hours toward graduation for their major per year. If a student athlete's cumulative GPA falls below 2.0 they are placed on academic probation. A student athlete on probation must earn a 2.0 GPA or higher each semester until their cumulative GPA is 2.0 or above.

The NCU Athletic Department also promotes student athlete academic achievement through its membership in the National Student Athlete Honor Society. As a member, NCU recognizes juniors and seniors who maintain a 3.4 GPA or higher. In addition, NCU sponsors an annual sports banquet where student athletes are honored for their academic and athletic achievements. Attendance at the annual sports banquet is mandatory for all student athletes. The head coaches for each team determine award recipients based on university, Athletic Department, and team expectations. All student athletes in the honors category must maintain a 3.0 or higher cumulative GPA. These forms of recognition explicitly signal to student athletes that academic achievement is valued and celebrated.

Section II: SACEQ Results

The Student Athlete College Experiences Questionnaire (SACEQ) was administered to a group of Black male football and men's basketball student athletes (N=57) at the selected HBU to provide descriptive information about the participants' background and holistic experiences in college (academic, athletic, and social). Data was collected on two separate occasions. The SACEQ was first administered following a study hall session at the primary athletic facility during the Fall 2012 semester. The second administration occurred at the football facility before a mandatory off-season team workout in Spring 2013. The response rate was 50.4% (57 out of 113). Due to schedule conflicts, not all eligible Black male football and men's basketball student athletes were available to complete the SACEQ. In addition, the initial number of participants targeted included senior football student athletes who were listed on the 2012-2013 athletics roster. However, these student athletes did not attend the mandatory off-season team workout. Nevertheless, all eligible and available participants consented to and completed the SACEQ. The SACEQ results are highlighted in the subsequent sections in the following order: 1) demographic information (see Table 3), 2) motivations for attending an HBU (see Table 4), 3) frequency and type of activity in college (see Table 5), 4) academic experiences (see Table 6), 5) athletic experiences (see Table 7), and 6) social experiences (see Table 8).

SACEQ Participants' Demographic Information Section Results

Among the SACEQ participants (N=57), 29.8% grew up in a two-parent household (mother and father), 19.3% grew up with a single mother, and 47.4% did not indicate (M=1.80; SD=1.63). In terms of annual household income (M=2.88; SD=1.14),

5.3% grew up in households earning \$9,000 or less, 29.8% grew up in households earning between \$10,000-\$29,999, 15.8% grew up in households earning between \$30,000-\$49,999, 17.5% grew up in households earning between \$50,000-\$69,999, 7.0% grew up in households earning \$70,000 or above, and 24.6% did not indicate.

The high school demographics results ($M=1.93$; $SD=.92$) revealed that 31.6% attended a predominantly Black high school, 12.3% attended a predominantly White high school, 26.3% attended a mixed-race high school, and 29.8% did not indicate. An overwhelming majority (84.2%) of the SACEQ participants participated in two or more sports in high school ($M=10.79$; $SD=5.85$). Regarding high school GPAs ($M=3.29$; $SD=.99$), 1.8% reported earning between a 1.99 or below, 17.5% reported earning between a 2.00-2.49, 33.3% reported earning between a 2.50-2.99, 26.3% reported earning between a 3.00-3.49, 10.5% reported earning between a 3.50-4.00, and 10.5% did not indicate.

Regarding academic classification in college ($M=2.57$; $SD=1.47$), 28.1% were first-year student athletes, 15.8% were second year student athletes, 10.5% were third year student athletes, 15.8% were fourth year student athletes, 10.5% were fifth year student athletes, and 19.3% did not indicate. Related to their primary college choice ($M=3.45$; $SD=1.80$), 57.9% reported that attending a Division I PWI was their primary college choice, compared to only 22.9% who reported that attending any type of HBCU (current school, Division I HBCU, or another Division II HBCU) was their primary college choice. Only 21.1% ($M=1.79$; $SD=.41$) reported transferring from a junior college.

In terms of college majors ($M=2.05$; $SD=1.30$), 50.9% were education majors (counseling education, health, physical education, recreation, or special education); 17.5% were business majors (business administration or marketing); 5.3 were arts and sciences majors (engineering or communications); and 22.8% were health and physical science majors (computer science, criminal justice and forensic science, mathematics, or psychology). Regarding their commitment to their academic advancement, 80.7% reported being committed to their academic major ($M=4.16$; $SD=.76$), 87.8 reported being committed to earning a degree ($M=4.60$; $SD=.66$), and 47.4% reported being committed to pursuing graduate school ($M=3.55$; $SD=.99$).

With regard to college sports participation ($M=1.14$; $SD=.35$), 86% were football student athletes and 14% were basketball student athletes. In terms of their positions ($M=7.57$; $SD=4.81$), 36.9% played offense (football), 52.7% played defense (football), 7.1% played special teams (football), 10.5% were guards (basketball), 1.8% were forwards (basketball), and 1.8% were centers (basketball). Related to their professional sports aspirations ($M=1.44$; $SD=.54$), 57.9% expressed that becoming a professional athlete was their primary career goal.

In terms of student identity ($M=4.02$; $SD=1.01$), 66.7% reported identifying as a student first and an athlete second, compared to only 34.0% who reported identifying as an athlete first and a student second ($M=3.04$; $SD=1.24$). Regarding the importance of these roles, 68.4% reported that being a student was an important part of their life ($M=4.00$; $SD=.93$) and 73.7% reported that being an athlete was an important part of their life ($M=4.14$; $SD=.90$).

Table 3: SACEQ Participant Demographic Section Results (Items 1-5, 7-11, 47-53)

Item	Percentage (N=57)	M	SD
1. College Sport Participation		1.14	.35
Football	86.0		
Basketball	14.0		
2. College Sport Position		7.57	4.81
Football Offense	36.9		
Football Defense	52.7		
Football Special Teams	7.1		
Basketball Guard	10.5		
Basketball Forward	1.8		
Basketball Center	1.8		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
3. High School Sport Participation		10.79	5.85
Basketball Only	3.5		
Football Only	12.3		
Two or more sports	84.2		
4. Junior College Transfer		1.79	.41
Yes	21.1		
No	78.9		
5. Primary Career Goal to be a Professional Athlete		1.44	.54
Yes	57.9		
No	40.4		
Yes/No	1.8		
7. Primary College Choice		3.45	1.80
Current School	8.8		
Division I HBCU	12.3		
Division II HBCU	1.8		
Division I PWI	57.9		
Division II PWI	5.3		
NAIA PWI	3.5		
Other	3.5		
Did Not Indicate	7.0		
8. Current or Prospective Academic Major		2.05	1.30
Education	50.9		
Business	17.5		
Arts and Social Sciences	5.3		
Health and Physical Sciences	22.8		
Did Not Indicate	3.6		
9. Commitment to Current or Prospective Major		4.16	.76
Disagree	1.8		

Neutral	15.8		
Agree	45.6		
Strongly Agree	35.1		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
10. Commitment to Earning a College Degree		4.60	.66
Neutral	8.8		
Agree	21.1		
Strongly Agree	66.7		
Did Not Indicate	3.5		
11. Commitment to Attending Graduate School		3.55	.99
Strongly Disagree	3.5		
Disagree	5.3		
Neutral	42.1		
Agree	28.1		
Strongly Agree	19.3		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
43. Student First, Athlete Second		4.02	1.01
Strongly Disagree	1.8		
Disagree	3.5		
Neutral	28.1		
Agree	24.6		
Strongly Agree	42.1		
44. Being a Student is an Important Part of my Life		4.00	.93
Strongly Disagree	1.8		
Disagree	1.8		
Neutral	26.3		
Agree	33.3		
Strongly Agree	35.1		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
45. Athlete First, Student Second		3.04	1.24
Strongly Disagree	12.3		
Disagree	21.1		
Neutral	29.8		
Agree	21.1		
Strongly Agree	14.0		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
46. Being an Athlete is an Important Part of my Life		4.14	.90
Strongly Disagree	1.8		
Disagree	0.0		
Neutral	22.8		
Agree	31.6		
Strongly Agree	42.1		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		

48. Family Annual Household Income⁷		2.88	1.14
\$9,999 or below	5.3		
\$10,000-\$29,999	29.8		
\$30,000-\$49,999	15.8		
\$50,000-\$69,999	17.5		
\$70,000 or above	7.0		
Did Not Indicate	24.6		
49. Family Background		1.80	1.63
Mother and Father	29.8		
Single Mother	19.3		
Mother and Grandmother	1.8		
Single Parent (No Indicator)	1.8		
Did Not Indicate	47.4		
50. Estimated High School GPA		3.29	.99
1.99 or below	1.8		
2.00-2.49	17.5		
2.50-2.99	33.3		
3.00-3.49	26.3		
3.50-4.00	10.5		
Did Not Indicate	10.5		
51. High School Racial Demographics		1.93	.92
Predominantly Black	31.6		
Predominantly White	12.3		
Mixed	26.3		
Did Not Indicate	29.8		
52. Classification/Year in School		2.57	1.47
First Year	28.1		
Second Year	15.8		
Third Year	10.5		
Fourth Year	15.8		
Fifth Year	10.5		
Did Not Indicate	19.3		
53. Estimated College GPA		2.81	.79
1.99 or below	3.5		
2.00-2.49	28.1		
2.50-2.99	43.9		
3.00-3.49	17.5		
3.50-4.00	0.0		
Did Not Indicate	7.0		

⁷ Income levels were adjusted and based on findings from the following reference: DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B.D., & Smith, J. C. (2011). U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports. *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010*. U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC. pp. 60-239.

SACEQ Motivations for Attending a Historically Black University Section Results

In response to the question about the importance of attending an HBCU ($M=2.56$; $SD=1.04$), 49.1% reported that it was moderately important, 38.6% reported that it was not important or not important at all, and 12.3% reported it was important or very important. Regarding the participants' perception of the type and quality of academic programs offered ($M=4.02$; $SD=.98$), 68.4% reported that these were important or very important compared to 24.6% who reported that they were moderately important, and 5.3% who reported they were not important or not important at all. Related to the participants' perceptions of the type and quality of athletic programs offered ($M=4.20$; $SD=.90$), 73.7% reported that this was important or very important.

In terms of social environment ($M=3.54$; $SD=1.07$), 52.6% reported that this was important or very important. Over half of SACEQ participants (52.6%) cited the school's location as an important or very important part of their motivation to attend an HBU ($M=3.57$; $SD=1.20$). Conversely, only 18.8% reported having a family member attend an HBCU as an important or very important motivation for choosing to attend an HBU ($M=2.20$; $SD=1.20$). Regarding financial reasons ($M=3.39$; $SD=1.25$), 42.1% reported that these were important or very important, 38.6% reported that they were moderately important, and 17.5% reported that they were not important or not important at all.

Table 4: SACEQ Motivations for Attending a Historically Black University Section Results (Items 6a-6g)

Item	Percentage (N=57)	M	SD
6a. Attending an HBCU		2.56	1.04
Not Important at All	21.1		
Not Important	17.5		
Moderately Important	49.1		
Important	8.8		
Extremely Important	3.5		

6b. Academic Programs		4.02	.98
Not Important at All	1.8		
Not Important	3.5		
Moderately Important	24.6		
Important	29.8		
Extremely Important	38.6		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
6c. Athletic Programs		4.20	.90
Not Important at All	0.0		
Not Important	3.5		
Moderately Important	21.1		
Important	26.3		
Extremely Important	47.4		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
6d. Social Environment		3.54	1.07
Not Important at All	7.0		
Not Important	3.5		
Moderately Important	36.8		
Important	33.3		
Extremely Important	19.3		
6e. Location		3.57	1.20
Not Important at All	8.8		
Not Important	5.3		
Moderately Important	31.6		
Important	26.3		
Extremely Important	26.3		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
6f. Family Member is an HBCU Alum		2.20	1.20
Not Important at All	35.1		
Not Important	29.8		
Moderately Important	17.5		
Important	10.5		
Extremely Important	5.3		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
6g. Financial Reasons		3.39	1.25
Not Important at All	10.5		
Not Important	7.0		
Moderately Important	38.6		
Important	17.5		
Extremely Important	24.6		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		

SACEQ Frequency and Type of Activities in College Section Results

The frequency and type of activities in college section was organized into two subsections, in-season and out-of-season. In terms of time spent on academically-related tasks in-season ($M=2.48$; $SD=.89$), 12.3% reported spending five or fewer hours per week, 38.6% reported spending 6-10 hours per week, 36.8% reported spending 11-15 hours per week, and 8.8% reported spending 16-20 hours per week. Related to time spent at team practices in-season ($M=2.64$; $SD=.97$), 14.0% reported spending five or fewer hours per week, 26.3% reported spending 6-10 hours per week, 36.8% reported spending 11-15 hours per week, and 19.3% reported spending 16-20 hours per week. Regarding time spent on workouts (individual or team) in-season ($M=2.22$; $SD=1.00$), 26.3% reported spending five or fewer hours per week, 31.6% reported spending 6-10 hours per week, 28.1% reported spending 11-15 hours per week, and 7.0% reported spending 16-20 hours per week.

In terms of time spent on social activities in-season ($M=1.95$; $SD=.88$), 35.1% reported spending five or fewer hours per week, 38.6% reported spending 6-10 hours per week, 19.3% reported spending 11-15 hours per week, and 5.3% reported spending 16-20 hours per week. Regarding time spent on personal hobbies in-season ($M=2.02$; $SD=1.05$), 36.8% reported spending five or fewer hours per week, 31.6% reported spending 6-10 hours per week, 21.1% reported spending 11-15 hours per week, 3.5% reported spending 16-20 hours per week, and 3.5% reported spending 21 or more hours per week.

Regarding time spent on academically-related tasks out-of-season ($M=2.69$; $SD=1.09$), 15.8% reported spending five or fewer hours per week, 21.1% reported spending 6-10 hours per week, 43.9% reported spending 11-15 hours per week, 8.8%

reported spending 16-20 hours per week, and 7.0% reported spending 21 or more hours per week. In terms of time spent at team practices out-of-season ($M=2.16$; $SD=1.08$), 36.8% reported spending five or fewer hours per week, 22.8% reported spending 6-10 hours per week, 29.8% reported spending 11-15 hours per week, and 8.8% reported spending 16-20 hours per week. Related to time spent on workouts (individual or team) out-of-season ($M=2.39$; $SD=1.10$), 22.8% reported spending five or fewer hours per week, 36.8% reported spending 6-10 hours per week, 22.8% reported spending 11-15 hours per week, and 14.0% reported spending 16-20 hours per week.

In terms of time spent on social activities out-of-season ($M=2.34$; $SD=1.00$), 21.1% cited spending five or less hours per week, 36.8% cited spending 6-10 hours per week, 28.1% cited spending 11-15 hours per week, and 10.5% cited spending 16-20 hours per week. Related to time spent on personal hobbies out-of-season ($M=2.51$; $SD=1.05$), 17.5% reported spending five or less hours per week, 31.6% reported spending 6-10 hours per week, 31.6% cited spending 11-15 hours per week, 12.3% reported spending 16-20 hours per week, and 3.5% reported spending 21 or more hours per week.

Table 5: SACEQ Frequency and Type of Activities in College (Hours Per Week) Section Results (Items 13a-13e and 15a-15e)

Item	Percentage (N=57)	M	SD
13a. In-Season Hours Spent on Academically-Related Tasks		2.48	.90
5 or less	12.3		
6-10	38.6		
11-15	36.8		
16-20	8.8		
21 or more	1.8		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
13b. In-Season Hours Spent on Team Practices		2.64	.97
5 or less	14.0		
6-10	26.3		
11-15	36.8		

16-20	19.3		
Did Not Indicate	3.5		
13c. In-Season Hours Spent on Workouts (Individual or Team)		2.22	1.00
5 or less	26.3		
6-10	31.6		
11-15	28.1		
16-20	7.0		
21 or more	1.8		
Did Not Indicate	5.3		
13d. In-Season Hours Spent on Social Activities		1.95	.88
5 or less	35.1		
6-10	38.6		
11-15	19.3		
16-20	5.3		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
13e. In-Season Hours Spent on Personal Hobbies		2.02	1.05
5 or less	36.8		
6-10	31.6		
11-15	21.1		
16-20	3.5		
21 or more	3.5		
Did Not Indicate	3.5		
15a. Out-of-Season Hours Spent on Academically-Related Tasks		2.69	1.09
5 or less	15.8		
6-10	21.1		
11-15	43.9		
16-20	8.8		
21 or more	7.0		
Did Not Indicate	3.5		
15b. Out-of-Season Hours Spent on Team Practices		2.16	1.08
5 or less	36.8		
6-10	22.8		
11-15	29.8		
16-20	8.8		
21 or more	1.8		
15c. Out-of-Season Hours Spent on Workouts (Individual or Team)		2.39	1.10
5 or less	22.8		
6-10	36.8		
11-15	22.8		
16-20	14.0		
21 or more	3.5		

15d. Out-of-Season Hours Spent on Social Activities		2.34	1.00
5 or less	21.1		
6-10	36.8		
11-15	28.1		
16-20	10.5		
21 or more	1.8		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
15e. Out-of-Season Hours Spent on Personal Hobbies		2.51	1.05
5 or less	17.5		
6-10	31.6		
11-15	31.6		
16-20	12.3		
21 or more	3.5		

SACEQ Academic Experiences Section Results

In response to the question about participation in one or more study groups ($M=2.77$; $SD=.89$), 33.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 47.4% reported a neutral response, and 17.6% agreed or strongly agreed. An overwhelming majority of the SACEQ participants reported attending over half of their academic classes both during their athletic season (84.2%) ($M=4.30$; $SD=.87$) and out-of-season (87.7%) ($M=4.45$; $SD=.74$). In terms of participating in one or more academically related organizations ($M=2.45$; $SD=1.12$), 45.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 29.8% reported a neutral response, and 22.8% agreed or strongly agreed.

Related to their interest in their academic courses ($M=3.95$; $SD=.77$), 77.2% agreed or strongly agreed. Regarding the presence of one or more faculty members they considered to be a mentor ($M=3.28$; $SD=1.12$), 42.1% agreed or strongly agreed compared to 24.6% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Over half (50.9%) of the SACEQ participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had positive relationships with their professors ($M=3.63$; $SD=.88$). Similarly, 59.7% reported having positive

relationships with administration/staff ($M=3.66$; $SD=.90$) and 73.7% reported having positive relationships with academic advisors ($M=3.98$; $SD=.75$).

Related to their satisfaction with their academic courses ($M=3.48$; $SD=.83$), 5.3% reported being not satisfied or not satisfied at all, 45.6% reported being moderately satisfied, and 47.4% reported being satisfied or very satisfied. In terms of satisfaction with the curriculum offered ($M=3.55$; $SD=.69$), 49.1% cited being moderately satisfied and 47.4% reported being satisfied or very satisfied. Regarding satisfaction with their academic major ($M=3.89$; $SD=.76$), 71.9% reported being satisfied or very satisfied. In terms of satisfaction with their academic performance ($M=3.67$; $SD=.90$), 63.1% reported being satisfied or very satisfied. Related to their satisfaction with their overall academic experiences ($M=3.77$; $SD=.71$), 66.7% reported being satisfied or very satisfied.

Table 6: SACEQ Academic Experiences Section Results (Items 16-25e)

Item	Percentage (N=57)	M	SD
16. Participate in One Or More Study Groups		2.77	.89
Strongly Disagree	8.8		
Disagree	24.6		
Neutral	47.4		
Agree	15.8		
Strongly Agree	1.8		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
17. Attend Over Half My Classes During My Athletic Season		4.30	.87
Strongly Disagree	1.8		
Disagree	1.8		
Neutral	10.5		
Agree	35.1		
Strongly Agree	49.1		
18. Attend Over Half My Classes Out of My Athletic Season		4.45	.74
Disagree	1.8		
Neutral	8.8		
Agree	31.6		
Strongly Agree	56.1		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		

19. Participate in One Or More Academically-Related Organizations		2.75	1.12
Strongly Disagree	10.5		
Disagree	35.1		
Neutral	29.8		
Agree	14.0		
Strongly Agree	8.8		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
20. Interested in Academic Courses		3.95	.77
Disagree	5.3		
Neutral	15.8		
Agree	56.1		
Strongly Agree	21.1		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
21. Have One or More Faculty Mentors		3.28	1.12
Strongly Disagree	5.3		
Disagree	19.3		
Neutral	28.1		
Agree	28.1		
Strongly Agree	14.0		
Did Not Indicate	5.3		
22. Positive Relationships with Professors		3.63	.88
Strongly Disagree	1.8		
Disagree	3.5		
Neutral	38.6		
Agree	35.1		
Strongly Agree	15.8		
Did Not Indicate	5.3		
23. Positive Relationships with Administration/Staff		3.66	.90
Strongly Disagree	1.8		
Disagree	7.0		
Neutral	29.8		
Agree	43.9		
Strongly Agree	15.8		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
24. Positive Relationships with Academic Advisors		3.98	.75
Disagree	1.8		
Neutral	22.8		
Agree	49.1		
Strongly Agree	24.6		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
25a. Satisfaction with Courses Offered		3.48	.83
Not Satisfied at All	3.5		
Not Satisfied	1.8		
Moderately Satisfied	45.6		
Satisfied	38.6		

Very Satisfied	8.8		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
25b. Satisfaction with Curriculum Offered		3.55	.69
Not Satisfied	1.8		
Moderately Satisfied	49.1		
Satisfied	38.6		
Very Satisfied	8.8		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
25c. Satisfaction with Current Major		3.89	.76
Not Satisfied	3.5		
Moderately Satisfied	22.8		
Satisfied	52.6		
Very Satisfied	19.3		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
25d. Satisfaction with Academic Performance		3.67	.90
Not Satisfied at All	1.8		
Not Satisfied	8.8		
Moderately Satisfied	22.8		
Satisfied	49.1		
Very Satisfied	14.0		
Did Not Indicate	3.5		
25e. Satisfaction with Overall Academic Experiences		3.77	.71
Not Satisfied	3.5		
Moderately Satisfied	28.1		
Satisfied	54.4		
Very Satisfied	12.3		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		

SACEQ Athletic Experiences Section Results

Results from the athletic experiences section revealed that 78.9% reported participating in mandatory team activities ($M=4.25$; $SD=.89$), 66.7% reported participating in voluntary team activities ($M=3.93$; $SD=.90$), and 59.7% reported participating in most of the team games ($M=3.67$; $SD=1.24$). A majority of the SACEQ participants (84.2%) reported being dedicated to their team ($M=4.30$; $SD=.83$). In terms of relationships within the Athletics Department, 68.5% reported having positive relationships with their coaches ($M=3.93$; $SD=.84$), 66.7% reported having positive

relationships with the athletic staff ($M=3.93$; $SD=.82$), and 59.6% reported having positive relationships with the Athletic Department academic support staff ($M=3.82$; $SD=.87$).

Related to their satisfaction with the time they spent on athletics ($M=3.96$; $SD=.73$), 75.4% reported being satisfied with the time spent on athletic participation. In addition, 50.9% reported being satisfied with their playing time ($M=3.42$; $SD=1.27$), 56.1% reported being satisfied with their role on the team ($M=3.54$; $SD=1.18$), and 68.5% reported being satisfied with their athletic performance ($M=3.88$; $SD=.97$). Overall, 68.5% reported being satisfied with their athletic experiences in college ($M=3.88$; $SD=.95$).

Table 7: SACEQ Athletic Experiences Section Results (Items 26-33e)

Item	Percentage (N=57)	M	SD
26. Participate in Mandatory Team Activities		4.25	.89
Strongly Disagree	1.8		
Neutral	19.3		
Agree	29.8		
Strongly Agree	49.1		
27. Participate in Voluntary Team Activities		3.93	.90
Disagree	5.3		
Neutral	28.1		
Agree	35.1		
Strongly Agree	31.6		
28. Participate in Most of the Team Games		3.67	1.24
Strongly Disagree	8.8		
Disagree	7.0		
Neutral	24.6		
Agree	28.1		
Strongly Agree	31.6		
29. Dedicated to My Athletic Team		4.30	.83
Strongly Disagree	1.8		
Neutral	12.3		
Agree	36.8		
Strongly Agree	47.4		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		

30. Positive Relationships with Coaches		3.93	.84
Disagree	3.5		
Neutral	28.1		
Agree	40.4		
Strongly Agree	28.1		
31. Positive Relationships with Athletics Staff		3.93	.82
Disagree	1.8		
Neutral	31.6		
Agree	38.6		
Strongly Agree	28.1		
32. Positive Relationships with Athletics Academic Support Staff		3.82	.87
Disagree	3.5		
Neutral	36.8		
Agree	33.3		
Strongly Agree	26.3		
33a. Satisfaction with Time Spent on My Athletic Participation		3.96	.73
Not Satisfied	1.8		
Moderately Satisfied	22.8		
Satisfied	52.6		
Very Satisfied	22.8		
33b. Satisfaction with Playing Time		3.42	1.27
Not Satisfied at All	12.3		
Not Satisfied	7.0		
Moderately Satisfied	29.8		
Satisfied	28.1		
Very Satisfied	22.8		
33c. Satisfaction with My Role on the Team		3.54	1.18
Not Satisfied at All	8.8		
Not Satisfied	7.0		
Moderately Satisfied	28.1		
Satisfied	33.3		
Very Satisfied	22.8		
33d. Satisfaction with My Athletic Performance		3.88	.97
Not Satisfied at All	1.8		
Not Satisfied	7.0		
Moderately Satisfied	21.1		
Satisfied	40.4		
Very Satisfied	28.1		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
33e. Satisfaction with my Overall Athletic Experiences		3.88	.95
Not Satisfied at All	1.8		
Not Satisfied	5.3		
Moderately Satisfied	24.6		
Satisfied	40.4		

Very Satisfied	28.1
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SACEQ Social Experiences Section Results

Regarding participation in social organizations on campus ($M=2.86$; $SD=1.03$), 29.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 45.6% reported a neutral response, and 22.8% agreed or disagreed. In terms of integration into the campus culture ($M=3.30$; $SD=1.08$), 47.3% reported feeling a part of the campus community. Over half (57.9%) of SACEQ participants reported attending or participating in social events at HBCU classics or rivalry games ($M=3.68$; $SD=1.04$). Regarding their engagement in social activities off campus ($M=3.47$; $SD=.98$), 45.6% reported participating in off-campus social activities on a regular basis. Related to social relationships on campus, 66.6% reported having positive relationships with students who were non-teammates ($M=3.73$; $SD=.84$), 67.2% reported having positive relationships with their teammates ($M=3.93$; $SD=.78$), 64.9% reported having positive relationships with student athletes who were non-teammates ($M=3.68$; $SD=.99$), and 43.8% reported having positive relationships with community members ($M=3.25$; $SD=1.12$).

In terms of satisfaction with the social environment ($M=3.56$; $SD=.93$), 67.9% reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the campus environment. Related to the off-campus social environment ($M=3.19$; $SD=1.06$), 42.1% reported being satisfied or very satisfied, 38.6% reported being moderately satisfied, and 19.3% reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Regarding their satisfaction with the social opportunities available at school ($M=3.56$; $SD=.85$), 56.1% reported being satisfied or very satisfied. Overall, 54.4% reported being satisfied with their social experiences in college ($M=3.60$; $SD=.82$).

Table 8: SACEQ Social Experiences Section Results (Items 34-42d)

Item	Percentage (N=57)	M	SD
34. Participate in One or More Social Organizations		2.86	1.03
Strongly Disagree	12.3		
Disagree	17.5		
Neutral	45.6		
Agree	17.5		
Strongly Agree	5.3		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
35. Feel Part of the Campus Community		3.30	1.09
Strongly Disagree	8.8		
Disagree	10.5		
Neutral	33.3		
Agree	36.8		
Strongly Agree	10.5		
36. Participate in Social Events		3.68	1.04
Strongly Disagree	3.5		
Disagree	7.0		
Neutral	31.6		
Agree	33.3		
Strongly Agree	24.6		
37. Engage in Social Activities Off-Campus on a Regular Basis		3.47	.98
Strongly Disagree	5.3		
Disagree	3.5		
Neutral	45.6		
Agree	29.8		
Strongly Agree	15.8		
38. Positive Relationships with Students who are Non-Teammates		3.73	.84
Strongly Disagree	1.8		
Disagree	5.3		
Neutral	24.6		
Agree	52.6		
Strongly Agree	14.0		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
39. Positive Relationships with Teammates		3.93	.78
Disagree	5.3		
Neutral	17.5		
Agree	56.1		
Strongly Agree	21.1		
40. Positive Relationships with Athletes who are Non-Teammates		3.68	.99
Strongly Disagree	5.3		

Disagree	3.5		
Neutral	26.3		
Agree	47.4		
Strongly Agree	17.5		
41. Positive Relationship with Community Members		3.25	1.16
Strongly Disagree	10.5		
Disagree	8.8		
Neutral	35.1		
Agree	33.3		
Strongly Agree	10.5		
Did Not Indicate	1.8		
42a. Satisfaction with Campus Environment		3.56	.93
Not Satisfied at All	3.5		
Not Satisfied	7.0		
Moderately Satisfied	31.6		
Satisfied	45.6		
Very Satisfied	12.3		
42b. Satisfaction with Off-Campus Environment		3.19	1.06
Not Satisfied at All	10.5		
Not Satisfied	8.8		
Moderately Satisfied	38.6		
Satisfied	35.1		
Very Satisfied	7.0		
42c. Satisfaction with Social Opportunities		3.56	.85
Not Satisfied at All	1.8		
Not Satisfied	7.0		
Moderately Satisfied	35.1		
Satisfied	45.6		
Very Satisfied	10.5		
42d. Satisfaction with Overall Social Experiences		3.60	.82
Not Satisfied at All	1.8		
Not Satisfied	3.5		
Moderately Satisfied	40.4		
Satisfied	42.1		
Very Satisfied	12.3		

SACEQ Demographic Section Results for Focus Group One Participants

The first focus group participants included four football and four men's basketball student athletes (see Table 11). Four of the participants were fourth-year (seniors) student athletes, two were fifth-year (seniors) student athletes, one was a second-year

(sophomore) student athlete, and one was a first-year (freshman) student athlete. In terms of family background, three participants grew up in two-parent households, one grew up in a single parent household, one grew up with one parent and a grandparent, and three did not indicate. Related to family income, one grew up in a household with less than \$9,999 annual income, two grew up in households with \$10,000-\$29,999 annual income, two grew up in households with \$30,000-\$49,999 annual income, one grew up in a household with \$70,000 or more annual income, and two did not indicate.

Concerning cumulative high school GPA, four participants reported earning between a 2.50-2.99, three reported earning between a 2.00-2.49, and one reported earning between a 3.00-3.49. With regard to the racial demographics of their high schools, four participants reported attending mixed-race high schools, two reported attending predominantly Black high schools, one reported attending a predominantly White high school, and one did not indicate. Five of the eight participants participated in two or more sports in high school.

Five of the eight participants transferred from PWIs. Among those who transferred, four previously attended a junior college. With regard to primary college choice, four participants reported that a Division I PWI was their primary college choice, one reported that a Division I HBCU was their primary college choice, two reported that their current school (a Division II HBU) was their primary college choice, and one did not indicate.

Related to academic majors in college, six participants reported being health, physical education, or recreation majors; one reported being a physical therapy major; and one reported being a special education major. Regarding professional career

aspirations, five participants reported that being a professional athlete was not their primary career goal, while three participants reported that being a professional athlete was their primary career goal. Related to cumulative college GPA, four participants reported earning between a 2.50-2.99, three reported earning between a 2.00-2.49, and one reported earning between a 3.00-3.49.

Table 9: SACEQ Demographic Section Results for Focus Group One Participants (Items 1, 3-5, 7, 8, 48-53)

Item	Percentage (N=8)	M	SD
1. College Sport Participation		1.50	.54
Football	50.0		
Basketball	50.0		
3. High School Sport Participation		6.75	4.68
Basketball Only	25.0		
Football Only	12.5		
Two or More Sports	62.5		
4. Junior College Transfer		1.50	.55
Yes	62.5		
No	37.5		
5. Primary Career Goal to be a Professional Athlete		1.63	.52
Yes	37.5		
No	62.5		
7. Primary College Choice		4.25	2.19
Current School	25.0		
Division I HBCU	12.5		
Division I PWI	50.0		
Did Not Indicate	12.5		
8. Current or Prospective Academic Major		1.00	.00
Education	100.0		
48. Family Annual Household Income⁸		2.67	1.37
\$9,999 or below	12.5		
\$10,000-\$29,999	25.0		
\$30,000-\$49,999	25.0		

⁸ Income levels were adjusted and based on findings from the following reference: DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B.D., & Smith, J. C. (2011). U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports. *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010*. U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC. pp. 60-239.

\$70,000 or above	12.5		
Did Not Indicate	25.0		
49. Family Background		3.60	3.58
Mother and Father	37.5		
Mother and Grandmother	12.5		
Single Parent (No Indicator)	12.5		
Did Not Indicate	37.5		
50. Estimated High School GPA		2.75	.71
2.00-2.49	37.5		
2.50-2.99	50.0		
3.00-3.49	12.5		
51. High School Racial Demographics		2.29	.95
Predominantly Black	25.0		
Predominantly White	12.5		
Mixed	50.0		
Did Not Indicate	12.5		
52. Classification/Year in School		3.63	1.41
First Year	12.5		
Second Year	12.5		
Fourth Year	50.0		
Fifth Year	25.0		
53. Estimated College GPA		2.75	.71
2.00-2.49	37.5		
2.50-2.99	50.0		
3.00-3.49	12.5		

SACEQ Demographic Section Results for Focus Group Two Participants

The second focus group interview included four men's basketball players (see Table 12). Among the four participants, two were first-year (freshman) student athletes and two were second-year (sophomore) student athletes. Three of the four participants grew up with a single mother and one participant grew up with both parents. Related to family income, two participants grew up in households with annual incomes between \$50,000-\$69,999, one participant grew up in a household with an annual income between \$30,000-\$49,999, and one participant grew up in a household with an annual income between \$10,000-\$29,999.

In terms of high school GPA, one participant reported earning between a 2.50-2.99, two reported earning between a 3.00-3.49, and one reported earning between a 3.50-4.00. Two of the participants attended predominantly Black high schools, one attended a predominantly White high school, and one attended a mixed-race high school. All four participants participated in two or more sports in high school. All participants attended the current HBU immediately after high school. Three of the four participants reported that a major Division I PWI was their primary college choice and one participant reported that a Division I HBCU was his primary college choice.

Regarding academic majors, all participants were Health and Physical Science majors. More specifically, one participant was a computer science major, one was a mathematics major, one was a criminal justice major, and one was a biology major. Related to career goals, only one of the four participants cited being a professional athlete as his primary career goal. With regard to cumulative college GPA, two participants reported earning between a 2.50-2.99 and two reported earning between a 3.00-3.49.

Table 10: SACEQ Demographic Section Results for Focus Group Two Participants (Items 1, 3-5, 7, 8, 48-53)

Item	Percentage (N=4)	M	SD
1. College Sport Participation		2.00	.00
Basketball	100.0		
3. High School Sport Participation		10.50	2.65
Two or more sports	100.0		
4. Junior College Transfer		2.00	.00
No	100.0		
5. Primary Career Goal to be a Professional Athlete		1.75	.50
Yes	25.0		
No	75.0		

7. Primary College Choice		2.50	1.00
Division I HBCU	25.0		
Division I PWI	75.0		
8. Current or Prospective Academic Major		4.00	.00
Health and Physical Sciences	100.0		
48. Family Annual Household Income⁹		3.25	.96
\$10,000-\$29,999	25.0		
\$30,000-\$49,999	25.0		
\$50,000-\$69,999	50.0		
49. Family Background		1.75	.50
Mother and Father	25.0		
Single Mother	75.0		
50. Estimated High School GPA		4.00	.82
2.50-2.99	25.0		
3.00-3.49	50.0		
3.50-4.00	25.0		
51. High School Racial Demographics		1.75	.96
Predominantly Black	50.0		
Predominantly White	25.0		
Mixed	25.0		
52. Classification/Year in School		1.50	.58
First Year	50.0		
Second Year	50.0		
53. Estimated College GPA		3.50	.58
2.50-2.99	50.0		
3.00-3.49	50.0		

SACEQ Demographic Section Results for Focus Group Three Participants

The third focus group, comprised of five football student athletes (see Table 13), included three first-year (freshman) and two second-year (sophomore) student athletes.

Two participants grew up with both parents, one participant grew up with a single mother, and two participants did not indicate information about their family background.

⁹ Income levels were adjusted and based on findings from the following reference: DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B.D., & Smith, J. C. (2011). U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports. *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010*. U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC. pp. 60-239.

Related to annual household income, one participant reported growing up in a household that earned \$50,000-\$69,999, two participants reported growing up in households that earned \$30,000-\$49,999, and two participants reported growing up in households that earned \$10,000-\$29,999.

Two participants reported earning high school GPAs between 3.50-4.00, two earned between 3.00-3.49, and one earned between 2.50-2.99. In terms of the racial demographics of their high schools, two participants attended predominantly Black high schools, two attended predominantly White high schools, and one attended a mixed-race high school. All five participants participated in two or more sports in high school. All five participants enrolled in the current HBU after high school and therefore did not transfer from a junior college or PWI. In terms of primary college choice, two participants reported that their current school (a Division II HBU) was their primary college choice, one reported that a Division I HBCU was their primary choice, one reported that a mid-major Division I PWI was their primary choice, and one reported that a major Division I PWI was their primary choice.

Related to academic majors, one participant was a special education major; one was a biology major; one was a computer science major; one was a health, recreation, and physical education major; and one was psychology major. Only one participant reported that being a professional athlete was his primary career goal. With regard to cumulative college GPA, three participants reported earning 2.50-2.99, one participant reported earning 2.00-2.49, and one reported earning a 1.99 or below.

Table 11: SACEQ Demographic Section Results for Focus Group Three Participants
(Items 1, 3-5, 7, 8, 48-53)

Item	Percentage (N=5)	M	SD
1. College Sport Participation		1.00	.00
Football	100.0		
3. High School Sport Participation		13.60	4.39
Two or more sports	100.0		
4. Junior College Transfer		2.00	.00
No	100.0		
5. Primary Career Goal to Be a Professional Athlete		1.80	.45
Yes	20.0		
No	80.0		
7. Primary College Choice		4.20	2.68
Current School	40.0		
Division I HBCU	20.0		
Division I PWI	40.0		
8. Current or Prospective Academic Major		2.60	1.52
Education	40.0		
Arts and Social Sciences	20.0		
Health and Physical Sciences	40.0		
49. Family Background		1.33	.58
Mother and Father	40.0		
Single Mother	20.0		
Did Not Indicate	40.0		
48. Family Annual Household Income¹⁰		2.80	.84
\$10,000-\$29,999	40.0		
\$30,000-\$49,999	40.0		
\$50,000-\$69,999	20.0		
50. Estimated High School GPA		4.20	.84
2.50-2.99	20.0		
3.00-3.49	40.0		
3.50-4.00	40.0		
51. High School Racial Demographics		1.80	.84
Predominantly Black	40.0		
Predominantly White	40.0		

¹⁰ Income levels were adjusted and based on findings from the following reference: DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B.D., & Smith, J. C. (2011). U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports. *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010*. U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC. pp. 60-239.

Mixed	20.0		
52. Classification/Year in School		1.40	.55
First Year	60.0		
Second Year	40.0		
53. Estimated College GPA		2.40	.89
1.99 or below	20.0		
2.00-2.49	20.0		
2.50-2.99	60.0		

SACEQ Reliability Results

Reliability analyses were conducted on the following three SACEQ constructs: 1) academic experiences, 2) athletic experiences, and 3) social experiences (see Table 7). Based on the Cronbach's alpha reliability results, each construct reflected strong item covariance, which indicated that the items adequately measured the intended concept (Churchill, 1979; Hinkin, 1998; Nunnally, 1978).

Table 12: SACEQ Reliability Results

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha
Academic Experiences Scale (items 16-25e)	.860*
Athletic Experiences Scale (items 26-33e)	.856*
Social Experiences Scale (items 34-42d)	.933*

*Note.**= Indicates the value was above the recommended Cronbach's alpha of .70 for internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). However, this number should be viewed with caution since the items were not analyzed concurrently and an appropriate factor analysis has not yet been conducted on this instrument (Cortina, 1993).

SACEQ Correlation Results

Correlation results revealed no statistically significant relationship between any of the SACEQ subscales (academic experiences, athletic experiences, and social experiences) and estimated college GPA. However, a moderately positive correlation

was found between academic experiences and athletic experiences ($r=.381$, $p<.001$).

Thus, it can be inferred that there is an association between level of positive academic experiences and positive athletic experiences. Similarly, correlation results indicated a moderately positive correlation between academic experiences and social experiences ($r=.662$, $p<.001$), suggesting an association between level of positive academic experiences and positive social experiences. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between athletic experiences and social experiences.

Table 13: SACEQ Correlation Results

Constructs	Pearson Correlation (r)
1. Academic Experiences Scale (items 16-25e) and Estimated College GPA (item 53)	.154
2. Athletic Experiences Scale (items 26-33e) and Estimated College GPA (item 53)	-.066
3. Social Experiences Scale (items 34-42d) and Estimated College GPA (item 53)	.166
4. Academic Experiences Scale (items 16-25e) and Athletic Experiences Scale (items 26-33e)	.381**
5. Academic Experiences Scale (items 16-25e) and Social Experiences Scale (items 34-42d)	.662**
6. Athletic Experiences Scale (items 26-33e) and Social Experiences Scale (items 34-42d)	.239
<i>Note.</i> **=Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)	

Section III: Focus Group Themes

A Sense of Connection

The first research question of this study focused on identifying the motivations for attending an HBU among Black male student athletes. In response to this inquiry, the

most salient theme among the participants' responses was, "a sense of connection." This theme referred to the participants' positive perceptions of acceptance and belonging at NCU. Tyler, a second-year football player, described how the environment at NCU was a primary reason he chose to attend:

I always wanted to attend an HBCU, and I attend Northern Central because it's closer to home, and I'm used to being around African Americans and . . . I enjoy being around . . . my own race.

Unlike at PWIs, where Black male enrollment is lacking, HBCUs provide a culturally empowering and supportive educational environment for Black males because the critical mass of Black students, faculty, administrators, and staff understand their sociocultural backgrounds (Allen, 1986; Fleming, 1984; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010). Mason, a fourth-year basketball player, described how his perception of the environment at NCU motivated him to attend:

I think it's more just a sense of connection, because you're around, you know, people that you're familiar to, like your skin color, how they talk, how they act, your sense of connection with everybody.

Beyond the shared bonds of race and ethnicity, Mason described the cultural connection at NCU as incorporating common forms of communication and behavior. Participants also highlighted how family members influenced their feelings of connection at an HBCU. Kevin, a second-year basketball player, described how family influenced his decision to attend NCU. "I wanted the historically Black college experience. And my brother told me it would be a real good experience. So, I came down."

Similarly, Myron, a second-year basketball player, explained the influence of a family member who convinced him to attend NCU because of its nurturing educational environment:

Well, when Auntie bragged about how she had attended an HBCU, and she wanted me to, you know, have all the type of experiences that she had when she had attended when she was there. She was just, “Ah, you know you need to go here. You need to go here. So, I considered, you know, it wasn’t my first choice. I considered going to a predominantly White school.

Even though, Myron initially wanted to attend a PWI, his aunt’s advice persuaded him to attend an HBCU.

Maurice, a first-year basketball player, explained that friends were his primary reason for choosing to attend NCU:

Well, it kind of had something to do with my friends. I had a bunch of friends go to HBCUs also . . . I didn’t plan on going to one. But they all said I should go to one, because it will be a great experience for me and be around other people. So, I just told them I would give it a try.

In addition to family and friends, coaches also conveyed the message that Black male student athletes would be supported and valued holistically at NCU. Stevie, a first-year football player, described how his coaches convinced him that NCU was the right place for him:

[T]he reason I came to the HBCU was because the coach, I felt like they wanted me to be here. I felt like it was going to be a family if I came out here. Like

they're going to take care of me. They're going to look out for me and stuff like that. Overall, I just like being here.

These collective comments reveal how participants' social networks of family, friends, and mentors possessed stronger ties with HBCUs compared to PWIs. As a result, the participants viewed NCU as an extension of their previous connections with family and friends.

Also related to the theme of "a sense of connection" is the fact that several focus group participants had transferred to NCU from a PWI. Each of the transfer students expressed how they felt more welcome and accepted at NCU than at their previous institutions. For example, Bobby, a fourth-year basketball player, described the difference in campus cultures between the PWI he previously attended and NCU:

I transferred from Maple Ridge College [a junior college PWI], about two hours away from here. It's like population like 1,500, but it's predominantly white and small-time country town . . . you actually feel like out of place really. So, it was like we was the outcasts of the group. Everybody know who we was. Wherever we went we was the basketball team. So, being down here [at NCU] is just like back home.

For Bobby, the lack of Black student enrollment at the PWI contributed to his feelings of isolation. In contrast, at NCU the critical mass of Black students and caring faculty, administrators, and staff signaled to him that he was accepted, welcomed, and valued (Allen, 1985, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975).

Phillip, a first-year football player, transferred from a major Division I PWI. He described the differences in how his professors treated him at each institution:

I went to Woodbridge [a major Division I PWI] before I came here. Like if you was to tell a professor a reason why you missed the test, or a reason why you didn't pass, or anything like that, they're just gonna look at it as an excuse, because they don't really understand where you came from and the situations you deal with. But if you tell the teacher here [at NCU] . . . most likely they know you don't just do it all the time. Like, they are pretty much understanding where you're coming from.

According to Phillip, the professors at the major Division I PWI were not empathetic to the unique challenges he faced as a Black male student athlete. In contrast, his NCU professors understood his responsibilities as a student athlete and were more willing to work with him. Collectively, all focus group participants both transfer and non-transfer students, expressed a perceived "sense of connection" at NCU prior to enrollment, which ultimately convinced them to attend.

You're Not Alone When You Come to an HBCU

The second research question related to understanding the overall college experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The emergent theme among the participants' responses was the notion that "you're not alone at an HBCU," which related to feelings of belonging at NCU. Myron described his overall experiences at NCU by talking about his comfort level with his peers:

I think it's more of a sense of pride thing that draws you to the HBCU, because you don't feel like you're just out there alone . . . you feel like they're the same type of things that you see, other people see.

Myron's comments reflect the unique role HBCUs serve among institutions of higher education. HBCUs provide quality educational experiences in a culturally empowering environment for Black students regardless of their academic preparedness, test scores, socioeconomic status, or environmental circumstances (Allen & Jewel, 2002; Kim, 2002; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Nettles & Perna, 1997; Palmer & Gasman, 2008).

Mal, a first-year football player, also explained his sense of belonging at NCU:

I felt like when it comes to that, it's like you're not alone when you come to an HBCU. You're always going to have that, that support, or that backbone to help you with everything. But if you just need books, you go to your coach. Your coach can get you the books. If you tell your professor that you don't have a book for a particular class, they're going to work with you. It's not like you're going to be left out in the cold or anything.

Mal provided examples of how students at NCU receive support from the faculty and staff. These individuals displayed an ethic of care towards the participants, which contributed to their positive experiences in college. Several participants noted that the presence of caring Black professors enhanced their overall experiences in college. For example, Leonard, a second-year basketball player, highlighted his professors when he talked about his overall experiences in college: "I just like the atmosphere. Like you're surrounded by people like you, professors like you, people like you. That's all it really is to me."

The participants also noted that several of their professors were NCU alumni. Therefore, the professors were able to connect with participants on multiple levels (e.g.,

common cultural and educational backgrounds). Bobby described how his professors were able to relate to his experiences as a college student at NCU:

My college experience here has been great, from sports to academics to off campus. I really enjoy an HBCU, but like they say, the teachers are more understanding because, like, they know what you're going through. So, it's really more hands on with us.

Zane, a first-year football player, also expressed the value of the caring professors at NCU. "I feel that the professors here at an HBCU, nobody wants you to fail. So that's the best part about going to a HBCU."

These comments reflect how important faculty-student interactions are in the overall college experiences of Black male student athletes. Beyond interactions with their professors, participants also described how the overall campus environment at NCU facilitated their positive experiences in college. Shelton, a fourth-year football player, expressed the positive nature of his overall experience at NCU:

I'm glad I made the decision to come here. Class has been great. I've had a high GPA ever since I've been in school. Like he said the social life here makes stuff go by faster, you know. You've got something outside football or basketball or class . . . you can get your mind off of everything.

Shelton highlighted how the environment at NCU enhanced both his academic and social experiences in college. Moreover, Shelton described how the social environment at NCU contributed to his psychosocial adjustment in college. Thus, the social environments both on and off campus influenced the participants' overall positive experiences in college.

Related to the theme, “you’re not alone at an HBCU,” was the participants’ consensus that one of the best parts of attending an HBU is participating in homecoming. Historically, homecoming events at HBCUs have served as a site for Black cultural empowerment, expression, and unity (Archer & Watson, 2005). Danny, a fourth-year basketball player, described the unique environment at NCU during homecoming:

I can’t speak for every school, but I know at Northern Central you have a basketball homecoming and you also have a football homecoming. Both of them still be pretty much the town be shut down [sic] . . . Knowing that you’re a part of that, it feels real good.

Danny described how the local community is involved in the production of homecoming and how this collaboration makes the event even more engaging. Kevin provided details of the fervor at NCU during homecoming:

People might be here at 7 o’clock in the morning for football homecoming. I mean they’re already out there tailgating, sitting there waiting. I mean, the strip out here be like under passage way up here be filled with booths [sic] . . . all out HBCU homecoming is probably like the best homecoming.

Kyle, a second-year football player, echoed similar sentiments when describing the various events surrounding an HBCU homecoming:

There’s nothing like a homecoming at an HBCU. Because all the alumni come out, people from out from neighboring cities come out. Like the whole town shut down . . . It’s like this long strip will be full of vendors selling things. You have fraternities, sororities coming back out. And it’s like former players and alumni, they’ll come out and want to meet you and talk to you about your experience.

Given that a majority of HBCUs are located in predominantly Black communities, the connection between the institutional missions and the uplift of the local community are often congruent, enhancing the sense of community and cultural empowerment among students who attend HBCUs (Davis, 2006). HBCU homecomings usually involve a week full of activities, such as step shows, fashion shows, parades, battle of the band performances, music concerts, and tailgating (Moore, 2012). Phillip articulated the group consensus about the impact of HBCU homecoming when he said:

I can't speak for another school, but here like if you never, ever visited a school ever before and you plan on attending an HBCU, if you came during a homecoming, most likely you're going to want to go here.

Overall, participants expressed positive feelings about their overall college experiences at an HBU. In particular, participants benefitted from being in an environment with a critical mass of Black students from similar backgrounds, as well as supportive professors who expressed an interest in students' holistic development. Participants also highlighted the social opportunities on and off campus as well as the annual homecoming events as factors that contributed to their overall positive experiences in college.

You're Their Children

The second part of research question two relates to understanding the academic experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The most salient theme among participants' responses about their academic experiences at NCU was the idea that "you're their children," referring to the nurturing faculty who demonstrated an ethic of

care toward the participants. Danny, a transfer student from a junior college PWI, explained how NCU professors treated him differently than those at his previous school:

[L]ike my professors, they're willing to work with you. They know that you have a busy, I mean a real busy schedule. So, they're willing to work with you, they're willing to take the time out to get with you the information that you missed . . . they're willing to take the time out to give you time to make it up . . . So, that's one thing I can say that since I've been at my other two schools [a junior college and Division III PWI] I haven't had.

According to Danny, professors at NCU understood and accommodated the hectic schedules of student athletes, rather than penalizing him like the professors at his previous PWI. Similarly, Kyle described his experiences with his professors and their understanding of his commitments as a student athlete at NCU:

I really enjoy my professors. It's good. If I need help, I go and talk to them and tell them my situation if I need extra time on an assignment, or anything like that. But most of the time they're understanding. They'll talk to me. If I talk to them straightforward and be honest with them.

Johnny, a first-year basketball player, explained how his professors worked with him when he had to miss class due to an out-of-town basketball game:

For the most part, all my professors, you know, easy to talk to, easy to get along with. You know, if you have a problem with anything, you know, you can go to them, and they'll give you help or advice. You know if you need, maybe, say like with us, you know, we're out of town. So, you know, they're understandable

about that. If you've got any extra time to turn something in, they're going to give it to you for the most part.

Stevie reported a similar experience when he missed a test because he was traveling for a football game, and noted how his professor accommodated his schedule:

My relationship with my professors, we all cool for the most part. Like if I'm missing anything, they'll work with me. Because they understand, I got other things going on beside class, like football. And like say, for instance . . . we have an away game or something like that. I'll come back, I might miss a test or something. They'll work with me. Let me make it up. That's cool.

The participants expressed the benefits of having professors who were sensitive to their unique schedules as student athletes. They felt their professors wanted them to succeed and did not want to penalize them for participating in intercollegiate athletics. In addition to professors' understanding of their schedules as student athletes, participants also felt they could talk to their professors about personal issues beyond academics or athletics. For example, Phillip poignantly explained how he felt comfortable going to his professors when he had personal troubles:

It's like when we say they understand us, they really do . . . basically, all of the teachers that I've got graduated from Northern Central so, they really do understand where we be coming from . . . it's really not just all about school. You can talk with them about whatever. Like if something happened with your life, or some situation you're going through, a lot of them will talk to you about that other than just class.

Myron also expressed how the professors at NCU demonstrated an ethic of care beyond the typical expectations for a professor:

[I]n a sense a lot of my professors will tell you like, you're their children. So now, you get that sense of feeling that they'll help me when I mess up, if I really need something I'm going to come see you, but they'll be there. And also, they don't ask you too much. But they do ask that you do your work. Just being that, you know, we all student athletes. They will adjust to help you.

These comments illustrate what Hirt et al. (2006) have described as "othermothering," whereby faculty and staff at HBCUs view their students as their own children and provide them with guidance and support beyond academics (p. 217). The faculty at NCU expressed an ethic care for the participants in this study by understanding their busy schedules as student athletes, meeting with them outside of class, and engaging in meaningful conversations with them about topics aside from academic tasks.

It's All About Time Management

The third part of research question two related to understanding the athletic experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The participants described the unique challenges they faced with responsibilities as students and as athletes. In light of these realities, the participants expressed the theme "it's all about time management." Kevin described the challenges he faced in his first year at NCU as a student athlete:

From my experience it's hard . . . my freshman year, it was hard coming here for practice at 7 p.m., getting out at 11 p.m., then going to your room, maybe get done, take a shower about 12 a.m. Then you still got to work that needs to be done. And you might have class at 8 o'clock. I mean it's hard . . . But it's all

about time management. Because at the end of the day, you're a student athlete.

Student comes first.

During the season, student athletes have to attend classes, mandatory study halls, athletic practices, film sessions, training sessions, and games. The participants expressed how the time commitment associated with their intercollegiate athletic participation limited the amount of the time they could apply towards their academics. Shawn, a fourth-year football player, expressed the challenges he faced in balancing his responsibilities as a student athlete:

I mean it's just like any other time you played athletics in school it's going to take away from like times you need to study, but you've got to balance that, because you're a student athlete. So, you've got to work your way around it. You've got to make your schedule work so you can do your schoolwork, and at the same time, make it on time, and practice and games or wherever you've got to be at.

In addition, to taking time away from their academic responsibilities, some participants also described how their athletic commitments affected their social experiences. Danny explained how being a student athlete limited the amount time he spent on social activities:

I mean from my experience, I'm not saying it was hard, but it was like you have to adjust to what your environment is now. Because you can't sit and hang with your friends. Because you're not a normal student. You're a student athlete. Like you do more extracurricular stuff than anybody else at your school. So, like he said, it's really time management.

Rather than view these challenges as obstacles, these participants embraced their responsibilities as student athletes as a way to enhance their time management skills. Moreover, in response to the question about how they identified themselves (e.g., student first/athlete second, athlete first/student second, neutral, or neither), a majority of the participants described themselves as students first and athletes second. Mal explained how his identity as a student first and athlete second influenced his priorities:

I'm a student athlete. 'Cause the student part is always going to come into play. Like you're always going to have class, and you're always going to have homework. Like I remember when we was on the road, and I think we were playing Leland College, I had a paper due that same night that we got checked into a hotel. So, I really don't have time for like social you know social time or trying to talk to a girl or something. I'm basically like doing homework, doing papers, or I'm somewhere doing work. I'm always doing work.

The participants cited the eligibility requirements as a primary source of reinforcement for their student first/athlete second identities. Shelton explained how maintaining his eligibility provided him with a level of discipline regarding his time management skills:

For me I think academics kind of disciplined me a bit. You know, at the end of the day if you don't get your grades, you can't play. So, whether it be practice or whatever you got to do, like game late nights you got to be up studying till you go to early morning meetings . . . because academics is the foundation for everything you doing. And that should always be first.

The participants were motivated to excel in their classes because they wanted to maintain their eligibility to participate in athletics. Myron also expressed how maintaining eligibility was an important part of his experience as a student athlete.

It's very tough being a student athlete. It didn't kind of hit me until after I actually got on the team like how hard it's going to be to have practice. And then you got classwork to do. Start your day all over again and have to do it all over. It's very hard, I mean, you know, but you have to put work in your academics. If you don't put work in your academics, then you become ineligible and you can't play.

Overall, the participants identified the main challenge they experienced as student athletes as balancing their responsibilities as both students and athletes. Yet instead of viewing these challenges as constraints, the participants embraced their roles as students first and athletes second and adopted effective time management strategies to ensure that they performed well both on and off the field.

It's Easy to Get Along With People

The fourth part of research question two pertained to understanding the social experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. In response to the question about their social experiences, the most salient theme was, "it's easy to get along with people here," referring to the friendly environment at NCU exhibited by students, faculty, administrators, and staff. Bobby described why he felt NCU was a positive social environment for him:

Social life is going well. I enjoy it here at Northern Central. I mean it's easy to get along with people. Easy to talk to because they probably come from the same place you come from. So, it's all right.

The fact that Bobby was surrounded by Black students who could relate to his background enabled him to establish meaningful relationships. Lorenzo also expressed his positive feelings about his social life at NCU: "My social life is outstanding, man . . . everybody knows me. I know everybody." Unlike at many PWIs, the high number of Black students enrolled at HBCUs fosters an environment that celebrates and values Black culture rather than marginalizing and stigmatizing it.

Participants also highlighted how they surrounded themselves with a positive group of peers. Kyle described his friendships at NCU:

[M]y social experience has been great so far . . . the people I hang out with, they're a positive group . . . I help them with the academics. They help me with academics. They help me with my athletics. I help them with whatever they are involved in. So, it's basically we push each other to be successful.

Kyle attributed his positive social experiences to the fact that he and his friends were committed to helping each other grow. Myron discussed how his relationships with his professors contributed to his positive social experiences in college:

I say meeting and having relationships with people on campus actually helps you throughout your college career. Because, you know, you might have a relationship with maybe like a professor or something, they might can help you get to where you need to be. So, I think having a relationship with the right type of people can help you make college life easier.

A primary benefit of attending an HBCU for Black students is the supportive environment, in which everyone works together to achieve collective success. Tyler explained how his academic and social experiences influenced each other:

[M]y social life, the academics, they kind of coexist, because I get to meet other students, and they help me with certain things, and I help them with certain things . . . like some subjects I'm good at, some subjects they're good at. So, that's how I get know people . . . now that I've become an upperclassman, I get to network with other people who are graduating. And when I graduate . . . I get to build a legacy . . . So I enjoy my social life. I just like, I just go out and enjoy being at an HBCU.

HBCUs operate under the belief that “it takes a village,” referring to the notion that individual success is rooted in collective upbringing and support (Palmer & Gasman, 2008, p. 52). In addition to being around peers with similar backgrounds, some participants also highlighted that they enjoyed interacting with people from diverse backgrounds at an HBU. Maurice described his social experiences with students from backgrounds different from his own:

[W]hen you meet new people, you can see how different people think. Because everybody don't think the same, especially at an HBCU. Like when you talk to different people . . . it can be helpful to you and then you get more involved with different people in your school campus.

Contrary to the myth that all students at HBCUs are the same, Maurice points out how the diversity at NCU enhanced his social experiences in college. By meeting people from different backgrounds, he was motivated to become more involved in campus activities.

Over half of the focus group participants were involved in campus organizations. Danny, Mason, Bobby, Shawn, Leonard, and Kyle were members of a Black male mentor organization called the Institute for Black Males¹¹ (IBM). This organization was designed to develop Black male college students through their involvement in leadership, service, and mentorship in the local community. Bobby and Shelton were involved in a religious organization for student athletes. Lorenzo was a member of an academic organization within his major. In addition to being a member of IBM, Leonard was also a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAAACP) at NCU. Tyler participated in volunteer hours at the local high school and middle school for his academic major. Overall, the participants cited being in an environment with peers and professors who related to their backgrounds, as well as being involved with campus organizations, as key elements that contributed to their positive social experiences at NCU.

Just Sticking With It

The third research question pertained to identifying the key influences associated with the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at an HBU. In response to this question, the most salient theme from the participants' responses was, "just sticking with it." This theme referred to the participants' perception that their academic achievement was largely predicated on their personal motivation and self-accountability.

Phillip explains key influences related to his academic achievement, highlighting the need for Black male student athletes to possess personal motivation to achieve their academic goals:

¹¹ In an effort to ensure anonymity, a pseudonym was used for the campus organization.

I think, basically, just sticking with it . . . once you hit that first bump, you just got to get over that . . . just keep trying . . . If you go to class everything should work out. You should graduate. Because the teachers are going to see that you're trying, and they'll work with you. I don't really know no teachers here that if you go to class every day and try, they'll just like fail you. They wouldn't do that. They'll try to find another way for you to pull up your grade.

Myron also identified motivation as a key influence on his academic achievement:

I'd say motivation also. Motivation to stay in school. You know more the what ifs . . . what if you fail out? What you going to do then? You know. Or more like real-life situations. Like before as far as being a student athlete what happened if you don't go pro? What you going to do then? I think it's more like a motivation factor. You know, you need this. It's really going to help you. That has helped me.

Although several participants expressed aspirations to play professional sports, they recognized that having a well-rounded education as an alternative plan for their future was important. Moreover, as student athletes the participants were accustomed to hard work, dedication, and accomplishing goals, so in their minds the key was to transfer that same mentality to their academic achievement. Mason articulated this sentiment:

The thing is just self-accountability. You know what I'm saying, having it, knowing you got to grind. You're going to be in a grind for all of the longevity or however long you're in school . . . you gotta want it. Just like you want athletics . . . you got to do the same thing with your academics. So, it's just self-accountability.

In addition to accountability, several participants also expressed the importance of having goals, writing them down, and working towards those goals. Bobby explained the value of identifying personal goals:

My big thing is you got to have a plan, got to know what you want basically. If you have a plan and goals and write it down, you probably most likely will accomplish if you see it every day. Like, "I want this. I want this to happen." You'll probably get done.

According to Bobby, to maximize your opportunities at a place like NCU you must have a clear idea of what you want in life and where you want to be. Once you have this vision, Bobby explained, writing down these goals provides a sense of accountability and direction, which is essential in accomplishing goals. Similarly, Kevin described how he sets goals for himself and works towards them: "I agree with Bobby. I mean I set goals for myself . . . I set short-term goals, long-term goals, and the majority of the time if you work at it, grind, keep motivated, you're gonna to reach your goal. And that's what I do."

The participants also cited three institutional support services they felt were effective in improving their academic achievement. The three institutional support services were Study Tables, peer tutors, and mandatory study hall. The group agreed unanimously that NCU's Study Tables program was the most effective academic support program on campus. Study Tables is an institution-wide academic support service that provides a central location on campus where all students can access academic assistance, complete academic tasks, and study in a quiet environment. Mason expressed his views

about the effectiveness of Study Tables: “I feel like this year was helpful . . . Like they really follow up on us . . . just monitoring like what we’re doing . . . like our progress...”

The participants believed the monitoring of their academic progress by the Study Tables staff was beneficial to their academic achievement. Moreover, the Study Tables program provided students with the opportunity to engage with peer tutors, instructors, and classmates in a quiet environment conducive to completing academic tasks. Zane explained the positive impact of having both peer tutors and professors available at the Study Tables:

Just the interaction. Because the peer helpers getting close to everyone.

Basically, pointing out the problem . . . they point to them, letting them know what you don’t understand, break it down every step of the way. Sometimes you have professors and they have like a white board, a small white board. And they write the problem out on the white board and ask you to solve it. They basically help you out.

The Study Tables program was offered year-round and every day of the week. This was particularly useful for the student athletes given their hectic schedules. Tyler highlighted the benefit of having Study Tables offered throughout the week:

Yeah, Sunday through Sunday they have key subjects, math, reading, history, all subjects. Also, the teachers come. And some students come by to help anyone who needs help. I think it’s a great thing for a Black school to have teachers come help students out.

The Study Tables program is a concerted institutional initiative created to increase students’ academic achievement by providing access to one-on-one peer tutoring, an

atmosphere conducive to studying, out-of-class interactions with instructors, and involvement with peer study groups. Previous research on college student development has found that these factors contribute to students' academic achievement and psychosocial development (Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Peer tutors were another institutional academic support service the participants identified as beneficial. NCU provided peer tutors at the Study Tables program as well as at the mandatory study halls. Peer tutoring is an effective support service because it allows students to collaborate on academic tasks in meaningful ways. For example, in response to a question about what institutions of higher education could do to improve Black male student athletes' academic achievement, Bobby cited more peer tutors as a possible remedy:

I'd say more peer tutors. Because like most of the time a professor they'll teach you something the way they know how to do it. That's the way they want it done. Most likely, if my classmate will tell me, "OK, you can do it like this," and I probably could understand it better from another person my age.

Several other participants agreed with Bobby's statement, noting that their peers were an excellent source for academic assistance because the peer tutors could explain complex concepts in ways the participants could understand them.

Another institutional academic support service the participants cited as useful was the mandatory study halls. The NCU Athletic Department requires all student athletes to attend study hall for 10 hours per week both in season and out-of-season. Phillip described the monitoring procedure associated with the mandatory study halls:

I don't know about last year; all I know is now they keep track of the day we go, how many hours we go for that day, and then they calculate them up for that week. So they know when we go and they know how long we're in there. I don't know if they did that last year, but they do that now.

Similar to Mason's comments about the monitoring procedure at the Study Tables program, Phillip believed the monitoring within mandatory study halls increased accountability and signaled to the student athletes that their presence was valued and noticed. The policy of mandatory study halls was also highlighted in the institutional document review under the theme of an "educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program." In the focus group interviews, the participants expressed how this program provided them with a structured schedule to keep a focus on their academics. It is important to note that the study halls for both the football and men's basketball teams were located outside the main athletic facility. The intentional location of these mandatory study halls outside the main athletic facility helps integrate student athletes into the NCU campus culture with non-athletes.

In summary, the number one influence the participants felt contributed their academic achievement was their personal motivation and self-accountability. The theme "just sticking with it" epitomizes the participants' belief that their academic success was based largely on their individual effort. In conjunction with this finding, participants highlighted key institutional services that increased their level of accountability. These services included the Study Tables program, peer tutors, and the mandatory study halls. Collectively, these institutional services provided participants with an environment and a structure that were sensitive to their needs while maintaining high expectations.

Section IV: In-Depth Individual Interview Themes

Interviewee #1: Bobby

Bobby grew up in same town as his current school (NCU) with his mother, grandmother, and four sisters. His family's estimated annual household income was \$30,000-\$49,999. Bobby attended a predominantly Black high school, where his estimated cumulative GPA was 2.50-2.99. In high school, he participated on the boys' basketball and track and field teams. His primary college choice coming out of high school was a Division I HBCU. However, upon graduation Bobby attended a two-year junior college PWI on a basketball scholarship, where he earned his associate's degree before transferring to NCU. Bobby is currently a senior special education major with a reported cumulative college GPA of 2.50-2.99. He is also a shooting guard on the men's basketball team.

Research question #1 responses. The first research question of this study focused on identifying the participants' motivations for attending an HBU. In response to this question, the most salient theme from Bobby's responses was, "you don't get the social life that you get at a Historically Black College." As a Black male student athlete who attended a predominantly Black high school and spent two years at junior college PWI, Bobby had firsthand experience attending schools with vastly differently sociocultural demographics. Bobby highlighted his primary reason for choosing to attend NCU after his experiences at the junior college:

My reason for choosing a Historically Black University is just the environment around me. It's more like I have more people around with me. So, I had come from a predominantly white institution. And it feels like you're more out of

place. You really don't get the social life that you get here at a Historically Black College.

The critical mass of Black students, faculty, and staff at an HBU enhanced Bobby's comfort level and contributed to his positive college experiences. He expressed how at the junior college PWI he felt "out of place" and the environment was not welcoming to him as a Black male student athlete. He further elaborated on how he was treated differently at the junior college PWI: "At Maple Ridge [junior college PWI] it was like we was kind of like the outcasts. So, it was kind of like they know you, but they don't know you. It's kind of like they want you here, but they don't want you here."

As a Black male basketball student athlete at the junior college PWI, Bobby was in the minority based on his race and athletic status. His comments revealed how he felt the environment at the junior college PWI was primarily accepting of him because he was a basketball player, but they were not interested in getting to know him aside from his athletic abilities. He explained in more detail how the campus climate at the junior college PWI improved only when the basketball team began to excel on the court:

Yeah . . . and teachers, everybody. The faculty and staff, the teachers, the students. It was like when we first got there it was like, "I don't want y'all there." You know what I'm saying . . . my first year was kind of bumpy. We had a 17-13 record, and they didn't like us. And my second year we won the conference. We started off like 10-0. And then it started changing. Kind of like *Glory Road*.

In this statement, Bobby references the movie *Glory Road*, which documented the experiences of the first all-Black starting five at a PWI, Texas Western University, who led the school to its first national championship in 1966. In the film, the Black players

were ridiculed, discriminated against, and mistreated from the moment they arrived on campus. However, as the team began to win more games, the campus community gradually became more accepting of their presence, albeit solely based on their athletic performance.

Similar to the Texas Western University players, Bobby and his Black teammates at the junior college PWI were treated favorably only when they won basketball games. In contrast, Bobby described how the environment at NCU was different from that of the junior college PWI and explained why he chose to transfer to an HBU:

But here at Northern Central, it's more like . . . feel like home. Like everybody they love sports, and just the vibe. They'll talk to you. You can go have a conversation not just about sports, but just about everything, especially with the faculty and staff. They're more . . . like they want to get to know what you're about besides basketball and even outside of school they want to know what your life is, like what your future plans are. Maple Ridge [junior college PWI], we didn't have that teacher-student connection. Not like, I got here at Northern Central.

Bobby's comments reflect how the welcoming environment at NCU contributed to his comfort level and positive relationships with the institutional staff. He highlighted how the faculty, students, staff, and administrators at NCU demonstrated a genuine interest in getting to know him beyond his athletic abilities. These findings corroborate with the first focus group's emergent theme of "a sense of connection" as their primary reason for choosing to attend an HBU. Both implicitly and explicitly, the NCU campus community

conveyed that they valued Black male student athletes holistically rather than solely as athletes.

One of the primary reasons for conducting in-depth individual interviews for this study was to understand the personal backgrounds of Black male student athletes who attended an HBU. The researcher contends that it is imperative to understand the personal backgrounds of Black male student athletes in order to create effective support programs and services that will enhance their academic achievement and positive college experiences.

The emergent theme from Bobby's descriptions of his personal background was, "I'm going to do this for him." This theme refers to the significant role Bobby's father played in his life. Bobby described the close bond he and his dad had when he was growing up: "I hung out with him every day. He taught me a lot. He taught me a lot about girls, life . . . Me and my dad, we talked about a lot. He taught me a lot about life." Although Bobby grew up with his mother, grandmother, and four sisters, he spoke at length about how influential his father was in his life. Bobby described how his father's passing was one of the biggest challenges he faced growing up: "He died when I was 15. So, that was one of my downfalls . . . kind of like challenges in life. But all my sisters, they took care of me when I was younger . . . But now, they really don't. They let me grow up and be a man."

The loss of his father greatly affected Bobby's childhood. However, he also talked about how his mother, grandmother, and four sisters provided him with a strong support system after his father passed:

Yeah, I'm the youngest of all five . . . One of them attended, all of them graduated high school. My mom didn't graduate high school. She finished like 11th, she finished in 12th, but she had my sister, and she stopped. Two of my sisters . . . one of them has a college degree from a nursing program. And the other one is just working. I'm the only one left in college now. I was pretty much raised by my grandma, though . . . Yeah, she was a big part of my life

Despite the challenges associated with not finishing high school, Bobby's mother, along with his grandmother and sisters, worked hard to ensure that he had an opportunity to go to college. Their love for him motivated him to succeed in college. Similarly, Bobby talked about how he viewed his Dad's passing as a form of motivation:

But, then, I kind of use it as a motivation. I feel like I'm an outcast from my sisters, because he seen all them graduate from high school and do all that. But he never got a chance to see me graduate from high school. He never got a chance to see me play college ball. He never got a chance to see high school ball. I feel like I always use that as a motivation. Like, "I'm going to do this for him."

Bobby's relationship with and admiration for his Dad is a source of motivation for him as he continues to pursue his degree. In addition, the support and love he receives from his mother, grandmother, and four sisters also played a significant role in his upbringing. Understanding the family history of Black male student athletes is imperative for cultivating positive learning environments with adequate support systems for them to thrive and develop holistically in college.

Research question #2 responses. The second research question focuses on understanding the holistic experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU.

Academic experiences are one component of student athletes' holistic experiences in college. The most salient theme identified from Bobby's responses about his academic experiences in college was, "it's more tough." This theme refers to the difficulties Bobby faced in transitioning from high school to college level work. He specifically described his challenges with his former favorite subject, math:

My least favorite course was like math. It was a math class. I think it was like I want to say Trig, and Math or something like that [sic]. He [the professor] wasn't that tough. He wasn't tough as in like grading. But he was just hard to understand. You know. So, I was good in math growing up. But when I got to college, I hated it. Because it was more, it was more tough.

Bobby described his difficulty in understanding his math professor, which negatively affected his academic engagement and performance in the course. He also highlighted his previous enjoyment in learning math, but noted that after this experience he did not have the same passion for math that he had in high school:

Like growing up in high school like math was like my favorite subject. When I got to college, it was like my worst. So, I had a tough college course, math course, that I had took with Dr. Trio. He was just tough to understand. He teaches so, so far. Like he teach it just so above, he make it tough, really.

From Bobby's perspective, his math teacher taught the course at a level that was difficult for him to understand and therefore he did not perform well in the course. Understanding communication barriers (e.g., of language, vocabulary, etc.) between students and faculty is important because addressing these barriers could enhance Black male student athletes' academic achievement and experiences in college.

Another major academic challenge for Bobby was the difference between high school and college class schedules. He described the difficulty he faced with his college schedule:

The major challenges you face academically with college just basically going to class. Because in high school it was like you there. And once you're there, you're there all day. Like you got classes back-to-back-to-back. You have an hour lunch, then you're back in class back-to-back. But in college, you might have one class at eight. Then your next class doesn't start until five. Then, you don't have your mom there waking you up saying, "Go to class." And, that's the major challenge is just going to class.

Similar to many college students, Bobby had difficulty adjusting to a college class schedule. Instead of having consecutive classes as he did in high school, Bobby found that the time gap between classes and the lack of direct oversight from his mother reminding him to go to class was a challenge. Similar to the finding about the communication barrier between Bobby and his math teacher, understanding the various challenges facing Black male student athletes is helpful for creating targeted services and programs. For example, by understanding that Black male student athletes may struggle with attending class, institutions and Athletic Departments can create monitoring systems (e.g., class checkers) and incentives (e.g., requirement for playing time) to encourage students to attend their academic classes.

Another component of research question two relates to understanding Black male student athletes' athletic experiences at an HBU. In response to this inquiry, the most salient theme expressed by Bobby was, "it's our brotherhood," which referred to Bobby's

positive relationships with this teammates and coaches. Bobby described the strong bond he shares with his teammates at NCU:

[M]y relationship with my teammates, it's pretty good. It's kind of like this our fraternity. Like you have Greeks. But this is our fraternity. This is our bond. It's our brotherhood.

According to Bobby, his teammates are like his family. Their common bond of basketball not only brought them together athletically, but also provided the opportunity to establish meaningful friendships beyond playing on the court. For example, Bobby talked about how he and his teammates spent time together after practice:

[A]fter practice like we'll be in the locker room. We practice at 8 o'clock at night. So, practice will be over by like 10:30 p.m. We'll just be in the locker room and talking about nonsense til like 1:30 a.m. The coach will be up in his office, and he'll be leaving. He'll be like, "Dang, y'all still here?" "We're just chilling, Coach, talking."

This quote typifies how the bonds established in an athletic setting can carry over to relationships off the court, enhancing student athletes' overall experiences in college. Related to the theme "it's our brotherhood," Bobby also described how his relationship with his coach influenced his experiences in college:

Because like, we went to the same high school. We both from here [the town in which NCU is located]. And now he's my coach. And it's like so what you do is like reflect on both of us. You know what I'm saying. So my relationship with him is pretty deep.

As natives of the same hometown, Bobby had a strong connection with his coach. Moreover, similar to many of the NCU faculty and staff, the basketball coach was an NCU alumnus, which further strengthened his bond with Bobby and his teammates. Not only does his coach understand Bobby's experiences as a Black male student athlete, but he also has an increased investment in Bobby's success beyond athletics because it reflects on him as well.

Along the same lines, Bobby described how his coach encouraged him to finish his degree:

I think like if I wasn't a student athlete, to be honest, I don't think I would have come this far in college . . . So, I thought about like not even playing ball after junior college. But my coach he was like, he was telling me, like he keep it real. He was telling me like, most guys that just quit playing ball like they don't finish their degree. Like they just fall out and don't care about it. So I took his advice and just came home. So if it wasn't for athletics, I probably wouldn't be here.

In this instance, Bobby's coach demonstrated an interest in Bobby beyond his athletic abilities. His coach framed playing basketball as a means to earning his college degree rather than as an end in itself. The familial culture within the NCU basketball team served as a source of inspiration and motivation for Bobby and contributed to his academic persistence at NCU.

The third part of research question two relates to understanding the social experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The emergent theme from Bobby's responses to his social experiences at NCU was, "everybody wants to hang out with us." This theme referred to the popularity and likeability on campus associated with

being a basketball player. Bobby explained how being a basketball player came with a certain social status on campus:

But then again, by you being a student athlete it kind of like more people want to hang out with you. Like more people want to get to know you. So, then, it kind of like help your social life. Because a lot of guys on campus like around here like it's kind of like you have your gangs. It's not like Crips and your Bloods, but, you know, like you have a gangs where this group of people hang out with this group of people. You know what I'm saying. So, but as the basketball team is like we hang out with the basketball team. Like everybody want to hang out with us.

As on most college campuses, the social groups Bobby described are organized around affiliations such as fraternities, sororities, student organizations, athletic teams, etc. The unique part about being a basketball player, as Bobby noted, is the opportunity to connect with everyone. Student athletes represent the entire school when they are playing, so regardless of which group another student is affiliated with, all students support the athletic teams because they represent the school as a whole.

Related to the social benefits of being a student athlete, Bobby described how he was initially rejected by a girl, but his athletic status improved his standing with her:

So, but, she rejected me. But the sweet part about it is like she found out I hoop. You know what I'm saying, who I was. And like she found out who I was. She approached me the second time. She was like, "Yeah, I really wasn't trying to . . . I like you . . . you're my type now."

Initially, Bobby reported, being rejected by this girl felt like the worst social experience he had in college. However, after the same girl found out he played on the basketball team she was suddenly more receptive to him.

When asked about his best social experience in college, Bobby referenced the basketball team's annual Midnight Madness event. He described the various activities associated with the event:

But my best experience was, I got to say, last year Midnight Madness. Northern Midnight Madness it was nothing I had . . . the best thing I ever experienced in college. Because it's like you have the Greek there. You have the Passionaires¹² [Social Group on Campus] there. And you have the boys and girls basketball team. The band be there. So, it kind of like the introduction or really like who you are. And I won the three-point contest that year. It was like the best experience. I got to meet a lot of new people.

Similar to NCU homecoming, the athletic events bring the campus community together for the common cause of institutional pride. These events provide a unique sense of belonging and a heightened sense of visibility for the student athletes, which can foster positive social relationships on campus. Overall, Bobby felt that being a student athlete enhanced his social experiences at NCU and enabled him to connect with a wide range of people.

Research question #3 responses. The third question associated with this study related to identifying the key influences associated with the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at an HBU. Similar to the first focus group interview findings, Bobby cited the "Study Tables and study hall" as the primary institutional

¹² Pseudonym applied to preserve anonymity.

programs that contributed to his academic achievement and progress. He highlighted the benefits of attending Study Tables:

It helped me study, teach me study habits, and tutor me with my math classes . . .

You have your peer tutors, and you have some time you even have your professor in there . . . just like with math like the professor he'll have a certain time where he is at Study Tables. And like you could just go in there and ask any questions. Like you know how some kids be shy to ask question in class . . . But you can go in there. Here you can ask him one-on-one like, "Explain this to me," or like, "Break this down to me. I don't get it." And they'll be in there to help you out with it.

Study Tables are an institution-wide student support service offered on the main part of campus every day, including weekends. This environment provides a quiet central location for students to engage with peer tutors, study, and meet with professors one-on-one outside of class. This institutional service reflects NCU's commitment to promoting a student-first environment and providing students with the necessary support to excel academically.

Complementary to NCU's Study Tables, student athletes are required to attend study hall 10 hours a week. Bobby described how he benefitted from attending these mandatory study halls:

Study hall is a time where I used to do my online classes, because we're on computers. Like I used that to do my online classes . . . and just review my notes like what I learned that day in class.

Similar to Study Tables, study hall provides a positive learning environment where students can complete their academic tasks. Within study hall, the student athletes have access to computers and a quiet environment in which they can focus on their academic work.

Providing student athletes with this service and requiring them to attend reinforces NCU's commitment to cultivating an "educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program," whereby student athletes are students first and athletes second. In addition to the services mentioned above, Bobby also discussed how maintaining his eligibility to participate in intercollegiate athletics motivates him to excel academically:

Staying eligible to play basketball. That was one of the main focuses. Because it's like, "I'm here to play basketball, but I'm here to get a degree." So, I can use basketball to help get my degree, then it can be more easier.

These comments demonstrate that Bobby has internalized NCU's stated value of "total student development." NCU student athletes are socialized to view their athletic participation as an extension of their educational experience and as a means for them to earn a meaningful academic degree in their field of interest.

With regard to improving Black male student athletes' academic achievement, Bobby offered three recommendations. The first was to offer more course-specific peer tutors: "I think better, they can have better peer tutors. More so like graduate students as not like students that are attending the school [undergraduates]. You know. Somebody that's further with the subject." This recommendation corroborates with the findings from the first focus group interview that student athletes value and benefit from having peer tutors.

Bobby's second recommendation was to have stricter monitoring during study hall. "They can do study hall a little more, be more strict on study hall where we have like . . . monitor it a little more better." Similar to Phillip and Mason's comments from the first focus group interview, Bobby perceived the monitoring of academically related tasks as a form of institutional commitment to student athletes' academic achievement. Bobby's third recommendation referenced the notion of personal motivation:

Cause with the academics it's basically about like what you want to do with it.

You know. You can provide a lot of stuff and students still not take advantage of it. So, basically, it's on you to have to take advantage of all your resources that you have. So, that's the main thing about it.

These comments echo the first focus group's sentiments about the importance of personal motivation and self-accountability as they relate to academic achievement. Thus, according to Bobby, enhanced personal motivation coupled with effective institutional programs and services (e.g., Study Tables, study hall, course-specific peer tutors, and increased academic monitoring) can contribute to Black male student athletes' academic achievement.

Interviewee #2: Mason

Mason grew up in a small town in the same state as NCU with his two parents and two older brothers. His family's estimated annual household income was \$70,000 or above. Mason attended a mixed-race high school where his estimated cumulative GPA was 2.50-2.99. He was a one-sport (basketball) athlete in high school. His primary college choice was NCU, but he started his college career at a two-year junior college PWI on a basketball scholarship. Mason is currently a senior health, physical education,

and recreation major with a reported cumulative college GPA of 2.01-2.49. He is also the starting point guard on the NCU men's basketball team.

Research question #1 responses. The first research question in the current study focused on identifying the motivations for choosing to attend an HBU for Black male student athletes. In response to this question, Mason reported that his primary reason for attending NCU was that his father went to NCU. This theme was captured by the phrase, "people you can relate to." Mason described how his father, a person whom Mason related to on multiple levels (e.g., family and cultural background), was very influential in his decision to transfer to NCU after attending a junior college PWI for his first two years of college:

As I said earlier I went to a junior college my first two years in college. And it was really a predominantly white school (PWI). And my father, he went to Northern Central when he was in college, too. So that he kind of motivated me and pushed me to come on over here.

Mason talked about the importance of family, and particularly the role his father played in his life. The fact that his father was an NCU alumnus encouraged him to follow in his footsteps and continue the family legacy at NCU. In addition, Mason expressed how the environment at NCU was different from that of the junior college PWI he attended. He described the challenges he faced at the junior college PWI:

[O]ther than the basketball team being all black people . . . we were the only ones at that school . . . And really, after practice it was just go home. It wasn't like you had some kind of bond with the other students at school . . .

Similar to Bobby's experiences at his junior college PWI, Mason highlighted that the only Black males at the school were the athletes, and therefore they were in the minority at the school. As a result, Mason experienced a lack of social acceptance and integration at the junior college PWI, which motivated him to transfer to a school where he felt more comfortable and could enjoy more positive social experiences. He explained his motivations for transferring to NCU:

I like it for the most part, because you have more a sense of people you can talk to. And it's just a different type of people you can relate to. And you just find out different stuff, different cultures where everybody comes from and stuff like that. So, it's cool.

These comments are in stark contrast to his perceptions of the environment at the junior college PWI. In addition to Mason's father attending NCU, he felt the social environment at an HBU would be a better fit for him to experience positive outcomes academically, athletically, and socially.

Another key aspect of the current study involved understanding the personal backgrounds of Black male student athletes who chose to attend an HBU. To create effective services and programs that will improve the academic achievement and college experiences of Black male student athletes, it is imperative to understand their personal experiences prior to enrolling in college. The most salient theme expressed by Mason in relation to his personal background was the notion that he experienced a "good environment growing up." Mason explained how his family was very close and how this greatly influenced his upbringing:

So I've got two brothers and two parents, and . . . it was a good environment growing up. So they both wanted me in sports. They played sports when they were growing up. They were big on school, doing the right thing with grades and stuff. So, I didn't have problems with like doing the wrong things outside of school. My dad was strict. He kept us on the right lane and stuff.

In Mason's household, both of his parents and his two brothers participated in sports; it was simply an expectation in his family. At the same time, his parents also had high academic and behavioral expectations for Mason and his brothers. He explained how his father was very strict and how he appreciated his father's guidance. The following quote epitomizes Mason's feelings about his father:

I wanted to follow the backgrounds of him, of my parents, and all my other family members. So then, my dad being strict, it was good. Because he was, when we was young he was strict. But he was like he understood us at the same time. He understood what we were going through, because he went through the same thing we were. So, he just really kept us on the same path.

The quote "he understood us at the same time" reveals how Mason internalized his father's strict nature as a way of keeping Mason and his brothers on the right path. In addition to his father, Mason expressed how he viewed his next older brother as a role model. He described the close bond he shared with his brother: "I saw my brother as being a role model. Because he always did the right thing. So I like, that's what I need to do when I grow up." Similar to his father, his brother embodied the characteristics of a positive role model through leading by example. Not only did his brother excel in sports, but he also did well academically and exhibited positive behaviors outside of school and

off the court. Collectively, Mason's two parents and his two brothers cultivated "a good environment" for Mason during his childhood and adolescence.

Research question #2 responses. The second research question related to understanding the academic experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The emergent theme from Mason's descriptions of his academic experiences was, "it's more like they want to see you succeed," referring to the supportive faculty, staff, and administrators at NCU who demonstrated an ethic of care towards all students.

Mason described his academic experiences at his previous junior college PWI to highlight the stark differences between institutional practices at a PWI and an HBCU:

At the junior college, it was more just after class that's it. She's gone. He's gone. That's it. You really got to catch them when you can. But at the HBCU, it's more of "Did anybody have questions? You come talk to me after class. I give you my number." Give me an e-mail address. "Please, feel free to talk to me. I'm trying to help you out." It's more like they want to see you succeed, and they want to see you do better in academics and just as a person in general.

These comments support previous research that found the faculty at HBCUs to be nurturing and supportive of their students (Allen et al., 2007; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Palmer & Young, 2010). The difference between Mason's perceptions of institutional support at the junior college PWI compared to the Division II HBU reflects how the actions of institutional actors such as faculty, staff, and administrators greatly influences Black male student athletes' academic experiences, engagement, and achievement (Zilber, 2002).

When Mason was asked to identify his favorite and least favorite courses in college, he described a math course he took at NCU as his favorite and a microeconomics course he took at the junior college PWI as his least favorite:

My favorite course in college, uh, it probably would have to be some type of math course like a trig, or something. I really liked, I liked numbers. I just liked it, you know what I'm saying. Just understanding numbers, how things work out and stuff. My least favorite course, uh, let me see. It would probably have to be one of those I did at junior college. Uh, I probably have to say Micro. It might be Micro. Yeah, the economics. It can be tricky sometimes.

The fact that his favorite course was taken at NCU, coupled with his comments about how the professors at NCU expressed a genuine interest in their students' overall development, suggests that faculty-student interactions had a significant impact on his academic experiences (Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Harrison et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Another aspect of research question two focused on understanding the athletic experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. In response to this inquiry, the most salient theme from Mason's responses was, "it's a good overall experience being in college and an athlete." This theme referred to the benefits of being an intercollegiate student athlete. One of the benefits Mason highlighted was the popularity that comes with being a student athlete:

The best thing is probably that everybody knows you. But it all depends on how you take that. Because sometimes they . . . people can get an ego . . . like have

big egos about it. It all depends on how you take it. If you be humble about it, just go on with it, it'll be a good experience for you.

As a basketball student athlete, Mason was a highly visible member of the student body. Some of the most popular events on campus are held in conjunction with athletic contests (e.g., homecoming, Midnight Madness, etc.). Therefore, student athletes receive a significant amount of attention by virtue of their roles as representatives of the institution. Mason described how being a student athlete affected his overall college experience:

I think it has affected it in a good, in a positive way. Because just teachers, like everybody around the campus, they try to help you out because you're a student. So, you're doing something. You're an athlete, I mean. So, you're doing something positive with yourself. You're not just, "I'm here just doing crazy stuff." You're doing stuff yourself trying to make a positive influence for the community and everybody in general. So, I think it's a good, it's a good overall experience being in college, and being an athlete, so I like it.

A unique feature of NCU is the fact that the campus community perceives student athletes in a positive light and as role models for the local community. This positive reinforcement greatly enhanced the overall college experiences of the Black male student athletes in this study (Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Steele, 2010).

Another key part of being a student athlete involves relationships with the coaches. Mason talked about his positive relationships with his coaches at NCU as well as at the junior college PWI he attended:

[M]y junior college coaches, they helped me grow up, and the HBCU is the same. Like . . . you can just, you can talk to them about life in general. It's not even

about basketball sometimes. You just, they ask you how things are going with classes. “Is everything straight with the fam back home?” Everything, just in general.

Similar to the faculty at NCU, both of Mason’s coaches (at the junior college PWI and NCU) expressed a level of care for him as a holistic individual rather than simply as an athlete. Mason interpreted their questions about issues related to his academic progress and family as their way of caring. Mason also described the impact of his positive relationships with his teammates:

My teammates are the same way, too. So, like our relationship, I have a good relationship with everybody trying to be a team leader. So like, I try to find out different personalities with everybody, and try to mesh them together. So it’s cool, though. I have the relationship with everybody.

As the starting point guard and team leader, Mason had the responsibility of connecting with every player on the team. He expressed satisfaction with this role and discussed his efforts to bring everyone together despite their differing backgrounds. Overall, Mason appreciated his experiences as a student athlete because they afforded him the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with various people on campus including faculty, teammates, students who are non-teammates, and coaches.

The third component of research question two involved understanding the social experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The most salient theme related to Mason’s social experiences in college was, “best social experience is Homecoming.”

Similar to the first focus group interview responses, Mason cited the NCU Homecoming

as his best social experience in college. He explained why this event meant so much to him:

My best social experiences, it has to be homecoming. And just that camaraderie of being around the people you know, your African Americans, just the old alumni coming through, your president of the school being around. Like he's always just, he was a good person in general . . . it's homecoming that feeling where everything is, everything will be OK for that one week. Like you don't have to worry about nothing. It's just, it's really cool.

Mason's passion for homecoming was evident in his enthusiasm when discussing the Homecoming events. He highlighted how the cultural celebration of institutional and communal pride was uplifting to him. Everyone from the members of the community to the NCU president participated in Homecoming events. At many schools, students do not even know their university president let alone have an opportunity to meet them. But Mason described how the NCU president was friendly and genuine. This sentiment echoes Coach Ben Jobe's description of HBCU presidents as "gatekeepers" who demonstrate a sincere interest in their students' success.

In response to the question about his worst social experience, Mason could not cite any negative experiences at NCU:

Like you don't have to worry about nothing. It's just, it's really cool. But I say the worst, the worst social experience I have to say, uh, I don't know. I don't know. I don't really have a worst social experience. Everything, it's cool around here at Northern Central.

The fact that Mason could not describe a negative experience at NCU reflects the positive campus culture. When discussing his experiences at the junior college PWI, he could document a list of negative experiences ranging from feeling out of place to not being able to establish relationships with his professors. In contrast, at NCU his experiences felt like a “homecoming,” whereby he found himself in a comfortable environment with supportive faculty, administrators, staff, and peers. These sentiments reinforce the notion that HBCUs serve as “villages” in which Black students are treated as valued family members (Palmer & Gasman, 2008, p. 52).

Research question #3 responses. The final research question for this study focused on identifying key influences related to the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The main theme that emerged from Mason’s responses related to this inquiry was, “it’s an all-around effort at an HBCU.” This comprehensive effort was cultivated through coordinated institutional actions.

Mason highlighted several key individuals at NCU who helped him overcome his academic challenges:

Talking to some older peers. My coaches, too, they tried to let me know what I need to be doing to try to stay on course. So, they helped me out a lot early on trying to get it balanced. But it still, you still got to go through it. Just understand what was needed to be done.

The consistent theme throughout Mason’s descriptions of his relationships at NCU is the notion that everyone cares for one another. This familial environment has been a cornerstone for HBCUs since their inception (Allen et al., 2007; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Hirt et al., 2008; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Within these environments, each

student's success is highly valued because it represents the success of the larger collective: the Black community.

In response to the question about key influences on his academic achievement, Mason described a series of institutional staff and services that provided assistance:

My advisors, they try to email me a lot, try to make sure I'm doing the right things in classes. Whatever class I need to be taking to graduate. And the study groups we go to, Study Tables. They do a good job, too. So, it's an all-around effort over here at HBCU to try to get you to get your work done.

The coordinated efforts of all institutional faculty, staff, and administrators sent a clear message to the students that the institution was vested in their holistic development and overall success in life. The explicit message through formal policies (e.g., mission statements) and informal practices (e.g., advisors emailing students) reinforced NCU's goals of providing a "comprehensive educational experience" for "total student development" with an "educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program."

Furthermore, in response to the question about recommendations for improving the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at institutions of higher education, Mason provided the following suggestions:

I think peer tutors . . . they can put it in another way where you can where you figure it out if you don't understand what your professor is talking about . . . I know finances are tough, but just offering more resources for the students even though they might, they might try to, it might not be enough now, but just offering, have more resources for the students to grab and take hold of . . .

Scholarships, too . . . And in offering specific tutors, too, for like courses you might have to be taking.

Peer tutors appeared to be a valuable academic support service that participants perceived as beneficial. In addition, previous research on Black student attrition has highlighted financial challenges as one of the major reasons for lack of Black student persistence in the academy (NCAA, 2011c; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010). Mason also added final comments and advice for aspiring Black male student athletes seeking to navigate the post-secondary educational terrain:

I think as an athlete we have to, we have to just make ourselves mentally more aware of like just the process. It's more than just being an athlete. It's about being a greater student and a greater person. It's more than just, it's just basketball. After basketball, after athletics, it's going to go and you got to move on to something else. So, I think we've got to broaden our horizons and understand like it's, we got to be better as a people.

Mason has clearly internalized NCU's value of "total student development." His experiences at NCU have provided him with tremendous learning opportunities, valuable social networks, and the professional skills necessary for him to be successful beyond his college years. Collectively, NCU demonstrates an "all-around effort" in the form of intentionally designed institutional policies that are reflected in day-to-day commitments and informal practices of faculty, staff, and administrators. These policies and practices have contributed to the academic achievement and positive college experiences of Mason and his fellow Black male student athletes in this study.

Interviewee #3: Kyle

Kyle is second-year (sophomore) football student athlete majoring in health, physical education, and recreation. He grew up in a single-parent household in a small rural town in another part of the state where NCU is located. His family's estimated annual household income is \$30,000-\$49,999. Kyle attended a mixed-race high school where his estimated cumulative GPA was 2.50-2.99. While in high school, he was a two-sport athlete in football and soccer. His primary college choice was a mid-major Division I PWI. Currently, Kyle is the starting kicker on the football team and reported a cumulative college GPA of 2.50-2.99.

Research question #1 responses. The first research question of this study focused on identifying the motivations for attending an HBU among Black male student athletes. The most salient theme among Kyle's responses regarding his motivations for attending an HBU was, "there's nothing like an HBCU community." This theme refers to Kyle's desire to further his education at a school with a vibrant social environment. Kyle described his initial motivation for attending college:

[C]oming out of high school, going into my senior year I wasn't really particular about which school I was going to. It was more of as long as I get out of the house and further my education. So, it's . . . whether it's Army, whether it's getting a job, or whether it's going to college. My main thing was I wanted to further my education. I wanted to see what the college experience is like. I always heard there was nothing like college. So, I always wanted to experience that.

As a high school senior, Kyle was indecisive about his college plans, but he knew he wanted to further his education and experience a college atmosphere. He elaborated on why he chose to attend NCU specifically:

But as far as choosing an HBCU, I enjoy Northern Central because of the pride, community, and organizations. There's nothing like an HBCU homecoming. There's nothing like an HBCU community. And there's nothing like HBCU pride.

Kyle's main motivation for choosing to attend an HBU related to the rich culture and communal atmosphere he had observed. He recognized the unique aspects of an HBCU, such as the community-based homecoming events. These events symbolize Black cultural heritage and remain a cornerstone of HBCUs (Archer & Watson, 2005; Davis, 2006; Douglas, 2012; Harris, 2012).

Kyle also referenced a friend who attended NCU and encouraged him apply. "I came here because I had a friend who went here and played football, and he told me that if I wanted to play, which is something I wanted to do, I should come here to try out. I have a chance and so far I've been successful." In addition to wanting to play football, Kyle was influenced by his friend's positive experience at NCU. These comments reiterated the emergent focus group theme of "a sense of connection" regarding the participants' strong social capital ties to the HBCU network. In this study, social capital refers to the meaningful relationships the participants possessed with their family members, peers, and individuals associated with their institution (e.g. faculty, administrators, staff, and alumni). These meaningful relationships contributed to their sense of connection and commitment to the institution. Kyle mentioned that he had

applied to three PWIs, but he chose to attend NCU because of the campus culture, his friend's recommendation, and the opportunity to play intercollegiate football.

Another primary purpose for conducting in-depth individual interviews for the current study was to ascertain a better understanding of the personal backgrounds of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The most salient theme related to Kyle's personal background was, "my mother and father." This theme refers to the significant role Kyle's parents had in his life. Kyle grew up with his mother in a small rural town in the same state as NCU. His father lived out of state in another part of the country. Even though he grew up with his mother, he talked at length about how his relationship with his father greatly influenced him. Kyle described how his relationships with his parents evolved as he became older:

[W]hen I was younger, I was more close to my mother, because she was the one that was taking care of me, running me around to my different athletic programs. But as I got older, only a man can raise a man. So, I started to become more closer to my dad and understanding how to be a man, and understanding my role in society and stuff like that.

When asked about challenges he faced growing up, Kyle cited growing up with a single mother as a young Black male as the biggest challenge he faced. This challenge was not related to the quality of his upbringing with his mother, but rather to his desire to have a father figure in his day-to-day life. As Kyle explained:

One major challenge was I didn't . . . growing up with my mother it was, it was hard at times, because being a man I always wanted to do what a man wants to do. And her way of doing things were different compared to my dad. Because seeing

as how I was getting older, I felt like I was more like my dad. So, I wanted to do whatever he was doing, but my mom wouldn't allow that. So, that was one thing.

I didn't really know which way I should go, my mom's way, or my dad's way.

As Kyle was growing up, he wanted to spend more time with his father and follow in his father's footsteps. He found this difficult because his mother had different expectations for him and because his father lived out of state. He described further how his father's absence affected his childhood:

[S]eeing as my dad was in a different state, I didn't always have a father figure there. So, me, I was always looking for that big brother role or father figure type of person in my life, someone I could go talk to, someone I could hang out with besides my mom. Even though we always had discipline, we didn't always agree. I felt like I wanted a male opinion on the situation from somebody that I could relate to.

Kyle desired to have a male in his life on a day-to-day basis to help him learn how to be a man. When asked how he dealt with this challenge, he described his parents' influence:

[B]eing mature. My mother and my father, they were able to raise me to be a good young man. They taught me lessons. They helped me to learn things on my own, and it's more about respect, and not only respecting myself but respecting others, and having respect for my community.

Kyle's comments reflect the significant role both his parents played in his upbringing.

These findings are critical for institutional staff because to connect with student athletes like Kyle and facilitate their overall development in college, it is vital to consider their lived experiences. Both of Kyle's parents greatly influenced his childhood experiences

and growth. However, his decision to attend NCU was primarily related to his positive perceptions of the campus culture, his connection to the institution through his friend, and his desire to play football at the intercollegiate level.

Research question #2 responses. The second research question focused on understanding the holistic experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The first component of this research question focused on understanding the participants' academic experiences. The emergent theme identified from Kyle's descriptions of his academic experiences was, "time management." This theme refers to the challenges Kyle faced in balancing his various responsibilities at NCU. When asked about his least favorite class in college, Kyle highlighted the time commitment related to his science class:

My least favorite I probably have to say science classes, because not the fact that it's hard, or it's difficult; it's the fact that it's so much information that you have to learn. And sometimes you have to sit down and take about an hour, hour-and-a-half just to study for one class.

In addition to his athletic responsibilities, Kyle described the significant amount of time he spent on his academic tasks. His comments reinforced the emergent theme from the institutional document review regarding NCU's "educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program," which guided student athletes to be students first and athletes second. Kyle described his biggest challenges related to his academic experiences as:

Studying, time management. Being in college, there's a lot of distractions of females, friends, outside programs, athletic events, and all of the above. It's like

you, as a, as a teen, or a young person, you want to go out . . . But you've got to be mature, and you got to know you're here for college. You're here for school. You're here to get an education and get a degree.

Despite the various distractions he encountered as a student athlete at NCU, Kyle recognized that his primary role at NCU was to acquire an education and earn his college degree. Kyle's comments reflected the institutional congruency between NCU's institutional actions (e.g., institutional mission statements), institutional actors (e.g., Black male student athletes), and institutional meanings (e.g., Black male student athletes' perceptions of their roles as student first and athletes second) (Zilber, 2002). Understanding the challenges facing Black male student athletes, such as the distractions Kyle outlined, will enable institutional policymakers to create targeted programs to improve Black male student athletes' academic achievement and college experiences.

The second component of research question two pertained to understanding how Black male student athletes at an HBU make meaning of their athletic experiences. The most salient theme associated with Kyle's athletic experiences was, "we're one big happy family." This quote typified Kyle's positive relationships with his coaches and teammates. In response to a question about his relationships with his coaches, Kyle described the close bond he shared with them:

I have a pretty good relationship with my coaches. To me growing up I've learned a lot about coaches. To me, if coaches are yelling on you, yelling at you, always on your back, always telling you to do something better, they want you to succeed. They see something in you, and they want to see you at your fullest potential.

These comments indicated that Kyle perceived the intense coaching style of his current and previous coaches as a reflection of their caring for him. In his mind, when his coaches were hard on him it meant they believed in his ability to succeed and were simply demanding nothing less than his best efforts. Athletic Departments and institutions need to understanding the impact of certain coaching styles so coaches can incorporate the best approaches for maximizing Black male student athletes' self-efficacy and development.

When asked about his relationships with his teammates, Kyle described his bond in familial terms. "I love my teammates. Every one of my teammates is like a brother to me. We're all one big happy family. Because we all push each other to do better. We all are there, basically, one big support group." Similar to Bobby and Mason, Kyle felt a very close bond with his football teammates and this bond had a positive impact on his overall college experiences. Kyle highlighted how he and his teammates served as support systems for each other and encouraged each other both on and off the field. One of the benefits of participating in intercollegiate athletics is the establishment of meaningful relationships with teammates. Student athletes spend a significant amount of their time with their teammates, which enable them to establish meaningful relationships based on their shared experience.

When asked how his athletic experiences influenced his academic experiences, Kyle replied that he felt student athletes were treated just like any other student and he appreciated this treatment. Discussing his experiences as a student athlete at NCU, he noted:

[S]ome might say that . . . student athletes get special attention. For me, I've never really seen that hands-on. I mean it's more like everyone is treated fairly . . . I don't feel like you need to help me more just because I'm not here every day, or just because I have some certain things.

Kyle highlights the NCU faculty's treatment of student athletes as students first. Kyle valued this institutional norm. In his mind, to be treated differently because he was an athlete would be problematic. Thus, the institutional climate at NCU cultivated strong athletic relationships for Kyle while reinforcing his role as a student first and athlete second.

The third component of research question two related to understanding how Black male student athletes at an HBU make meaning of their social experiences in college. The most salient theme from Kyle's response regarding his social experiences at NCU was, "you're known on campus," which referred to the popularity associated with being an intercollegiate student athlete. Athletics is one of the most visible entities on campus. As a result, student athletes enjoy an increased level of exposure and visibility based on their participation in sports. Everyone from the student body to the local community recognized student athletes.

Kyle explained how he benefitted from the attention he received as a football student athlete:

[Y]ou're known around campus more. And it's not only on campus, it's also in the community. Say Homecoming, like I say you have a lot of people come from outside of the college to come and see the Homecoming game. So, it's like you see little kids walking around. They look at you and, "Oh, that's that I want to be

when I get older.” So, it’s like a warming, I feel like I’m somebody’s hero. I feel like if I did it, then they can do it, too.

A primary benefit of being highly visible is the fact that people view student athletes as role models. Kyle valued the way that children who attended NCU’s Homecoming looked up to him and his teammates. This feeling contributed to Kyle’s sense of belonging at NCU and his overall positive social experiences in college.

When asked about his best social experiences in college, Kyle referenced time spent with friends after football games:

The best social experiences are after games, going to my friends and talking to them about the game, or talking to them about my day, or practice, or whatever. And then me getting their feedback, and me giving them feedback, basically having a big conversation.

In addition to connecting with the local community, Kyle talked about how being a student athlete also provided a means to connect with his peers. Athletic events at HBCUs serve as cultural gatherings and institutional celebrations (Archer & Watson, 2005). Similar to Bobby and Mason, Kyle felt that being a student athlete provided him with a level of popularity that enhanced his social experiences in college.

Research question #3 responses. The third research question focused on identifying the key influences associated with the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The emergent theme from Kyle’s responses related to this question was, “hanging around the right people.” According to Kyle, the best thing an aspiring Black male student athlete can do to excel academically is to surround himself

with positive, supportive, and focused peers. Kyle explained how he interacted with his peers at NCU:

Hanging around the right people . . . my friends, they'll say, "What classes do you have tomorrow? What test do you have tomorrow?" They're willing to help me study for those tests. I want to help them with their classes. So, it's more of a support group. Not only are they a support group, they'll help you succeed.

These sentiments echoed Kyle's remarks about the bond he shared with his teammates.

The emphasis on support, both academically and personally, is a major influence on Kyle's academic achievement and overall attitude toward school. Peer relationships have been identified in previous college student development literature as critical for students' successful transition to college and persistence through graduation (Astin, 1993a, 1993b; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993).

When asked how institutions of higher education could address the problem of low academic achievement among Black male student athletes, Kyle cited the quality of instruction in the classroom. He recommended that professors apply a more hands-on approach to working with students:

I would say more hands on. More hands-on teaching . . . But some students, they're about on the same level as, as learning as other students are. Because in high school you probably had special ed kids, and CE [non-honors] classes, and AP classes, and stuff like and honors classes, and stuff like that. In college, they don't have, they actually have one setting . . . everybody learns at a different pace. Like if there's more hands-on teaching, everybody would be able to succeed and pass at their rate.

According to Kyle, professors should adapt their pedagogical approaches to assist each student with their academic achievement. Similar to Bobby and Mason's recommendations about NCU's Study Tables, Kyle also suggested that Black male student athletes benefit from personalized, one-on-one instruction. Thus, the combination of having a positive and supportive peer group along with concerted pedagogical strategies sensitive to each student's needs would support Black male student athletes' academic achievement.

Interviewee #4: Marcus

Marcus is a first-year (freshman) football student athlete majoring in computer science. He grew up in a two-parent household along with his older sister in a large city in another part of the state in which NCU is located. Marcus' family has an estimated annual household income of \$50,000-\$60,000. He attended a predominantly White high school where his estimated cumulative GPA was 3.50-4.00. In high school, he was a multi-sport athlete, participating in football, track and field, weightlifting, and wrestling. His primary college choice was NCU (a Division II HBU). Currently, he is a linebacker on the football team and reported a cumulative college GPA of 2.50-2.99.

Research question #1 responses. The first research question focused on identifying the motivations for attending an HBU among Black male student athletes. The emergent theme from Marcus' response about his motivations for choosing to attend an HBU was, "I feel like it's home." This theme refers to his positive perception of the holistic opportunities (e.g., academic, athletic, and social) available at an HBCU. Marcus explained that he initially wanted to attend a PWI, but the athletic opportunity afforded to him by NCU changed his mind:

[I]t wasn't really like I wanted really want to go to a historical black college. I wanted to go to like a predominantly white school . . . my main reason [for choosing NCU] was where can I play football . . . and where I can feel like I'm best fitted at, like where can I feel like it's home.

Although attending an HBCU was not his first choice, Marcus felt he wanted to attend a school where he could play intercollegiate football and feel supported by the institutional staff, such as coaches and faculty. NCU provided him with that opportunity. Marcus explained the influence of his coaches on his decision to attend NCU:

I felt like Northern Central is home because of the coaches. They made it feel like it was home. Like our head coaches are from my hometown. And, basically, it just made like a home feeling experience, and like the people around here it just, you know, they felt like family.

Similar to Bobby, Mason, and Kyle, Marcus had a social connection to NCU prior to his enrollment. He explained how having people he knew and trusted--the NCU coaches--reach out to him made him feel wanted and accepted at NCU. The reference to NCU as a family is a common description of the institutional environment at HBCUs for Black students (Harris, 2012).

In addition to identifying the motivations for attending an HBU, the purpose of conducting in-depth individual interviews is to understand the personal backgrounds of Black male student athletes who attended an HBU. With regard to Marcus' personal background, the theme "family was hard on me" was the most salient. This theme reflects Marcus' perceptions of how his family applied discipline to his upbringing to

ensure his later success both on and off the field. Marcus described his family background and upbringing:

I live with both parents up until I was about 15. My parents divorced, and both of my parents had jobs. And my dad graduated from the University of Overbrook [major Division I PWI]. My mom, she went to Strong College [Division II HBCU].

Despite his parents' divorce, Marcus described feeling supported and loved by both parents. Marcus explained in detail the influence his father and uncle had on his upbringing:

Oh, my family was hard on me. Like my dad, um, he came from a football background. My uncle, he played for Warriors [professional football team]. He played at East Valley [major Division I PWI]. And he always wanted me to like play football . . . he always said, "Get a degree" . . . try to be better than him and don't pay for school . . . he's like, "You love football, but also use it as a tool."

Growing up in a football family, Marcus was greatly influenced by his father and uncle, both of whom played football at competitive levels. In addition, Marcus discussed how his uncle encouraged him to use football as a means to further his education and attain upward mobility. These positive male role models were important aspects of Marcus' personal background and the source of his core values (e.g., hard work, determination, and a belief in the value of education).

When asked about challenges he faced growing up, Marcus cited his difficulty in figuring out what he wanted to do with his life after high school. He described how he faced this challenge in high school:

A major challenge I faced growing up was trying to figure out where I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. Did I want to play basketball? Did I want to wrestle? Did I want to play football? Like, could I really focus in school because, like, I wasn't really like a school type of person growing up until I really got in high school, and I just started to focus. And once I finally found that mindset, that's when I started clicking.

As a multi-sport athlete in high school, Marcus was determined to be an intercollegiate athlete. However, he was concerned about which sport he would have the best opportunity to excel in, as well as the challenges associated with being a student athlete in college. He elaborated on the key influence that helped him change his high school mindset:

[T]here was like a coach, his name was Coach Elroy. He was like one of my mentors. Like he told me, I had potential because I had a good work ethic. All I had to do was focus. So, like, he just told me what I needed to do and how I needed to do it. And he kind of showed me the way through high school.

According to Marcus, Coach Elroy helped him prioritize his responsibilities as a student athlete. Marcus also explained that based on Coach Elroy's advice, he enrolled in more challenging classes in high school to prepare for college:

I took classes that I needed to. I passed them, made A's and B's. I tried a challenging course. And, like, teachers at my high school, they were hard and strict on me. But, you know, they got me there.

Coach Elroy's influence reflects the significant impact coaches can have on student athletes' academic self-efficacy and performance. Understanding the key influences in

student athletes' lives can provide institutional staff with vital information about ways to support and facilitate their holistic development in college. From these findings, it is clear that athletics were a major part of Marcus' life and his decision to attend NCU. Using this information, institutional staff can promote athletics as a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

Research question #2 responses. The second research question aimed to understand how Black male student athletes at an HBU make meaning of their holistic experiences in college. Answering this question first entailed understanding the participants' academic experiences. In response to questions regarding his academic experiences, the emergent theme from Marcus' responses was, "it's challenging." This theme referred to the difficulty of his academic courses and the accompanying time commitment involved in fulfilling his academic tasks.

Marcus began by highlighting his least favorite courses in college and discussing how he adjusted his approach to these courses:

[W]ell really in college, like if you want to succeed your most challenging course has to be the one you hate, but you have to like it. In order to pass, you have to like it. So, I despise math, but I got to love it. And computer science, because I'm a computer science major.

Even though computer science was his major, he cited it as one of his most challenging courses. Marcus identified specific aspects of the course that made it difficult for him:

The course curriculum . . . It's overall math . . . Yeah, it's challenging. It's just not something that you can read over for five minutes and, oh, you got it. You got

to sit down every night and study for at least 30 minutes to get it right. You got to keep going over the same problem over and over until you get the steps down.

Marcus noted that spending the time necessary to complete his math assignments was challenging because he had a full schedule every day as a student athlete. In spite of this challenge, Marcus was determined to excel in his academic tasks.

The second aspect of research question two related to understanding how Black male student athletes at an HBU perceived their athletic experiences. Marcus' overall feelings about his athletic experiences were captured in his quote, "it's just a fun experience." This theme referred to the positive impact of being a student athlete in college, including the unique opportunity to represent your school in athletic competitions. Marcus described how he felt different from other students at NCU as a student athlete:

I think the best thing about being an athlete in school is like many people are not doing what you're doing every day. It's like, it feels like some sort of accomplishment . . . So, I think like overall playing college, college sports is just fun . . . It's just a fun experience.

Marcus felt a sense of accomplishment as a student athlete at NCU because he fulfilled responsibilities as both a student and an athlete, which only a select number of individuals do at NCU. He also highlighted his relationships with his coaches as contributing to his positive athletic experiences in college:

The coaches, they'll look out for you. Like they'll call you and make sure like if you're doing the right thing. And if you're not doing the right thing, they're going to find you. They're going to find a way. And with my teammates, like

some of us will have the same class. So if we need help with a different subject, or even the same class that we're in, they can help us . . . we need a book . . . they'll give you the book.

Similar to Bobby, Mason, and Kyle, Marcus expressed how his coach demonstrated an ethic of care towards his overall development. According to Marcus, his coach wanted to make sure he was not only excelling in the classroom, but also that he was an upstanding citizen whose actions reflected positively on the institution as well as the athletic program.

In response to a question about the impact of his athletic experiences on his academic and social experiences in college, Marcus described both positive and negative impacts:

[S]tudent experience like academic-wise, it's more structured. But social-wise, well, with my experience, with the major I have and everything, like you don't really have time to socialize. Like you don't have time to hang out. You got to go to the room. You got to study, because you only have so many hours of sleep. You're going to lose sleep.

Marcus' athletic involvement provided him with a structured schedule, which allowed him to fulfill his responsibilities as a student and as an athlete. Pascarella, Edison, Hagedorn, Nora, and Terenzini (1996) identified intercollegiate athletic participation as one factor that helped college students develop an internal locus of attribution for academic success in their first year. On the other hand, the significant time commitment associated with athletics limited the amount of time Marcus could spend on social activities. Nonetheless, when asked if he would be a student athlete again if he had the

chance, his answer was a resounding yes. “Yeah, it’s probably the best time of your life when you play college sport.”

The third aspect of research question two focused on understanding how Black male student athletes at an HBU interpreted their social experiences in college. The most salient theme from Marcus’ responses about his social experiences at NCU was, “being known.” This theme referred to the benefits associated with being a student athlete in college, including increased popularity on campus and in the local community. Marcus described his feelings about being a student athlete at NCU:

It helped tremendously. Because if you’re in school and I mean playing college sport, any college sport, people are going to come up to you automatically because they see you at a game or they see you out on the field practicing. So it’s like a boost, basically.

Marcus and his teammates were revered by the general student body because they were student athletes. This popularity facilitated meaningful relationships with his peers. Marcus explained how students would recognize him as an athlete by his physique and how that contributed to positive social interactions:

[T]hey can tell by your physical [physique . . . Like, “Oh, he plays football. Yeah, he plays football.” The main thing is going to come out of their mouth when you just walk up to some random person. “Oh, you play football?” “Yeah.” Or, “Yeah, you play football. I’ve seen you out there one day.” . . . Then when they come to the game they’ll be like, “Good game. Good game.”

In this way, Marcus experienced a level of acceptance from his peers simply because he was a football student athlete at NCU. Overall, Marcus attributed his positive social

experiences in college to his athletic participation, which enhanced his social status and recognition on campus as well as in the local community.

Research question #3 responses. The third research question aimed to identify the key influences associated with the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The most salient theme related to Marcus' perceptions of influences associated with Black male student athletes' academic achievement was, "Study Table." The Study Table program is an initiative of the Office of Student Affairs and the Academic Retention Center. The program provides students with a quiet and supportive environment in which to complete academic tasks and receive quality academic support. Marcus explained the benefits of the Study Table program:

Now, you got to go to Study Table and go do your work. So, I feel like if Study Table and football wasn't there, I probably wouldn't be doing well in college right now. Because like, it's basically like an itinerary, what you need to do. If I didn't have that, I'd probably, I'd probably be making C's right now.

These comments reflect the benefits for Marcus of the rigid schedule imposed on football student athletes, which require them to complete a minimum of 10 hours per week at Study Tables. This Athletic Department requirement reinforced the institutional theme of cultivating an "educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program." Marcus elaborated on the specific aspects of the Study Tables program he felt were beneficial:

[I]t's just like you sit there and you basically people have got the same problem as you sitting at that. And you got that professor. And all y'all sitting there. So, basically, y'all got to work together to get that problem. Or if you don't, it teaches you how to do your work. Basically, if you're lazy, if you go to Study

Table, you're going to get your work done. There is no more lounging around in your room and waiting to do it, just go ahead and get it done and get it out of the way.

A key benefit of the Study Tables program cited by nearly all the interview participants was the presence of their professors. The structure of Study Tables created a one-on-one environment in which students could ask professors questions and receive meaningful feedback in a comfortable setting. Furthermore, the administrators of the Study Tables program created an environment that bolstered students' confidence that they could attend and complete their work in timely manner.

Marcus' feelings about the Study Tables program was so positive that his primary recommendation for improving Black male student athletes' academic achievement at NCU was to keep the Study Tables program functioning in its current state. He also cited some additional institutional services as especially effective: "I think he's [NCU President] doing a good job right now . . . keep doing what he's doing as far as having Study Table and WEP Labs." The WEP Labs were comprised of the NCU Writing Center and computer labs. Nearly all of the academic support programs the interviewees cited as effective were institution-wide services for all students. These concerted institutional efforts reiterated NCU's commitment to providing "total student development" through a "comprehensive educational experience." In summary, the key influences associated with the academic achievement of Black male student athletes, according to Marcus, were the structured schedule for football student athletes and the Study Tables program.

In-Depth Individual Interview Emergent Themes

The purpose of the in-depth individual interviews was to ascertain a deeper understanding of the personal backgrounds and lived college experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The interviews were designed to provide a multi-faceted perspective on the experiences of Black male student athletes in the two highest revenue-generating sports, football and men's basketball, which are also the two sports that have historically posted the lowest graduation rates among intercollegiate athletic teams.

Feel like home. In response to the first research question about the motivations for attending an HBU, the emergent theme across all four in-depth individual interviews was the theme "feel like home." Each participant expressed positive perceptions of the social and cultural environment at NCU prior to enrollment. More specifically, each participant had a pre-existing social connection to the institution, which served as a pivotal influence on his decision. Bobby cited the influence of his high school coach, Mason's father was an NCU alumnus, Kyle had a friend who attended NCU, and the NCU football coaches were from Marcus' hometown.

These positive relationships with key individuals associated with the institution also influenced the student athletes' perceptions of acceptance and belonging at NCU. The participants identified the opportunity to participate in intercollegiate athletics as a major motivation for choosing to attend NCU. The cornerstone of HBCUs is their ability to provide opportunities for Black students who might not have attended college otherwise (Allen, 1992). In the case of these Black male student athletes, the athletic opportunities coupled with the sociocultural environment at NCU significantly influenced their decision to attend NCU as well as to persist in college.

Good environment growing up. With respect to common patterns among the participants' personal backgrounds, the theme "good environment growing up" captured their overall perception of their individual and collective upbringing. Each of the interviewees cited challenges they faced growing up. Yet they also expressed how the love and support they received from family members enabled them to overcome these obstacles.

In Bobby's case, his father's passing was a tremendous obstacle for him, but his positive memories of his father and the love of his mother, grandmother, and sisters were significant influences on his development. Mason noted how his father, mother, and two older brothers instilled in him the values of self-respect and hard work, which he continued to apply to his everyday life. Kyle referred to his mother, who raised him, and to his long-distance relationship with his father as important influences in his development, particularly his positive self-awareness and sociocultural consciousness. Marcus described his father, mother, and uncle as influential people in his life that encouraged him to maximize his potential both on and off the field. Overall, the participants benefitted from having loving and supportive family members who instilled in them positive self-identities, a strong work ethic, and an appreciation for their culture.

It's challenging. The second research question focused on understanding the holistic college experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The first part of this research question related to understanding the participants' academic experiences. The emergent theme across the in-depth individual interviews was, "it's challenging." This theme reflected the challenges the interviewees faced managing their academic and athletic responsibilities.

Bobby identified his biggest academic challenge in college as attending class. Unlike high school, his classes were spread throughout the day, and he found it difficult at times to go a class after leaving that part of campus. Mason cited the increased academic workload in college compared to high school and the increased time commitment associated with athletics as major challenges he faced in college. Kyle also had difficulty trying to manage his time with academics, athletics, and social activities. Marcus described how taking difficult courses in his major and the time commitment associated with performing well in those classes was challenging for him. Nevertheless, the participants embraced these challenges and maintained a determined mentality that enabled them to excel academically and athletically.

It's our brotherhood. Another aspect of research question two related to understanding the athletic experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The most salient theme across all interviewees was, "it's our brotherhood," which referred to their positive relationships with teammates and coaches. All four interviewees described their relationships with teammates and coaches as familial. Bobby explained how his relationship with his coach extended beyond basketball and how he could talk with him about personal issues. Similarly, Mason referred to his coach as a brother whom he trusted to offer him advice and counsel.

Kyle also described his relationships with his coaches as positive and explained how their strict leadership style conveyed their love for him and his teammates. Marcus identified his coaches as the primary reason he chose to attend NCU and described how they looked after him whenever he needed anything. All of the participants affectionately referred to their teammates as brothers or family members. They described how they

looked after one another and served as positive support systems for one another both on and off the court/field.

You're known on campus. The third component of research question two related to understanding the social experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The theme, "you're known on campus" was prevalent across all four interviews. This theme referenced the interviewees' enhanced popularity on campus and in the surrounding community based on their athlete status. Bobby talked about the annual Midnight Madness event, which introduced the basketball team to the student body. He noted that he gained visibility and favor with female students through this recognition.

Mason highlighted the annual Homecoming events as his best social experiences in college. He cited the camaraderie between the campus, the local community, and the NCU alumni as a socially empowering experience. Kyle also mentioned Homecoming as a positive social experience that celebrates student athletes. He noted that he enjoyed being a role model for children who attended the Homecoming events and looked up to the student athletes. Marcus explained how his classmates would recognize him as a football player and how he felt an increased sense of belonging on campus as a result.

It's an all-around effort at an HBCU. The third research question focused on identifying key influences associated with the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at an HBU. The emergent theme from the interviewees' responses was, "it's an all-around effort at an HBCU." This theme referred to the concerted institutional effort among NCU faculty, administrators, and staff to provide all students with a "comprehensive educational experience."

The most popular institutional program cited by the interviewees was the Study Tables program. Each of the participants highlighted the presence of their professors, peer tutors, and classmates as positive aspects of the program. They also praised the fact that it was offered year-round seven days a week and that they were required to attend as a part of their athletic participation. Bobby described how the peer tutors were particularly helpful to him because they were able to explain complex concepts in ways he could understand. Mason expressed how the Study Tables program provided him with a quiet environment to complete his studies as well as a place to seek help when he needed it.

Kyle recommended a more hands-on approach to improving Black male student athletes' academic achievement. Within this approach, he explained how structuring course content delivery to fit each student's skill level and preferred pace would be beneficial. The structure of the Study Tables program incorporated these elements. Marcus noted how his strict schedule as a football student athlete and his regular attendance at Study Tables enhanced his academic achievement. He emphasized that being in an environment with classmates who experienced similar challenges made him feel more comfortable in seeking academic assistance.

Summary

Chapter Four presented the results from the four data collection methods (institutional document review, SACEQ, focus group interviews, and in-depth individual interviews) employed in the current study. From these results, two emergent meta-themes were identified: "NCU as a social capital enhancer" and "NCU as an educational environment for holistic development."

The purpose of the institutional document review was to identify the stated mission, core values, and key purposes of the institution, its Athletic Department, and its academic support services. Key themes identified from this institutional document review included “comprehensive educational experience,” “total student development,” and “educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program.” The “comprehensive educational experience” theme referred to the array of academic programs offered at NCU and the institutional priority of a low student-to-teacher ratio. The “total student development” theme referred to the multitude of campus organizations, research opportunities, and community service activities on campus. The “educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program” theme reflected the institution’s commitment to a *student first/athlete second* environment for all student athletes. The implementation of eligibility standards and year-round mandatory study halls, and the monitoring of student athletes’ academic progress, fostered this environment.

SACEQ results revealed a diverse group of participants based on academic classification, family background, annual household income, academic classification, sport participation history, and college experiences. With regard to participants’ motivations for attending an HBU, key findings revealed that the social environment, academic programs, athletic program, and location of the school were key influences. Related to academic experiences, participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with their overall academic experiences. In terms of athletic experiences, participants reported maintaining positive relationships with their coaches, teammates, and administrators. Regarding social experiences, participants expressed satisfaction with the social environment and the feeling of being a part of the campus community.

The emergent themes from the focus group interviews included: 1) “a sense of connection” (motivation for attending an HBU), 2) “You’re not alone when you come to an HBCU” (overall experiences), 3) “you’re their children” (academic experiences in college), 4) “it’s all about time management” (athletic experiences in college), 5) “it’s easy to get along with people” (social experiences in college), and 6) “just sticking with it” (key influences associated with academic achievement). The theme “a sense of connection” referred to participants’ positive perceptions of the NCU environment as accepting and welcoming of their presence. The theme “you’re not alone when you come to an HBCU” reflected the participants’ comfort level in attending an educational environment with a critical mass of supportive Black students, faculty, administrators, and staff.

The theme “you’re their children” referred to the familial ethic of care demonstrated by the professors at NCU and their commitment to their students’ holistic development. The theme “it’s all about time management” related to the participants’ challenges in balancing their responsibilities as students and athletes. The theme “it’s easy to get along with people” referred to the participants’ feelings of camaraderie and respect among students, alumni, and the local community as student athletes. The theme “just sticking with it” referred to the participants’ belief that personal motivation and self-accountability are among the key influences associated with their academic achievement. In addition, the participants cited institutional programs such as Study Tables, peer tutors, and mandatory study hall as contributors to their academic achievement and persistence in college.

The most salient themes from the in-depth individual interviews included: 1) “feel like home” (motivation for attending an HBU), 2) “good environment growing up” (personal background), 3) “it’s challenging” (academic experiences in college), 4) “it’s our brotherhood,” (athletic experiences in college) 5) “you’re known on campus more,” (social experiences in college) and 6) “it’s an all-around effort at an HBCU” (key influences associated with academic achievement). The theme “feel like home” referred to the participants’ connection to key individuals in their lives who were associated with NCU. The theme “good environment growing up” related to the participants’ positive upbringing, whether it was with both parents, a single mother, or a grandmother. All participants expressed being raised with positive values of self-respect, perseverance, and love for their culture and community.

The theme “it’s challenging” reflected the participants’ difficulties with their academic courses and with the time required to perform at a high level in these courses. The theme “it’s our brotherhood” referred to the participants’ positive relationships with their coaches and teammates. Finally, the theme “you’re known on campus more” reflected the participants’ increased visibility and popularity on campus based on their athletic participation.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and college experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU in the southeastern United States. The researcher applied a mixed methods approach to explore the impact of the institutional environment at a Historically Black University (HBU) on the holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social) of Black male student athletes (Creswell, 2009; Greene, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Discussion

Three research questions guided the current study: 1) What are the motivations for attending a Historically Black University for Black male student athletes? 2) How do Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University make meaning of their holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social)? and 3) What are the key influences associated with the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University?

Motivations for Attending an HBU: A Sense of Connection

The first research question aimed to understand Black male student athletes' motivations for attending an HBU. Findings indicated that the participants' primary motivation for attending an HBU related to the emergent focus group theme of "a sense of connection," which referred to the positive perception of a welcoming campus environment prior to enrollment (see Figure 3). The presence of a critical mass of Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators at Northern Central University (NCU)

collectively contributed to the participants' perceptions of feeling welcomed, accepted, and supported (Allen, 1985, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975).

The focus group participants explained that prior to enrolling at NCU, their perceptions of the cultural congruence at NCU were connected to factors beyond race and ethnicity, including familiar forms of communication, behavior, and worldviews (Davis, 2006; Douglas, 2012; Gallien & Peterson, 2005). Convergent SACEQ results indicated that 52.6% ($M=3.54$; $SD=1.07$) of the participants reported that the social environment at an HBU was an important or very important influence on their decision to attend NCU. Furthermore, nearly all focus group participants and individual interviewees identified someone close to them (e.g., father, coach, family member, or friends) who either attended an HBCU or encouraged them to attend because of the nurturing environment and career opportunities available. Thus, the participants in this study possessed a higher level of social capital with HBCUs compared to PWIs, which played a pivotal role in their decision to attend an HBU (Allen et al., 2007; Brown & Davis, 2001; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Palmer & Gasman, 2008).

An additional factor related to the theme of "a sense of connection" was the participants' perceptions of NCU's athletic program. Nearly all focus group participants and individual interviewees cited athletics as a primary reason they chose to attend NCU. Corroborating SACEQ results indicated that 73.7% ($M=4.20$; $SD=.90$) identified the athletics program as an important or very important motivation for choosing to attend NCU. Yet 57.9% ($M=3.45$; $SD=1.80$) also reported that their primary college choice was a Division I PWI, compared to only 22.9% who reported that their primary choice was to attend any type of HBCU (e.g., their current school, a Division I HBCU, or another

Division II HBCU). Given that Division I athletic programs are better funded and provide higher levels of visibility (for instance, through national television contracts) for their student athletes, many athletes who dream of pursuing a professional sports career seek to attend these larger, well-funded Division I PWIs. However, for various reasons (e.g., lack of financial resources, academic eligibility issues, or feelings of isolation at a PWI), participants cited the athletic opportunity they received at NCU as a primary motivation for choosing to attend college. A majority of the SACEQ participants, 84.2% ($M=10.79$; $SD=5.85$), participated in two or more sports in high school. Similarly, 73.7% ($M=4.14$; $SD=.90$) of SACEQ participants reported that being an athlete was an important part of their life. Thus, the athletic opportunity afforded by NCU enhanced their “sense of connection” between their athletic identity and the institution.

Another motivation identified by the participants that related to the theme of “a sense of connection” was their perception of the academic programs at NCU. All focus group participants and individual interviewees viewed attending NCU as an opportunity to explore a wide range of career opportunities aside from athletics. This perception was congruent with findings from the institutional document review that NCU sought to provide a “comprehensive educational experience” for its students by offering majors in the humanities, fine arts, social sciences, and sciences. NCU also offers numerous technologically advanced academic programs, undergraduate research opportunities, study abroad programs, undergraduate and graduate student internships, service-learning courses, and pre-professional development experiences. SACEQ results revealed that 68.4% ($M=4.02$; $SD=.98$) of participants reported that the academic programs at NCU were important or very important in their motivation to attend NCU. The wide range of

academic programs and culturally relevant curricula, along with the preponderance of talented Black faculty, reflect the uniqueness of HBCUs and their appeal to Black students (Allen et al., 2007; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Palmer & Young, 2010).

The school's location was another motivating factor related to the theme of "a sense of connection" that attracted the participants to NCU. All but one of the focus group participants grew up in the state where NCU is located. These participants described how attending a school close to home and participating in intercollegiate athletics in a location where their family could attend the games was important to them. Corroborating SACEQ results indicated that 52.6% ($M=3.57$; $SD=1.20$) of the participants cited the school's location as important or very important in their motivation to attend an HBU.

The collective influence of positive perceptions of the social environment, athletic program, academic programs, and location created "a sense of connection" among the participants and contributed to their motivation for attending an HBU. These findings reinforce the notion that Black students continue to view HBCUs as safe havens that foster positive relationships and holistic development (Allen, 1986; Fleming, 1984; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010).

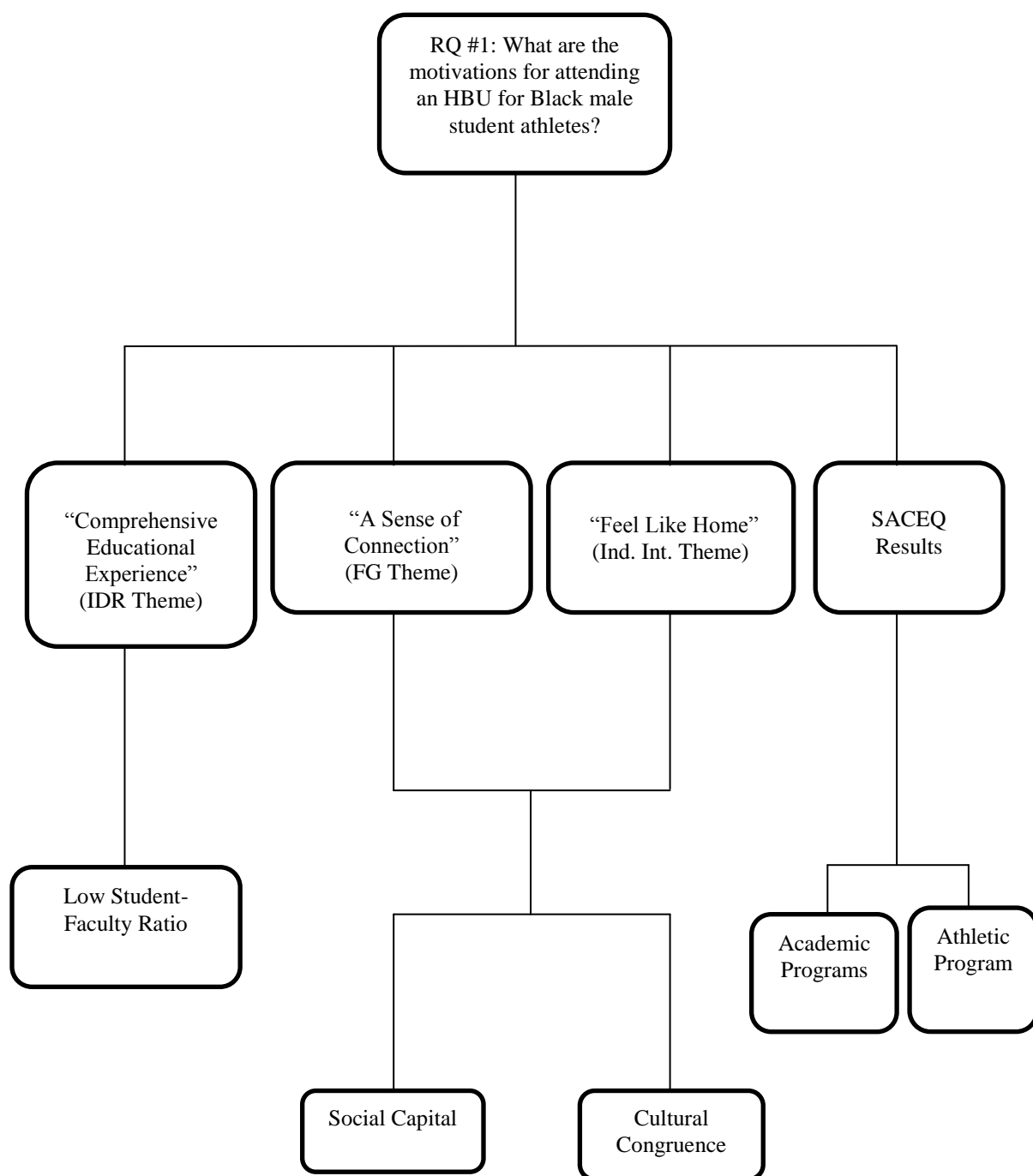


Figure 3: Research Question #1 Concept Map

Meaning Making of College: You're Not Alone When You Come to an HBCU

The second research question in the current study pertained to understanding how Black male student athletes at an HBU make meaning of their holistic college experiences (overall, academic, athletic, and social). Participants unanimously expressed sentiments related to the emergent focus group theme of “You’re Not Alone When You Come to an HBCU.” This theme conceptualized the participants’ sense of belonging and experiences with a supportive environment at an HBU (see Figure 4). The focus group participants and individual interviewees identified their professors and classmates as key institutional actors who positively contributed to their overall college experiences (Zilber, 2002). The participants described their professors’ understanding of their unique schedules as student athletes and the professors’ willingness to work with them to make sure they acquired the information they needed to perform well in the course. Similarly, the participants discussed how their peers served as a positive support group for their academic, athletic, social, and personal development.

These findings corroborated with the institutional document review theme that reflected NCU’s mission of providing a “comprehensive educational experience” for all students. A major component of the “comprehensive educational experience” theme is NCU’s commitment to cultivating strong and meaningful faculty-student relationships. For example, a low student-to-teacher ratio creates an educational environment conducive to positive one-on-one instruction. The focus group participants and individual interviewees described how their professors made themselves available outside of class to meet with them when they missed class due to athletic commitments.

Additional SACEQ results indicated that nearly half of all SACEQ participants, 42.1% ($M=3.28$; $SD=1.12$), reported having one or more faculty member they considered a mentor. Their positive and consistent interactions with professors outside of class reflect Person and LeNoir's (1997) findings that African-American student athletes at HBCUs engage in more frequent interactions with faculty than their counterparts at PWIs. In the current study, the participants' positive relationships with professors and the low student-to-teacher ratio provided a possible explanation for the increased level of engagement among Black male student athletes at HBCUs, as the smaller class sizes facilitated more personal and meaningful faculty-student relationships. Additionally, the participants' positive relationships with their professors, coupled with their satisfaction with their overall experiences in college, support the findings of previous studies that faculty-student relationships contribute to the quality of student athletes' overall experiences and academic performance in college (Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Harrison et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The focus group participants and individual interviewees also highlighted their positive relationships with their classmates as a contributing factor to their satisfaction with their overall experiences in college. Similar to the theme of "a sense of connection," participants described how being in an environment with peers whom they felt understood their background socially, culturally, and emotionally enabled them to develop meaningful relationships. This point was particularly expressed among the focus group participants who had transferred from a PWI. All of the participants who had transferred from PWIs expressed feelings of isolation, encounters with discrimination, and an overall lack of support from the campus community. These findings are

consistent with the abundance of literature on Black male student athletes' experiences at PWIs, which found these educational environments to be unfit to meet their unique needs and incongruent with their sociocultural backgrounds (Adler & Adler, 1991; American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989; Benson, 2000; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Sellers, 1992; Singer, 2005).

In contrast, when these same participants attended NCU they experienced feelings of acceptance and belonging (Brown, 2004). Convergent SACEQ results indicated that 66.6% ($M=3.73$; $SD=.84$) of participants reported having positive relationships with the students (non-teammates) at NCU. It is interesting to note that focus group participants highlighted their academic and social relationships rather than their athletic experiences when describing their satisfaction with their overall experiences in college. In connection with this observation, SACEQ correlation results also indicated a positive correlation between academic experiences and social experiences ($r=.662$, $p<.001$). Thus, these convergent findings reflected another level of congruency between the participants' institutional meanings (e.g., perceptions) and NCU's institutional action of cultivating "total student development" through its institutional mission statement, Athletic Department mission statement, Academic Support Services mission statement, Student Athlete Handbook, and Athletic Department compliance guidelines (Zilber, 2002).

In addition to citing the importance of relationships, the focus group participants unanimously identified Homecoming as the best part of their college experience at an HBU. Phillip captured the focus group participants' feelings about Homecoming when he said:

I can't speak for another school, but here like if you never, ever visited a school

[an HBCU] ever before and you plan on attending an HBCU, if you came during a Homecoming, most likely you're going to want to go here.

Homecoming is a cornerstone event for HBCUs because it serves as a unifying platform for the expression of “school pride, cultural celebration, and athletic tradition” (Lillig, 2009, p. 45). Although the athletic event is the centerpiece of Homecoming, surrounding events such as tailgates, parades, battle of the band performances, step shows, and music concerts all contribute to the appeal and success of the event (Moore, 2012). Along the same lines, SACEQ results revealed that 57.9% ($M=3.68$; $SD=1.04$) of the participants reported attending or participating in social events at HBCU classics or rivalry games.

Additional convergence was identified between the participants’ positive perceptions of NCU’s Homecoming and results from the institutional document review. One of the emergent themes from the institutional document review was NCU’s focus on promoting an “educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program.” This theme referred to the notion that the NCU athletic program constitutes an extension of the institution, which is committed to the collective uplift of the Black community (Klores, 2008). NCU’s Homecoming epitomizes this institutional value because the event not only serves as a cultural gathering, but also generates a significant amount of revenue for the institution as well as for the businesses located in the surrounding communities (Armstrong, 2001, 2008).

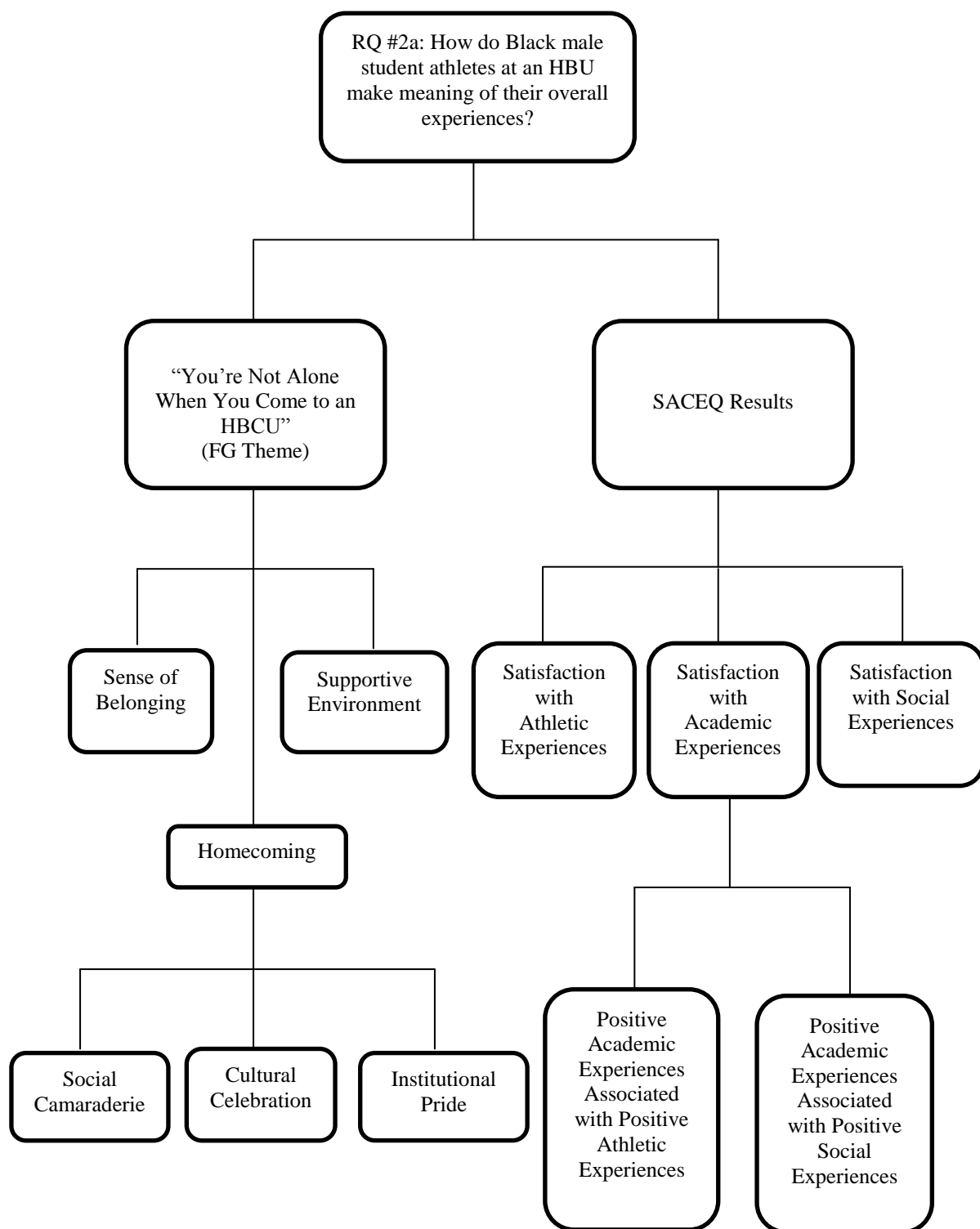


Figure 4: Research Question #2a Concept Map

Making Meaning of Academic Experiences: You're Their Children

Regarding the participants' academic experiences, findings indicated that the combination of concerted institutional actions (e.g., out-of-class interactions, an ethic of care, and one-on-one instruction) by key institutional actors (e.g., professors, academic advisors, and peer tutors) at NCU contributed to positive academic experiences for the participants (Zilber, 2002). The emergent focus group theme of "you're their children" referred to the participants' perceptions that NCU professors treated them with a level of care and compassion comparable to how family members care for one another (see Figure 5). In other words, the professors at NCU demonstrated what Hirt et al. (2008) describe as "othermothering," whereby faculty and staff at HBCUs treat their students as their children, providing them with holistic guidance and support (p. 217). The professors demonstrated the institutional action of othermothering by meeting regularly with the participants outside of class, expressing their concern for the participants' overall well-being, and understanding their unique athletic schedules.

The results of these deliberate institutional actions included increased levels of academic engagement and effort from the participants. The focus group participants and individual interviewees were enthusiastic in describing their relationships with their professors, conveying their admiration for and appreciation of the faculty. In describing how the professors at NCU treated him and his teammates, Mason said, "They really care about your well-being after school and moving forward." Convergent SACEQ results revealed that 50.9% ($M=3.63$; $SD=.88$) of the SACEQ participants reported having positive relationships with their professors, 59.7% ($M=3.66$; $SD=.90$) reported having

positive relationships with administration/staff, and 73.7% ($M=3.98$; $SD=.75$) reported having positive relationships with academic advisors.

A noteworthy connection between academic and athletic experiences is the fact that participants from both teams had assistant coaches who also served as their academic advisors. The participants explained how beneficial it was to have academic advisors who were cognizant of their athletic commitments, whether those advisors were assistant coaches or staff from the institution's academic advising department. Convergent SACEQ correlation results also indicated a positive association between academic experiences and athletic experiences ($r=.381$, $p<.001$). Thus, the findings indicate that athletic participation can contribute to positive academic outcomes when appropriately situated with the broader educational mission of the institution (Hildenbrand, Sanders, Leslie-Toogood, & Benton, 2009).

As a result, of these positive relationships with key institutional actors, nearly all of the focus group participants and 63.1% ($M=3.67$; $SD=.90$) of the SACEQ participants expressed being satisfied with their academic performance. Additional SACEQ results revealed that 66.7% ($M=3.77$; $SD=.71$) also reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their overall academic experiences in college. The findings are buttressed by previous studies that found Black students performed better academically when they felt professors expressed a genuine interest in their academic performance and overall development (Benson, 2000; Cooper & Hawkins, 2012; Gaston-Gayles, 2009). In addition, the presence of positive, supportive, and understanding faculty and administrators proved to be integral to the successful transition from high school to college for Black male student athletes (Brown, 2004; Harrison & Martin, 2012).

These findings also reinforced the emergent themes from the institutional document review regarding NCU's commitment to providing a "comprehensive educational experience" and "total student development." Thus, the findings from multiple methods revealed congruency between institutional actions (the NCU mission statement, Athletic Department mission statement, and faculty-student relationships); institutional actors (the NCU faculty, administrators, staff, and Black male student athletes); and institutional meanings (Black male student athletes' perceptions of institutional support) (Zilber, 2002).

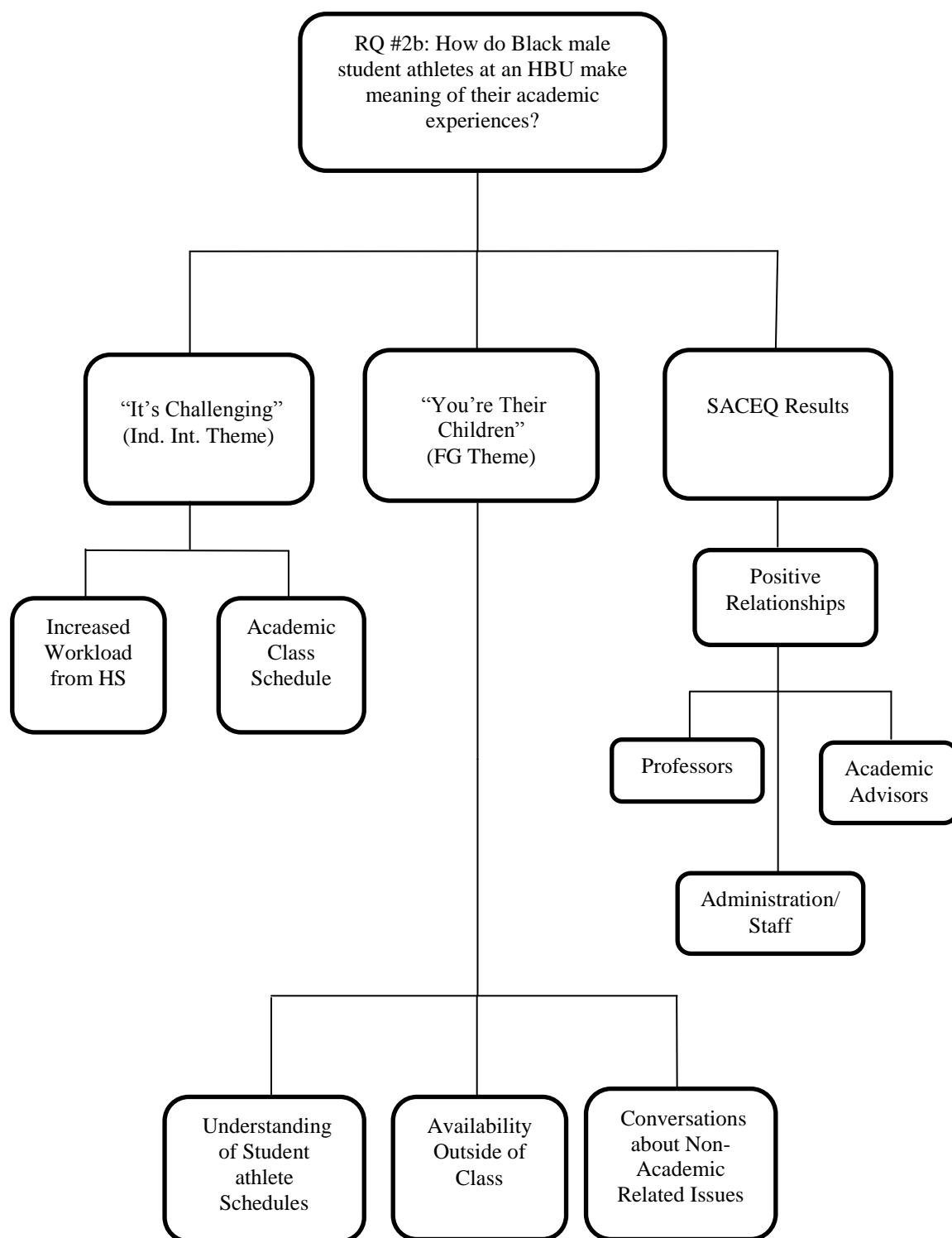


Figure 5: Research Question #2b Concept Map

Making Meaning of Athletic Experiences: It's All About Time Management

Related to their athletic experiences, participants identified challenges in balancing their dual roles as students and athletes, yet they also perceived these challenges as facilitating their overall development. The focus group theme of “it’s all about time management” captured the participants’ perceptions of their responsibilities as both students and athletes (see Figure 6). In response to questions about their athletic experiences, the focus group participants and individual interviewees delineated the differences between their in-season and off-season schedules. In all three focus groups, the participants described in-season schedules filled with practice time, workouts, study halls, meeting with tutors, travel time for competitions, and games, with only a small portion of time spent on their personal hobbies or social activities. These sentiments were also reflected in the SACEQ results, which revealed that 56.1% ($M=2.64$; $SD=.97$) of participants spent 11 or more hours per week on team practices during their athletic season. In contrast, 47.4% ($M=2.48$; $SD=.89$) reported spending 11 or more hours per week on academically related tasks during the athletic season, 24.6% ($M=1.95$; $SD=.88$) reported spending 11 or more hours per week on social activities, and 28.1% ($M=2.02$; $SD=1.05$) reported spending 11 or more hours per week on personal hobbies.

Regarding their athletic off-season, both the focus group participants and individual interviewees reported that they tended to do better academically because they had more time to dedicate to their studies. SACEQ results indicated that 59.7% ($M=2.69$; $SD=1.09$) of participants reported spending 11 or more hours on academically related tasks compared to 38.6% ($M=2.16$; $SD=1.08$) who reported spending 11 or more hours at team practices during their athletic off-season. In addition, 38.6% ($M=2.34$; $SD=1.00$) of

participants reported spending 11 or more hours on social activities and 47.4% ($M=2.51$; $SD=1.05$) reported spending 11 or more hours on personal hobbies. When asked whether they performed better academically during their athletic season or during the off-season, the overwhelming response among focus group participants was off-season. This supports the findings of previous studies that the time commitment associated with being an intercollegiate student athlete can lead to a lack of time and energy spent on academically related tasks (Eiche, Sedlacek, & Adams-Gaston, 1997; Etzel, Ferrente, & Pinkney, 1991; Singer, 2008; Watson, 2006).

Despite the significant time commitments associated with their roles as student athletes, the participants embraced these challenges and viewed them as beneficial for their overall development. The theme “it’s all about time management” reflected the participants’ commitment to balancing their responsibilities. Shawn described how the participants perceived their role as student athletes:

I mean it’s just like any other time you played athletics in school; it’s going to take away from like times you need to study, but you’ve got to balance that, because you’re a student athlete. So you’ve got to work your way around it.

You’ve got to make your schedule work so you can do your schoolwork.

All of the focus group participants reported that they had been involved in sports since they were children, so the need to balance responsibilities as a student and an athlete was not new to them. This familiarity with the time commitments associated with athletics was reflected in the SACEQ results revealing that 75.4% ($M=3.96$; $SD=.73$) expressed satisfaction with the amount of time they spent on their athletic participation and 68.5% ($M=3.88$; $SD=.95$) reported satisfaction with their overall athletic experiences. The

participants understood that effective time management was critical to their success both on and off the playing field. Similar to previous studies on Black male student athletes and academic performance, the findings from the current study revealed that effective time management is a critical element of Black male student athletes' academic success in college (Harrison & Martin, 2012; Martin, Harrison, Stone et al., 2010).

In addition to embracing the challenges associated with being a student athlete, the participants also acknowledged and internalized the idea that they were students first and athletes second. NCU promotes a *student first and athletes second* mantra, reflecting the broader NCAA Division II value that athletics are an extension of the educational experience (NCAA, 2011d). Shelton explained how the participants prioritized their roles as student first and athletes second when he noted, "academics is the foundation for everything you're doing. And that will always be first." Convergent findings from the SACEQ results revealed that 66.7% ($M=4.02$; $SD=1.00$) of participants identified as students first and athletes second, compared to only 34.0% ($M=3.04$; $SD=1.24$) who identified as athletes first and students second.

The student-first identity was also reflected in the participants' responses to questions about their commitment to their academic advancement. Among SACEQ participants, 80.7% ($M=4.16$; $SD=.76$) reported being committed to their academic major, 87.8% ($M=4.60$; $SD=.66$) reported being committed to earning a degree, and nearly half (47.4%) ($M=3.55$; $SD=.99$) reported being committed to pursuing graduate school. These findings are consistent with previous studies that found a positive relationship between athletic participation, satisfaction in college, and increased

motivation to graduate (Astin, 1993a, 1993b; Pascarella & Smart, 1991; Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2006; Ryan, 1989).

SACEQ results also revealed participants' satisfaction with their athletic experiences at an HBU. For example, 78.9% ($M=4.25$; $SD=.89$) reported participating in mandatory team activities, 66.7% ($M=3.93$; $SD=.90$) reported participating in voluntary team activities, and 59.7% ($M=3.67$; $SD=1.24$) reported participating in most of the team games. A majority of the SACEQ participants (84.2%) ($M=4.30$; $SD=.83$) reported being dedicated to their team. In terms of relationships within the athletic department, 68.5% ($M=3.93$; $SD=.84$) reported having positive relationships with their coaches, 66.7% ($M=3.93$; $SD=.82$) reported having positive relationships with the athletic staff, and 59.6% ($M=3.82$; $SD=.87$) reported having positive relationships with the Athletic Department academic support staff.

Related to their satisfaction with the time they spent on athletics, 75.4% ($M=3.96$; $SD=.73$) reported being satisfied with the amount of time they spent on athletic participation. In addition, 50.9% ($M=3.42$; $SD=1.27$) reported being satisfied with their playing time, 56.1% ($M=3.54$; $SD=1.18$) reported being satisfied with their role on the team, and 68.5% ($M=3.88$; $SD=.97$) reported being satisfied with their athletic performance. Overall, 68.5% ($M=3.88$; $SD=.95$) reported being satisfied with their athletic experiences in college.

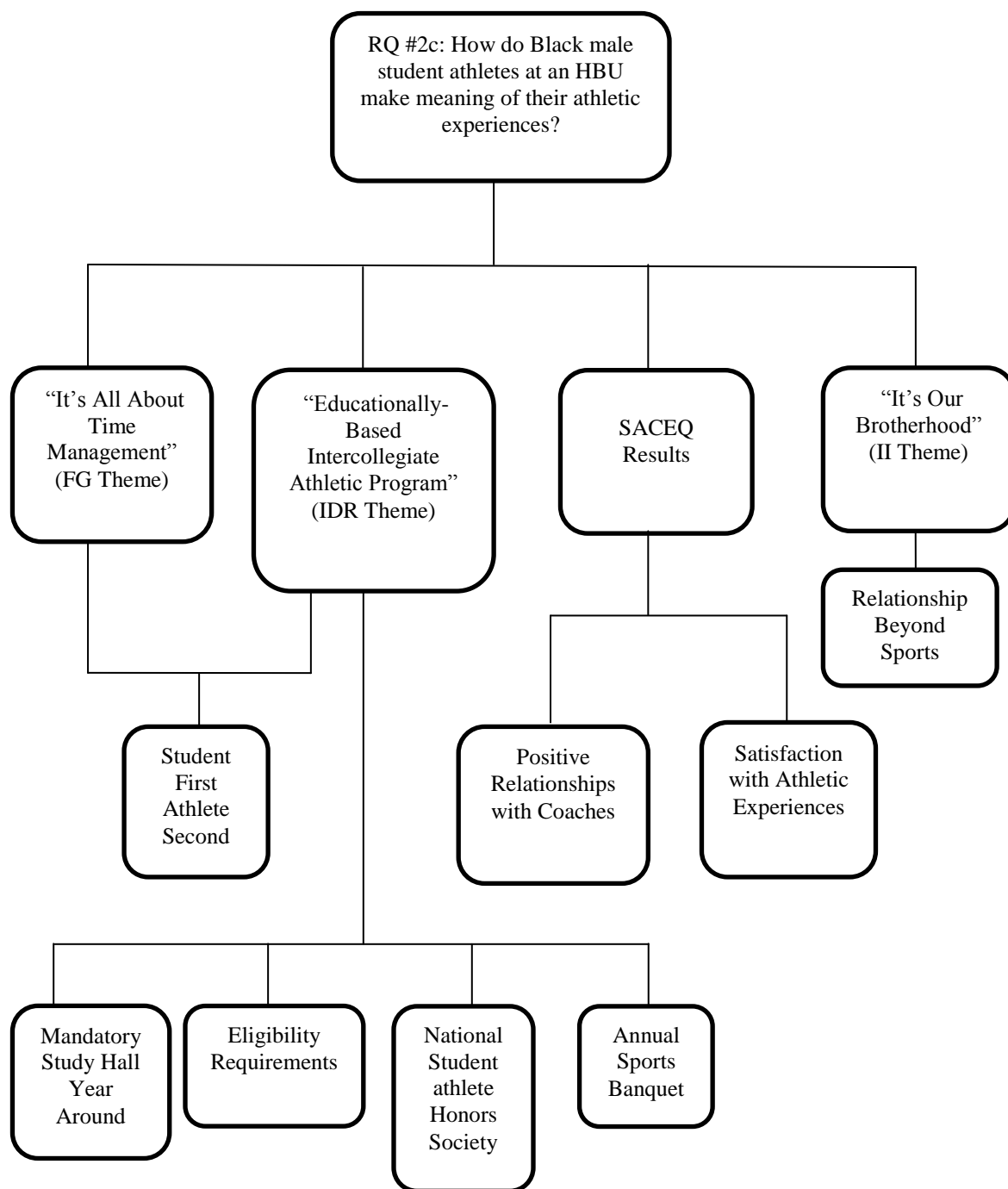


Figure 6: Research Question 2c Concept Map

Making Meaning of Social Experiences: It's Easy to Get Along With People

Regarding their social experiences, findings indicated that participants felt the environment at NCU was welcoming, accepting, and supportive (Allen et al., 2007). These findings were conceptualized in the emergent focus group theme, “it’s easy to get along with people.” This theme described participants’ sense that as student athletes they possessed heightened visibility and popularity on campus, which contributed to their ability to establish positive and meaningful relationships (see Figure 7). This finding suggested that athletic participation could contribute to higher levels of self-esteem among student athletes (Taylor, 1995).

Bobby captured the focus group participants’ sentiments about their social experiences at NCU when he noted, “I mean it’s easy to get along with people . . . Easy to talk to because they probably come from the same place you come from.” The fact that nearly a third, 31.6% ($M=1.93$; $SD=.92$), of SACEQ participants attended a predominantly Black high school meant that attending an HBU was a familiar environment for them. HBCUs differ from PWIs in multiple ways, including their mission statements, emphasis on faculty-student engagement, traditions, and the presence of cultural artifacts that reflect Black collective unity and cultural pride (Craig, 2006).

Yet even though NCU has a predominantly Black student enrollment, the participants also highlighted the diversity on campus. For example, Maurice expressed how he enjoyed meeting students from different backgrounds and how these interactions enhanced his overall college experience. Convergent SACEQ results revealed that 66.2% ($M=3.73$; $SD=.84$) of the participants reported having positive relationships with students who were non-athletes, 67.2% ($M=3.93$; $SD=.78$) reported having positive relationships

with teammates, and 64.9% ($M=3.68$; $SD=.99$) reported having positive relationships with fellow student athletes who are non-teammates. These findings suggest that athletic participation may enhance the quality of peer relationships and increase student athletes' openness to and engagement with students from diverse backgrounds (Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, & Hannah, 2006; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001; Wolf-Wendell, Toma, & Worphew, 2001).

Furthermore, the environment at NCU facilitated positive self-identities, meaningful social networks, and valuable professional skills for Black male student athletes (Harris, 2012). Regarding positive self-identifies, several of the focus group participants were members of a campus organization, such the Institute for Black Males (IBM).¹³ This organization was designed to promote positive self-identities, strong mentoring relationships, leadership skills, and community service involvement among Black males at NCU. The presence of organizations such as IBM provided the participants with opportunities to develop themselves holistically and to understand their role as citizens of their local community, their state, their nation, and the world.

Related to social networks, participants described how their connections with professors, administrators, staff, and alumni were advantageous for their career aspirations. The focus group participants also noted that a significant number of the faculty and staff at NCU were alumni of the institution. Not only did this contribute to their increased investment in each participant's success, but it also expanded the student athletes' social network. Brown and Davis (2001) described HBCUs as entities that engage in a social contract with their students, serving as disseminators of social capital

¹³ In an effort to ensure anonymity, a pseudonym was used for the campus organization.

and facilitating social equality, particularly among Black students.

This role is illustrated by the fact that several participants were also members of academic organizations within their major. For example, many of the participants were members of an organization within the health, physical education, and recreation major. As members of this organization, they were able to attend national conferences and gain exposure to a wide range of career opportunities. The findings regarding the participants' social experiences at NCU reinforced the notion that HBCUs remain "villages" where Black students can enhance their social capital and build marketable skills for career attainment after college (Palmer & Gasman, 2008, p. 52).

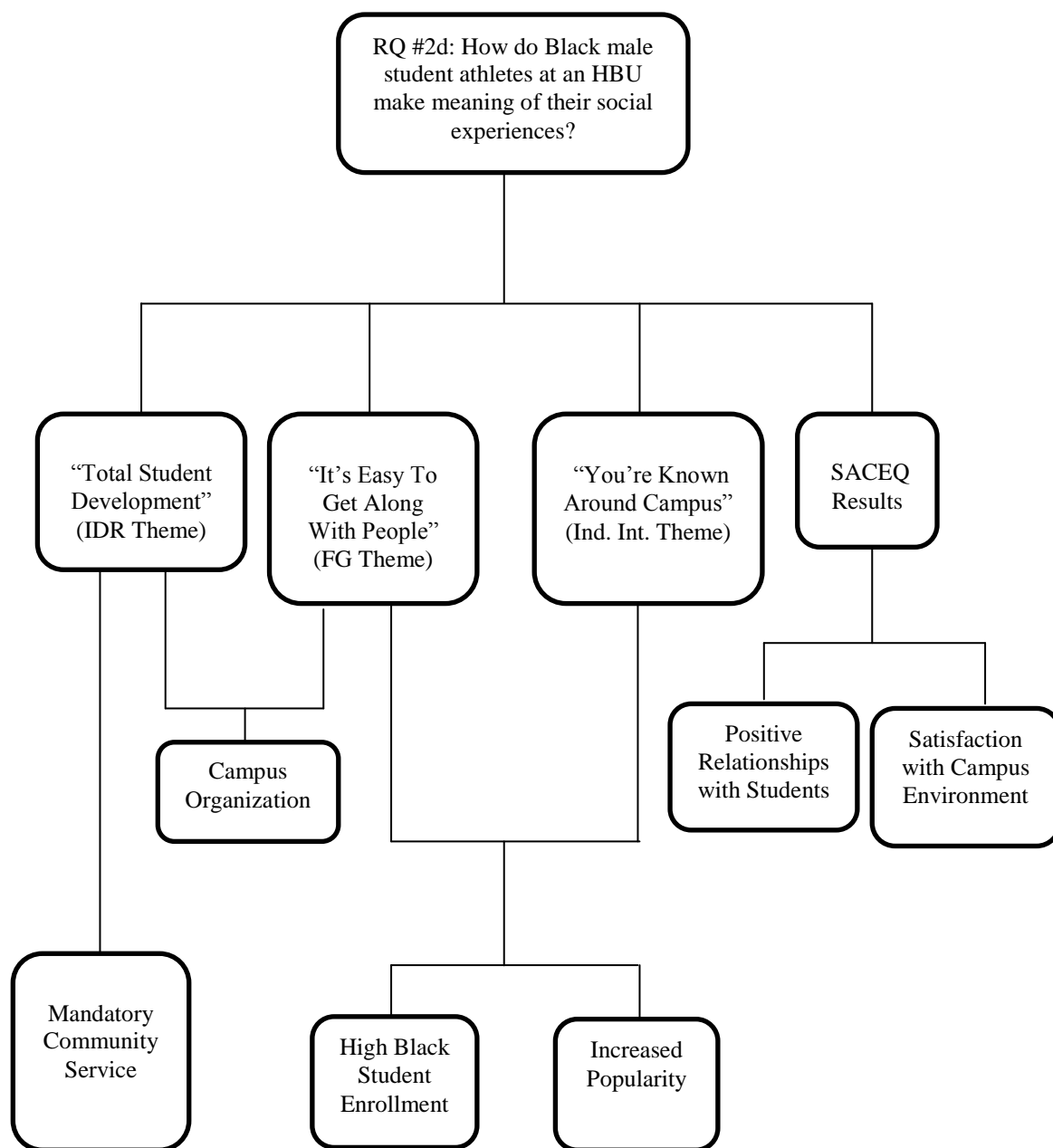


Figure 7: Research Question 2d Concept Map

Key Influences on Academic Achievement: Just Sticking With It

The third research question in the current study focused on identifying key influences associated with the academic achievement of Black male student athletes at an HBU. SACEQ correlation results indicated no statistically significant correlations between academic experiences, athletic experiences, or social experiences and levels of academic achievement as measured by estimated college GPA. However, the qualitative findings revealed that participants largely attributed their academic achievement to personal motivation and self-accountability, which was captured in the emergent theme of “just sticking with it.” Participants expressed that regardless of their situation or the challenges they encountered, a core prerequisite for their academic achievement was a desire and will to do the work that needed to be done.

Mason explained his belief that Black male student athletes should apply the same mentality they applied to athletics to their academics. He noted, “The thing is just self-accountability . . . Just like you want athletics . . . you got to do the same thing with your academics.” Martin, Harrison, Stone et al. (2010) studied 27 high academic achieving African American male student athletes and found that the participants’ pride in their academic performance and strong work ethic were key contributors to their academic achievement. Similarly, the participants in this study felt that personal motivation and self-accountability were among the most important influences on their academic achievement. These findings reinforced the notion that academic motivation is a key predictor for student athletes’ academic achievement (Gaston-Gayles, 2004, 2005).

Related to the theme “just sticking with it,” participants identified three institutional services that contributed their academic achievement. These institutional

services were Study Tables, peer tutors, and mandatory study hall. The overwhelming consensus among focus group participants and individual interviewees was that the Study Tables were the most effective academic support program at NCU. This institutional initiative, which is overseen and operated by the Office of Student Affairs and the Academic Retention Center, was designed to increase student retention at NCU. The Study Tables program is centrally located on campus, operates seven days a week year-round, and provides a quiet environment where students can meet with peer tutors, professors, or study groups, or work individually on academically related tasks.

The participants identified several beneficial features of the Study Tables program. One was the opportunity to engage with faculty and peer tutors one-on-one outside of class. Many participants also mentioned that it was difficult to retain all the information discussed in class, but when they attended Study Tables they were able to get all their questions answered because they did not feel the same pressure they felt in a class. Another key feature of Study Tables is the student integration component of the program. Rather than being housed within the athletic facility, the program is centrally located on campus, which sent a message to the participants that they are valued as students first and athletes second. In addition, the fact that all students at NCU have access to the program further integrated the student athletes into the campus culture, as opposed to isolating them from their peers.

A final benefit of the program is its year-round, seven-day-a-week schedule, which enabled the participants to attend as frequently as they needed both in- and out-of-season. Collectively, these features contribute to the healthy integration of the participants into the campus culture. This finding is important because previous research

on college student development has found that increased student engagement and identification with the campus community contributes to increased academic achievement and persistence through graduation (Astin, 1993a, 1993b, 1999; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, 1993, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993).

Another effective academic support service highlighted by the participants was peer tutors. Nearly all focus group participants indicated that peer tutors were beneficial. In response the question about recommendations for improving Black male student athletes' academic achievement in college, Bobby described how peer tutoring was equally if not more effective than one-on-one instruction with professors. Chickering and Gamson (1987) identified developing reciprocity and cooperation among students as one of the seven guiding principles for good practice in undergraduate education. Furthermore, previous research on college student development has found that these factors contribute to students' academic achievement and psychosocial development (Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Similar to the Study Tables program, NCU's concerted effort to have peer tutors available enhanced peer relationships and student athlete integration into the campus culture.

The third institutional service the participants highlighted as an effective contributor to their academic achievement was the mandatory study hall. As student athletes at NCU, the participants were required to attend 10 hours of study hall per week both in- and out-of-season. This institutional action was emblematic of NCU's commitment to promoting an "educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program." The focus group participants noted that the strict monitoring of the time they spent in study hall was beneficial to them and signaled to them that the institution cared about their

academic development. Phillip described the strict monitoring of study hall:

They keep track of the day we go, how many hours we go for that day, and then they calculate them up for that week. So they know when we go, and they know how long we be in there. I don't know if they did that last year, but they do that now.

Collectively, these institutional actions corroborated with the themes from the institutional document review of a providing “a comprehensive educational experience,” cultivating “total student development,” and promoting an “educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program” through the establishment and maintenance of effective academic support programs.

The current study fulfills a gap in the literature on Black male student athletes by examining their college experiences within the context of an HBU. Historically, HBCUs have been successful at cultivating holistic development among Black students by establishing programs and services that were sensitive to their unique needs and by providing adequate support to help them overcome societal and individual challenges (Allen & Jewel, 2002; Kim, 2002; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Nettles & Perna, 1997; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Yet there is a scarcity of research on the relationship between the unique educational environments at HBCUs and Black male student athletes' experiences and developmental outcomes in college (American Institutes for Research, 1988, 1989; Brown, 2004; Person & LeNoir, 1997).

Findings from the current study revealed that an HBU explicitly prioritized Black male student athletes' holistic development not only through its institutional documents (e.g., the institutional mission statement, Athletic Department mission statement,

Academic Support Services mission statement, Student Athlete Handbook, and Athletic Department compliance guidelines), but also through its institutional practices (e.g., faculty-student interactions, Study Tables, peer tutors, and study hall) (see Figure 8). Moreover, these findings reinforced the notion that non-cognitive factors such as the presence of strong faculty-student relationships, a supportive institutional staff, the promotion of effective study habits, high levels of academic self-motivation, and concerted institutional initiatives enhance the quality of Black male student athletes' college experiences (Bonner, 2010; Brown, 2004; Harrison et al., 2006; Person & LeNoir, 1997; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992).

Additionally, findings from this study validate the significant role these institutions play in cultivating positive educational environments for Black students (Allen & Jewel, 2002; Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Kim, 2002; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Nettles & Perna, 1997; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). The participants in this study described in detail how the cultural congruence and presence of talented and caring Black faculty, administrators, and staff increased their academic self-efficacy, personal self-esteem, and motivation to persist in college (Gallien & Peterson, 2005). Furthermore, the application of a mixed methods approach allowed the researcher to examine the phenomena on multiple (institutional and individual) levels, providing a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences (Greene, 2007; Hall & Ryan, 2011). The information embedded in their experiences provides a pathway for creating, enhancing, and disseminating institutional best practices. These findings at an HBU thus reflect how collective and concerted efforts designed to address the unique needs of Black male student athletes can facilitate their holistic development in college.

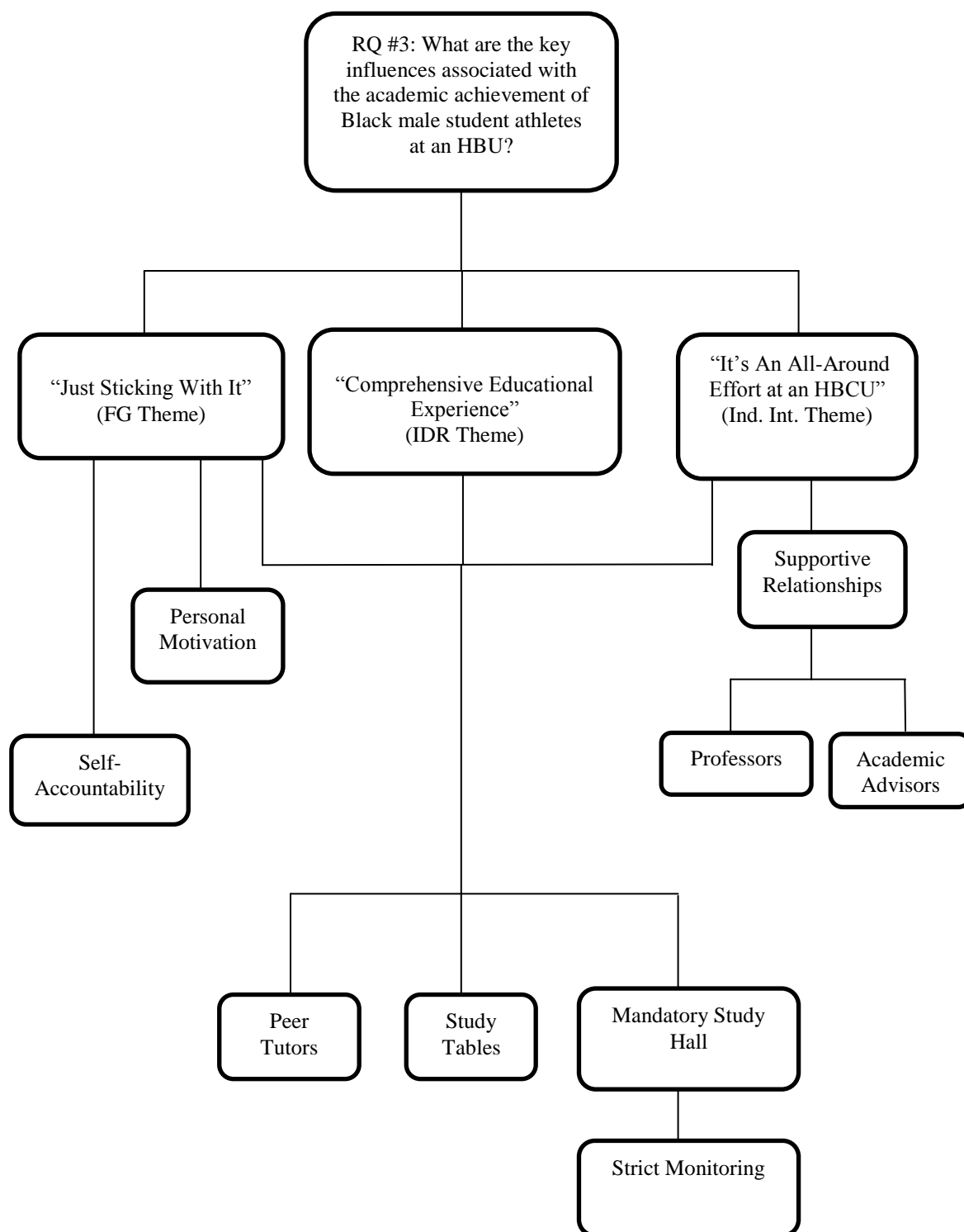


Figure 8: Research Question 3 Concept Map

Conclusions

The current study builds on the previous literature on Black male student athletes at institutions of higher education by examining their lived experiences in the context of an HBU. Using an institutional theoretical lens, the researcher incorporated multiple methods to examine the influence of key institutional actions, actors, and meanings at an HBU on the academic achievement and college experiences of Black male student athletes (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Zilber, 2002). The key institutional actions associated with this study related to the institution's formal policies as well as informal practices. The institutional document review highlighted key institutional actions in the form of formal policies, which were identified from the following institutional sources: 1) institutional mission statement, 2) Athletic Department mission statement, 3) Academic Support Services mission statement, 4) Student Athlete Handbook, and 5) Athletic Department compliance guidelines. The three emergent themes of a "comprehensive educational experience," "total student development," and an "educationally-based intercollegiate athletic program" reflected the institution's commitment to developing students holistically and preparing them for life after college. More importantly, these institutional actions signaled to Black male student athletes that they were students first and athletes second.

Regarding informal practices, institutional actions such as regular out-of-class meetings with professors, conversations with professors and coaches about non-academic issues, positive interactions with a diverse group of peers, and culturally empowering celebrations (e.g., Homecoming) contributed to the academic achievement and positive college experiences of the participants. The findings suggest that articulating a

comprehensive institutional mission and establishing congruency between formal policies and informal practices are critical to ensuring quality educational experiences for Black male student athletes (Charlton, 2011).

Related to institutional actors, the SACEQ provided descriptive information about the backgrounds of the participants and the nature of their relationships with professors, administrators, staff, coaches, athletic administrators, athletic academic support staff, students, teammates, and non-teammate student athletes at NCU. Findings revealed that participants experienced positive relationships with all institutional actors, but particularly highlighted their professors and their peers as key influences associated with their experiences in college. The presence of a critical mass of Black faculty, administrators, staff, and students signaled and cultivated a welcoming environment for the participants (Allen, 1985, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Gurin & Epps, 1975).

Both the focus groups and in-depth individual interviews provided insight into the key influences associated with the academic achievement and college experiences as identified by the participants. The institutional meanings expressed by the participants included their internalization of the *student first, athlete second* mantra, a high level of academic motivation, the value of setting and writing down personal goals, and their commitment to uplifting their race and community. The emergent findings revealed that concerted institutional efforts at an HBU led to the creation of a familial, culturally empowering, identity-affirming environment in which Black male student athletes could develop holistically (Brown, 2004; Charlton, 2011). Collectively, these findings highlight an HBU's ability to establish a level of congruency between institutional

actions (NCU Athletic Department mission statement, Student Athlete Handbook, and compliance guidelines), actors (NCU faculty, administrators, athletic staff, and Black male student athletes), and meanings (Black male student athletes' perceptions of their role as student athletes at an NCAA Division II school), which contributes to the academic achievement and positive college experiences of Black male student athletes.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings from the current study provide insight into key institutional practices that can enhance Black male student athletes' academic achievement and positive college experiences. Although these findings cannot be generalized to all institutions of higher education in the U.S., they nevertheless provide policymakers, educators, and administrators with useful information to evaluate their current policies and practices. These stakeholders should therefore carefully consider the recommendations discussed below.

From this study, it is evident the participants benefitted from a variety of institutional programs and services (e.g., Study Tables, peer tutors, and mandatory study hall) that underscored their value as students first and athletes second. Therefore, one recommendation is to offer an institution-wide academic support program that caters to all students, rather than segmenting these services. The mere location of these services on the academic part of campus highlighted the students' primary role at the institution. Thus, another recommendation is to establish these programs in locations that reinforce in the minds of student athletes their value as students first. In addition, the streamlining of academic support services for student athletes may help alleviate student athletes' feelings of isolation from the student body at all institutional types (e.g., HBCUs and

PWIs). This recommendation is consistent with the logic behind the NCAA's elimination of athlete-segregated dormitories in 1996.

The participants explicitly noted that all students had access to these resources. Black male student athletes are often stigmatized based on their race, athletic status, and perceived intellectual abilities (Brooks & Althouse, 2000; Harrison et al., 2009; Sailes, 2010b). Thus, establishing an academic support program that serves all students facilitates Black male student athletes' integration into the campus community rather than isolating them (Duderstadt, 2003). At NCU, the Office of Student Affairs and the Academic Retention Center operate these programs, but they also collaborate with the Athletic Department to ensure that student athletes' needs are being met. The formal establishment or strengthening of these relationships is integral to optimizing institutional resources as well as insuring students' academic achievement and holistic development.

Another key component of these services was their creation of a comfortable environment where student athletes could meet with professors or peer tutors in a one-on-one setting. Maintaining a quiet environment conducive to delivering academic assistance is important to the program's overall effectiveness. The participants also described how these programs enforced strict monitoring of their attendance and academic progress, which they viewed as beneficial. According to the participants, the strict monitoring indicated to them that their presence and academic development were not only acknowledged, but also valued. Thus, effective monitoring of student athletes' participation and academic progress in these programs is another recommendation for institutions of higher education.

Coupled with this academic monitoring could be the incorporation of an accountability system, similar to the way athletic staff track statistics on athletes to measure their athletic performance. Given that student athletes at the intercollegiate level are driven by competition and excellence, a recommendation would be to simulate an athletic competition with academically related tasks. For example, similar to an athletic contest in which a coach evaluates a student athlete's effectiveness based on statistics, academic support programs could work with the athletics staff to develop an evaluation system for the student athletes' participation and engagement in these programs. Attendance at study sessions, satisfactory evaluations by professors or peer tutors, extracurricular involvement, and exceptional performance in academic classes could be tracked in a manner similar to the tracking of yards, tackles, and completions in football or points, rebounds, and assists in basketball. Several institutions already have recognition programs that celebrate the academic accomplishments of their student athletes. This initiative would allow student athletes to compete with each other for recognition based on their academic participation, engagement, and performance. Such a program would capitalize on student athletes' competitive spirit.

In addition to increasing recognition of Black male student athletes' academic success at the institutional level, organizations such as the NCAA, Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (JBHE), and The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) should coalesce to create a nationwide ranking of institutions that graduate Black male student athletes at high rates, as well as institutions that show improvement from year to year (Cooper, 2012). Harper et al. (2013) have initiated these efforts by aggregating data on Black male student athletes from various sources, including NCAA data reports, the

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) website, and various institutions. However, taking these initiatives a step further would include creating a national top 25 ranking similar to the widely publicized rankings of athletic teams. These rankings could be disseminated through numerous outlets, from scholarly journals within the field of higher education to mass media channels such as ESPN.

Along with this recognition, best institutional practices could be promoted and shared across institutions. For example, using national data (e.g., the NCAA's Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Learning of Students (GOALS) and/or the Student College Outcomes and Recent Experiences (SCORE) surveys) could assist in the identification of institutions where Black male student athletes experience positive academic, athletic, social, and holistic developmental outcomes. These initiatives would reflect the educational mission of institutions of higher education and prioritize Black male student athletes' holistic development, rather than simply celebrating their athletic accomplishments.

Another recommendation for policy and practice is to establish a clear and consistent line of communication between the faculty and athletic staff. The participants in the current study benefitted from engaging in positive relationships with professors who understood their unique schedules as student athletes and worked with them to ensure that high expectations were maintained while reasonable accommodations were provided. The schism between the faculty and Athletic Departments at many post-secondary institutions is well documented in the literature (Duderstadt, 2003; Funk, 1991; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Sperber, 2000). However, if institutions of higher education

aim to remain true or in some cases return, to their roots of academic integrity, a healthy partnership between academic faculty and administrators and athletic staff is essential.

This recommendation incorporates the oversight of the institution's president. At NCU, the congruency between institutional actions (e.g., formal policies and informal practices), actors (faculty, academic administrators, athletic administrators, coaches, athletic staff, academic support staff, institution staff, and students), and meanings (Black male student athletes' perceptions of the institutional environment) contributed to the academic achievement and positive college experiences of Black male student athletes (Zilber, 2002). As a recommendation for other institutions, under the president's leadership regular meetings could be held with a group of faculty representatives, top level athletic administrators, and academic support staff at least twice a semester to exchange ideas about best practices related to increasing student athletes' holistic development and preparation for life after college.

One topic that could be discussed is incentivizing peer tutor and faculty participation within student academic support programs. The institution and its Athletic Department could devise a plan to ensure that a set amount of revenue generated by each entity is dedicated to increasing the number and quality of peer tutors and professors within these programs. Most importantly, the institution's educational mission and core values should govern these meetings. Similar to the recommendation regarding academic support programs, strengthening the partnership between the academic and athletic aspects of the institution could exponentially benefit the student athletes' overall well-being.

Another key recommendation, particularly for PWIs, is to recruit and retain more Black students, faculty, administrators, and staff. The participants overwhelmingly expressed that a key reason they chose to attend NCU and a vital element of their positive experiences and academic persistence in college, was the culturally congruent and accepting environment they experienced at an HBCU (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Gurin & Epps, 1975). Division I PWIs are strongly committed to recruiting talented Black male athletes in high numbers; however, when it comes to attracting talented Black students their efforts pale in comparison (Harper et al., 2013). If these institutions are committed to increasing Black male student athletes' achievement, they must apply the same effort to enrolling outstanding Black students that they apply to recruiting talented Black athletes.

Diversity initiatives should receive funding and institutional support comparable to that of the Athletic Department to recruit and retain more Black students, faculty, administrators, and staff. Although not all schools can duplicate the exact demographics of an HBCU, there are ways to create culturally accepting environments. For example, Strayhorn, Terrell, Redmond, and Walton (2010) described the important role of African American cultural centers at PWIs. These facilities serve as a symbol of Black cultural recognition, appreciation, and acceptance. Furthermore, given the history of success at HBCUs, PWIs should collaborate with HBCUs to identify and disseminate best practices and ideas about how to recruit and retain Black male student athletes. These partnerships could include having formal visiting scholar programs designed to strengthen connections and enhance Black male student athletes' academic achievement. Thus, a primary lesson of this study is that the presence of a critical mass of Black students, faculty,

administrators, and staff signals a culturally accepting educational environment and contributes to positive college experiences for Black male student athletes.

Institutions of higher education should also create programs focused specifically on student athletes' holistic academic, athletic, social, and psychological development. In response to questions about the key influences on their academic achievement, the participants overwhelmingly referenced the role of personal motivation and self-accountability. One proposal that makes use of this finding is to establish a program called "Limitless." The title of the program would send a message to student athletes that their potential for success has no limits other than the barriers they internalize and place on themselves. The purpose of this program would be to empower, educate, and inspire student athletes to maximize their full potential as holistic individuals. The program would focus on helping student athletes reach a deeper level of awareness about who they are and who they want to become.

This program could include the writing of a personal mission statement, the documentation of short-term and long-term career goals, self-awareness activities (e.g., personality, values, and career inventory assessments), confidence building exercises, and individual brand/image management techniques. Incorporating testimonies and examples from previous alumni as well as from other individuals, the student athletes respect and admire could help them transform their thinking about their value and abilities. These narratives could focus on how individuals with backgrounds similar to those of the student athletes overcame obstacles to achieve their goals.

In addition, group discussion sections focused on identifying and analyzing societal norms such as negative stereotypes and historical and current trends (e.g.,

attrition rates, incarceration rates, etc.) could be employed to enhance the student athletes' critical thinking skills. These sessions would provide student athletes with a historical context for the challenges they face and enable them to connect their personal experiences with broader systemic issues (Edwards, 2000). This knowledge will provide a sense of empowerment to enable them to achieve their full potential. These types of activities and exercises could increase the student athletes' personal motivation, self-efficacy, and self-accountability.

Building on findings from the current study as well as a previous study examining the impact of critical factors on Black male student athletes' academic and athletic success at a Division I PWI (Cooper, 2009), the researcher proposes implementing an approach called The New Athletic Model. This model is based on the researcher's lived experiences, personal values, unique perspectives, and previous research (Cooper, 2009; Cooper, 2012; Cooper & Hawkins, 2012). The New Athletic Model aims to capitalize on the influence of athletics on young athletes as a starting point for helping them develop as well-rounded individuals. In addition, this model is influenced by previous models of college student development (Astin, 1993a, 1993b, 1999; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, 1996; Pascarella, 1985; Sedlacek, 1987; Tinto, 1993; Weidman, 1989), student athletes' academic success (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Harrison et al., 2010), and African American cultural values, experiences, and identity development (Boykin, 1986; Cross, 1971, 1995; Gallien, 2005).

The purpose of The New Athletic Model is to equip student athletes with the skills they need to maximize their potential both on and off the field and develop holistically. The key components of The New Athletic Model include the following

seven Holistic Development Principles (HDPs): 1) personal development, 2) social harmony, 3) engagement with a strong support system, 4) academic achievement, 5) career aspirations, 6) time management skills, and 7) organized religion/spirituality.

Personal development refers to the experiencing of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-fulfillment. The two primary elements of personal development are knowledge of self and knowledge of self in relation to others. These elements are attained through various exercises and activities that encourage individuals to reflect on their personal values, experiences, and beliefs and to assess how these perspectives fit within their social world. These exercises include self-awareness assessments, culturally empowering reading assignments, diversity enrichment workshops, and scenario based/role-playing activities.

Social harmony involves the establishment and preservation of positive interpersonal relationships among individuals within a given social world. For Black male student athletes at institutions of higher education, social harmony refers to their integration into the campus community. The two key aspects of social harmony include engaging in meaningful relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds and individuals sharing their unique experiences, perspectives, and values. A key strategy for attaining social harmony involves active involvement in extracurricular activities such as community service projects, multicultural groups, leadership development, Greek life, and pre-professional organizations. The principle of social harmony is grounded in the belief that the lives of all individuals are enhanced when they learn from one another and maintain meaningful and positive relationships.

Engagement with a strong support system involves the creation of positive relationships with family, friends, mentors, counselors, teachers, coaches, teammates, and other individuals who may facilitate an individual's holistic development. The focus of engagement with a strong support system is for individuals to identify people in their lives who will uplift them and advance their overall development. The role these individuals play throughout the course of an individual's life may change; however, the consistent presence of a core nucleus of supporters is vital to the psychosocial well-being of the individual. Activities related to building this engagement would include family tree assignments, the establishment of mentoring relationships, and accountability protocols to monitor an individual's communication with key supporters.

Academic achievement refers to the optimization of an individual's performance on academically related tasks. Since all individuals are different, academic achievement means something different for each individual. Therefore, academic achievement in this context does not refer to arbitrary measures, but rather to personalized goals set by the individual and their support system (e.g., family, teachers, and academic advisors). Academic achievement would be rewarded and celebrated both privately and publicly to reinforce for the individual the importance of education. Academic achievement may be attained by using personal education plans (PEPs) along with consistent involvement in academic development programs (e.g., tutoring, summer enrichment programs, research assistantships, etc.).

Career aspirations refer to the identification and fulfillment of occupational paths that enable individuals to experience a desired quality of life. A major constraint on many Black youth is their lack of social capital, leading to a distorted perception of the

career opportunities available to them. An underlying belief behind the career aspirations principle is that individuals can only attain true happiness in adulthood when they perform tasks that challenge them and fuel their passions. Through the development of an individual's social capital, the individual can identify the range of career options they can pursue. Activities designed to enlighten individuals about their career options include career exploration; personality, skills, and interest assessments; internship placement; involvement in local, regional, national, and international professional organizations and associations; and networking programs.

Time management skills refer to the ability to manage multiple responsibilities while maintaining a positive state of mind. Individuals who participate in athletics, particularly at the interscholastic or intercollegiate levels, face significant time constraints. Their time is often spent training, practicing, studying, in class, or participating in competitions/games. Depending on the individual's ability to prioritize and manage these responsibilities successfully, they may experience negative psychological, physical, and/or social outcomes. Therefore, promoting positive time management skills is essential to an individual's holistic development and overall well-being. Developing individuals' proficiency in short-term and long-term scheduling, planning, and organizing (e.g., prioritizing responsibilities) is the key to instilling effective time management skills.

Organized religion/spirituality refers to an individual's connection with a divine entity or greater purpose. The promotion of this principle does not require endorsing any particular religion or belief system, but instead provides a support system for individuals to explore and identify a way of thinking that fits their needs. The key aspect of this

principle is to incorporate a way of thinking and living that contributes to the individual's holistic (spiritual, psychological, emotional, physical, and social) development.

Providing individuals with the resources necessary to either foster their development within their current way of thinking or explore options previously unknown to them is a vital aspect of this HDP. The underlying assumption is that individuals with a healthy level of spirituality live fulfilling lives that not only maximize their potential, but also contribute to the betterment of the world. Activities that could be encouraged are regular attendance at religious services or spiritual gatherings, engagement in regular prayer or peaceful meditation, engagement with spiritual counselors whom an individual trusts, and consistent participation in religious outreach.

Future Research

This study contributes to the current body of literature on Black male student athletes by examining their holistic experiences at an HBU. This study builds on the limited number of studies that have investigated the relationship between the unique educational environments of HBCUs and Black male student athletes' experiences and outcomes (AIR, 1988, 1989; Brown, 2004; Person & LeNoir, 1997). Future research should include a larger sample size of participants. A larger sample size could also include Black male student athletes from different institutions including, but not limited to, Division I, Division II, Division III, junior college, NAIA, and community colleges.

Future studies should also conduct comparative analyses across institutional types (e.g., private vs. public, HBCUs vs. PWIs, low-resource vs. high-resource, etc.) to further examine the impact of institutional cultures on the lived experiences and outcomes of student athletes. Additionally, future research should include in-depth cross-sectional

and comparative analyses of Black male student athletes across institutional classifications (e.g., first year, second year, third year, fourth year, fifth year, and sixth year); family income backgrounds (e.g., high income earners, middle income earners, and low income earners); academic preparedness for college (e.g., high school GPA, quality of high school, etc.); and academic achievement levels (e.g., high academic achieving vs. low academic achieving) to provide greater insight into the socialization processes at these institutions.

In addition, future research should expand the sample size to include more diversity within the sample along lines of stratification including race (e.g., Black, White, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Multi-racial, etc.); ethnicity (e.g., African American, Irish American, Puerto Rican American, Chinese, Korean, etc.); gender (e.g., female, male, transgender, etc.); athletic status (e.g., non-student athlete vs. student athlete); sport affiliation (e.g., baseball, track and field, swimming, tennis, etc.); and sport type affiliation (e.g., single competition sports vs. team competition sports). Lastly, a longitudinal study (e.g., ethnography) should be conducted on a smaller sample of Black male student athletes from pre-college to post-college to examine their socialization processes. Collectively, future research should build on previous literature to identify effective strategies and best practices related to Black student athletes' academic achievement and holistic development in college.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

STUDENT ATHLETE COLLEGE EXPERIENCES QUESTIONNAIRE (SACEQ)

Your participation is voluntary. You reserve the right to withdraw your participation in this study at any time. Information received from the participants will be privately reviewed and analyzed by the principal investigators. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the survey, please contact Joseph N. Cooper at joeycoop@uga.edu. Thank you for participating in this study.

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON ANY SHEET

The purpose of this survey is to identify and classify the college experiences of Black male student athlete participants enrolled at a Historically Black College and/or University (HBCU).

1. What sport do you play in college? _____
2. What position(s) do you play on your college athletic team?

3. Which sports did you play in high school (please circle all that apply)
 - a. Basketball
 - b. Baseball
 - c. Football
 - d. Soccer
 - e. Track and Field
 - f. Other(s): _____
4. I attended a Junior College (junior college) before attending my current school.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. My primary career goal is to be a professional athlete.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

6. In your decision to come to college, how important was...					
Please circle one response to the following questions.	Not Important at all				Extremely Important
a. Attending an HBCU	1	2	3	4	5
b. Academic programs	1	2	3	4	5
c. Athletic program	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle one response to the following questions.	Not Important at all				Extremely Important
d. Social environment	1	2	3	4	5
e. Location	1	2	3	4	5
f. Family member went to an HBCU	1	2	3	4	5
g. Financial Reasons	1	2	3	4	5

7. What school was your primary college choice? _____

8. What is your current/prospective major? _____

The next set of questions relates to your COMMITMENT TO YOUR MAJOR, earning a degree, and attending graduate school.					
Please circle one response to the following questions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
9. I am committed to my current or prospective major.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am committed to earning a college degree.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am committed to attending graduate school after college.	1	2	3	4	5

Now, I would like you to think about how much time you spend on average per week on the following tasks.					
12. Which months are you in your athletic season? _____					
13. On average, how many hours per week do you spend on the following tasks DURING YOUR ATHLETIC SEASON...					
Please circle one response for each of the following questions.					
Hours Per Week					
a. Academic-related tasks	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more
b. Team practices	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more

13. On average, how many hours per week do you spend on the following tasks DURING YOUR ATHLETIC SEASON...					
Please circle one response for each of the following questions.					
Hours Per Week					
c. Workouts (individual or team)	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more
d. Doing social activities (e.g., hanging out with friends)	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more
e. Personal hobbies (e.g., relaxing, listening to music, etc.)	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more
14. Which months are you in your athletic off-season? <hr/>					
15. On average, how much time per week do you spend on the following tasks DURING THE OFF-SEASON...					
Please circle one response for each of the following questions.					
Hours Per Week					
a. Academic-related tasks	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more
Please circle one response for each of the following questions.					
Hours Per Week					
b. Team practices	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more
c. Workouts (individual or team)	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more
d. Doing social activities (e.g., hanging out with friends)	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more
e. Personal hobbies (e.g., relaxing, listening to music, etc.)	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more

Now, I would like you to think about your ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES in college. Please circle one response to the following questions.					
Please circle one response to the following questions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
16. I participate in one or more study groups.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I attend over half my academic classes during my athletic season.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I attend over half my academic classes during my athletic off-season.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I participate in one or more academic-related extracurricular organization (e.g., Honors program).	1	2	3	4	5
20. I am interested in my academic courses.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I have one or more faculty members who I consider as a mentor.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I have positive relationships with my professors.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I have positive relationships with the administration/staff.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I have positive relationships with my academic advisors.	1	2	3	4	5
25. How satisfied are you with the following:					
Please circle one response to the following questions.	Not Satisfied at all				Completely Satisfied
a. Courses offered (e.g., majors)	1	2	3	4	5
b. Curriculum offered (e.g., content covered in classes)	1	2	3	4	5
c. My current major	1	2	3	4	5
d. My academic performance in college	1	2	3	4	5

e. My overall academic experiences in college	1	2	3	4	5
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Now, I would like you to think about your ATHLETIC EXPERIENCES in college.					
Please circle one response to the following questions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
26. I participate in most of the mandatory team activities.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I participate in most of the voluntary team activities.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I have attended or participated in most of the team games last season.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I am dedicated to my athletic team.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I have positive relationships with my coaches.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I have positive relationships with the athletic staff (e.g. athletic director, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
32. I have positive relationships with the athletics academic support staff (e.g., tutors).	1	2	3	4	5
33. How satisfied are you with the following:					
Please circle one response for each of the following questions.	Not Satisfied at all				Completely Satisfied
a. The amount of time I spend on my athletic participation	1	2	3	4	5
b. My playing time on the team	1	2	3	4	5
c. My role on the team	1	2	3	4	5
d. My athletic performance	1	2	3	4	5
e. My overall athletic experiences	1	2	3	4	5

Now, I would like you to think about your SOCIAL EXPERIENCES in college. Please circle one response to the following questions.					
Please circle one response for each of the following questions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
34. I participate in one or more social extracurricular organization at school (e.g., campus organization, fraternity, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
35. I feel a part of the campus community.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I attend or participate social events at HBCU classic games or rivalry games.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I engage in social activities off-campus (e.g., movies, downtown, etc.) on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I have positive relationships with other students who are not my teammates.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I have positive relationships with my teammates.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I have positive relationships with other student athletes who are not my teammates.	1	2	3	4	5
41. I have a positive relationship with members of the community near my school (e.g., non-students who live near the school).	1	2	3	4	5
42. How satisfied are you with the following:					
Please circle one response for each of the following questions.	Not Satisfied at all				Completely Satisfied
a. Campus environment	1	2	3	4	5
b. Off-campus environment	1	2	3	4	5
c. The social/extracurricular	1	2	3	4	5

opportunities available					
d. My overall social experiences	1	2	3	4	5

Now, I would like you to think about your PERSONAL ROLE IDENTITIES in college.					
Please circle one response for each of the following questions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
43. I consider myself student first and an athlete second.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Being a student is an important part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I consider myself an athlete first and a student second.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Being an athlete is an important part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5

Lastly, I would like for you to provide me with DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION about yourself.					
Please circle one response for each of the following questions.					
47. Which of the following best describes your race?	Black	White	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander
48. Which of the following best describes the annual income of your family?	\$9,999 or below	\$10,000-\$29,999	\$30,000-49,999	\$50,000-\$69,999	\$70,000 or above
49. Please provide the best description of your family background when you were growing up (e.g., grew up with mother and father, grew up with single mother or father, grew up with grandparents, etc.)? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>					

Please circle one response for each of the following questions.					
50. Which of the following best describes your high school GPA?	1.99 or below	2.00-2.49	2.50-2.99	3.00-3.49	3.50-4.00
51. Please briefly describe the racial make-up of your high school (e.g., predominantly the same race as you, predominantly a different race than you, or a mixture of races?) <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>					
Please circle one response for each of the following questions.					
52. What is your current academic year or classification in college?	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
53. Which of the following best describes your estimated college GPA?	2.00 or below	2.01-2.49	2.50-2.99	3.00-3.49	3.50-4.00

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "Black male Student Athletes' Experiences at a Historically Black University " conducted by Joseph Cooper from the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. Billy Hawkins, Department of Kinesiology, University of Georgia (706-542-4427). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed. The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

The purpose of this study is to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and positive college experiences of Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

- 1) Answer questions about my personal background and provide basic demographic information. Answer questions about my academic, athletic, and social experiences in college. I will also answer questions about my motivations for attending an HBU and commitment to my academic major. This process should take approximately fifteen to thirty minutes.
- 2) Potentially, take part in a videotaped and audiotaped focus group interview along with other student athletes from my school that will last approximately one to one and half hours.
- 3) Potentially, take part in an audiotaped individual interview with the researcher that will last between forty minutes and one hour.
- 4) Someone from the study may email me to clarify my information.

The benefits for me include that I can provide insight to the academic research community and society at large about the experiences of Black male student athletes at an institution of higher education in the United States. I will also provide insight into effective measures and key strategies for improving academic achievement and positive college experiences among Black male student athletes. Findings from this study may prove useful in enhancing and creating programs that improve Black male student athlete academic achievement and overall positive experiences in college.

No risk is expected but I may experience some discomfort or stress during the focus group interview or in-depth interview (if selected and agree to participate) as others in the room will be able to hear about my experiences. I can choose not to speak up at any point during the study if I feel uncomfortable or otherwise do not choose to speak.

I understand that the time commitment for the questionnaire will range from fifteen to thirty minutes.

No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if required by law. I will be assigned an identifying pseudonym and this pseudonym will be used on all of the questionnaires I fill out.

I understand that the focus group interview will be video recorded and audio taped and this recording will only be seen by the two researchers. I also understand that the individual interview will be audio taped and this recording will only be reviewed by the two researchers. After transcription and analysis is completed on the video and audio recordings, these tapes will be destroyed.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is Joseph Cooper and I am a graduate student at the University of Georgia. I am pursuing a doctoral degree in the area of Kinesiology with a concentration in sport management and policy. I am conducting a research study on Black male student athlete experiences at a Historically Black University (HBU). The purpose of the study is to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and positive college experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU in the Southeastern United States. With your permission, I would like to conduct a focus group interview with you today about your experiences as a Black male student athlete at an HBU and the impact these experiences have had on your life.

Throughout the interview, I will ask you questions related to your personal background and your experiences (academic, social, and athletic) in college. I will also ask about your personal motivations for attending an HBU. All information we discuss will be confidential and your identity will not be revealed on any documentation associated with this study. No identifiers will be used for this research with exception of a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and the documentation of your demographic information. Do you have questions in regards to your participation in this study?

I anticipate this focus group interview will last between one and one and a half hour. You may discontinue your participation in the interview at any point. You may decline to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You may also feel free to take a break during any portion of the interview. Also, feel free to let me know if you need additional clarification or explanation about any of the questions. Do you have any questions for me before we begin the interview?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Motivations for Attending a Historically Black University (HBU)

1. Tell me about your reasons for choosing to attend an HBU.
2. Based on your college experiences, what are your feelings about attending an HBU

Academic Experiences

1. Tell me about your relationship with your professors.
2. What type(s) of academic support programs are available at your school? In your opinion, are they helpful?

Athletic Experiences

1. Tell me about a positive athletic experience you have had in college.
2. Describe how you feel participating in athletics has affected on your academic experiences.

Social Experiences

1. Describe your involvement with campus organizations aside from your athletic team.
2. Overall, how have your social experiences in college affected your academic experiences? Athletic experiences?

APPENDIX D

IN-DEPTH INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is Joseph Cooper and I am a graduate student at the University of Georgia. I am pursuing a doctoral degree in the area of Kinesiology with a concentration in sport management and policy. I am conducting a research study on Black male student athlete experiences at a Historically Black University (HBU). The purpose of the study is to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and positive college experiences of Black male student athletes at an HBU in the Southeastern United States. With your permission, I would like interview you today about your experiences as a Black male student athlete at an HBU and the impact these experiences have had on your life.

Throughout the interview, I will ask you questions related to your personal background and your experiences (academic, social, and athletic) in college. I will also ask about your personal motivations for attending an HBU. All information we discuss will be confidential and your identity will not be revealed on any documentation associated with this study. No identifiers will be used for this research with exception of a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and the documentation of your demographic information. Do you have questions in regards to your participation in this study?

I anticipate this interview will last forty minutes to one hour. You may end the interview at any point. You may decline to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You may also feel free to take a break during any portion of the interview. Also, feel free to let me know if you need additional clarification or explanation about any of the questions. Do you have any questions for me before we begin the interview?

IN-DEPTH INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I would like to begin with talking about your personal motivations for choosing to attend a predominantly White institution.

Motivations for Attending a HBCU

- What were the reasons you chose to attend a Historically Black University instead of a predominantly White institution?

Thank you for sharing that information with me. Now let's move on to talk about your personal background.

Background Experience

- Tell me about your family background
- What, if any, major challenges did you faced growing up?
- What were the major factors in your life that would say helped you overcome those obstacles?

Thank you for sharing that information with me. Now let's move on to talk about your academic experiences.

Academic Experiences

- Tell me about your favorite and least favorite courses in college.
- What were some challenges you faced academically in college, if any?
- What factors helped you overcome those academic challenges?
- What recommendations would you provide to improve academic achievement levels for Black male student athletes in college?

Thank you for sharing your academic experiences with me. Now let's talk about your athletic experiences.

Athletic Experiences

- Tell me the best and worst things about being an athlete in college.
- Tell me about your relationships with your coaches and teammates.
- How has being an athlete affected your overall student experience in college?

Social Experiences

- Tell me about the best and worst social experiences you had in college.
- Describe how being an athlete has affected your social experiences in college.

That concludes our interview. Is there anything else you would like to mention or talk about? If not, I would like to thank you for participating in this interview. The information you provided me will be extremely useful to my research. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns pertaining to this interview. I will send you a copy of the transcribed interview for your records and for you to review. Thank you again for your participation. Have a great day.

APPENDIX E

EMAIL SCRIPT

Good morning Athletic Director. My name is Joseph Cooper, a doctoral student at the University of Georgia in the Department of Kinesiology. I am planning to conduct a research study, which focuses on the holistic experiences of Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University (HBU). The purpose of this study is to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and positive colleges of Black male student athletes at an HBU in the Southeastern United States.

Details about the study are listed below. It is my hope that the current Black male student athletes at your institution could participate in my study. The names of the student athletes will be confidential and at no point will their names documented on any part of the study. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality. Following the analysis of the study, all surveys and interview transcripts will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality.

My study will involve a 4-part process listed below:

1. Document Review (target participants=0)

- This portion of the study will involve a review of institutional documents such as institutional mission statements, Athletic Department archives, and academic policies.
- Information analyzed will be paraphrased and summarized.

2. Student Athlete College Experiences Questionnaire (SACEQ) (target participants=113 Black male football and men's basketball student athlete s)

- This questionnaire will contain 53 items (35 five-point Likert scale questions (interval level), 8 multiple-choice questions (ordinal level), 8 open-ended questions (non-ratio fill-in-the blank), and two yes/no questions (nominal level)).
- The questionnaire will be divided into 10 sections: 1) sport participation and interests (5 questions), 2) motivations for attending an HBU (1 question), 3) primary college and current/prospective major (2 questions), 4) commitment to academic major (3 questions), 5) frequency and type of college experiences (4 questions), 6) academic experiences (10 questions), 7) athletic experiences (8 questions), 8) social experiences (9 questions), 9) personal role identities (4 questions), and 10) demographic background (7 questions).
- The questionnaire will be submitted to the University of Georgia IRB as well as the IRB committee at your institution. Only upon approval from the UGA IRB will the questionnaire be available for use.

3. Semi-Structured Focus Group Interviews (target participants=12 to 16 Black male football and men's basketball student athletes)

- I like to conduct one focus group interview with six to ten Black male football student athletes and another focus group interview with six to ten Black male men's basketball student athletes that should range between one and one and half hours to discuss their college experiences.

- Upon your approval, I would provide my own transportation to the institution. All interviews will take place at the institution or at the athletic facility.
 - The purpose of these focus group interviews is to identify key themes among the experiences of a group of Black male student athletes at an HBU as it relates to their academic achievement and positive college experiences.
4. **Semi-Structured In-Depth Individual Interviews** (target participants=four Black male football and men's basketball student athletes)
- This portion of the study will just involve interviewing two Black male football student athletes and two Black male men's basketball student athletes individually.
 - These interviews will last between forty minutes to one hour.
 - The purpose of these interviews is to identify key influences related to the academic achievement and positive college experiences of each individual participant.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. I hope to hear back from you soon in regards to your response to our request. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Joseph N. Cooper, M.A.
 Ph.D. candidate
 Graduate Teaching Assistant
 University of Georgia
 Department of Kinesiology

APPENDIX F

TELEPHONE SCRIPT

Good morning, Athletic Director. My name is Joseph Cooper. I am a doctoral student at the University of Georgia in the Department of Kinesiology. I am planning to conduct a research study, which focuses on the holistic experiences of Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University (HBU). The purpose of this study is to identify key influences associated with the academic achievement and positive colleges of Black male student athletes at an HBU in the Southeastern United States.

It is my hope that the current Black male student athletes at your institution could serve as participants in my study. The study will involve a document review, 53-item Student Athlete College Experiences Questionnaire (SACEQ), three focus group interviews with six to ten participants, and four in-depth individual interviews with four participants. Participation will be voluntary. All participants will be given a consent form with detailed information about the study. Even after signing the consent form, participants can decline to answer any questions or remove themselves from the study at any point.

The names of the student athletes will be confidential and at no point will their names be documented on any part of the study. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality. Following the analysis of the study, all surveys and interview transcripts will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality.

I can provide you with all forms for you to review.

Do you have any questions about the study?

I would like to formally request your permission to approach the Black male student athletes at your institution to participate in my study.