

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: UNVEILING THE MULTIFACETED
IDENTITY OF BLACK STUDENT
ATHLETES: IMPLICATIONS FOR
COACHING AND SPORT LEADERSHIP

Tasha Harris, Doctor of Philosophy, 2024

Dissertation directed by: Professor Susan De La Paz
Department of Counseling
Higher Education, and Special Education

This qualitative study explores the multifaceted experiences of Black student-athletes in higher education. The landscape of higher education leadership is predominantly White, with a significant majority being White men. Over 80% of chancellors, presidents, athletic directors, faculty athletic representatives, and conference commissioners are White; meanwhile, Black student-athletes constitute 55% of the NCAA's highest revenue sports—men's basketball and football. This disparity is particularly striking given the significant presence and contributions of Black student-athletes to college sports. It highlights the impact of external and internal factors, such as the lack of adequate support systems, that shape the identity and experiences of student-athletes, especially those from marginalized backgrounds.

Utilizing Critical Race Theory and Community Cultural Wealth frameworks as an analytical tool, this study highlights the importance of counter-storytelling to empower Black student-athletes and challenge dominant cultural narratives. Interviews were conducted with 10

student-athletes from both Historically Black Colleges (HBCUs) and Universities and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Adapting tools from Strauss and Goldberg (1999) and Cowan et al. (1978), this study shifts the focus on student-athletes, and explores how racial, athletic, and academic identities intersect among Black student-athletes, illuminating their perceptions of past, present, and future selves.

Findings reveal that HBCUs cultivate social capital opportunities, while PWI student-athletes need stronger navigational capital to maneuver through less supportive environments. Both institutions provide familial, aspirational, and resistance capital, but PWI student-athletes struggle more with discovering their true identities due to societal pressures and an overemphasis on athletic performance. Participant counter-stories emphasized the importance of holistic identity development, particularly regarding invisible identities, where dominant athletic roles limit full identity exploration. Black student-athletes navigate between Goffman's (1959) concepts of the frontstage and backstage self. Their frontstage self is the persona they present to society, shaped by impression management to counter stereotypes and biases, while the backstage self represents their true identity which they struggle to develop due to the constant demands of frontstage performance. This performance aims to project an idealized version of self challenging negative assumptions.

Findings highlight how experiences at PWIs and HBCUs shape the identity development of Black student-athletes, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support systems encompassing social integration, leadership representation, and identity development programming beyond sports. As student-athletes navigate the transition out of college, the study emphasizes the importance of holistic identity development, especially in acknowledging unexplored facets of identity. Ultimately, this research fills a gap in understanding the role of

CCW in navigating the complex landscape of athletic, academic, and racial experiences in higher education, offering insights for coaches and sport leaders on how to foster more inclusive and supportive environments.

Keywords: Community Cultural Wealth, Black student-athletes, Black student-athlete identity, possible-selves, college athletic administrators, self-presentation.

UNVEILING THE MULTIFACETED IDENTITY OF BLACK STUDENT
ATHLETES: IMPLICATIONS FOR COACHING AND SPORT LEADERSHIP

by

Tasha Renee Harris

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2024

Advisory Committee:

Professor Susan De La Paz, Chair

Associate Professor Andrew Brantlinger

Associate Professor Tamara Clegg

Associate Professor Kelly Cummings

Professor Sharon Fries-Britt

© Copyright by
Tasha Renee Harris
2024

Acknowledgments

Completing this dissertation has been a laborious process that has taught me a lot about myself. It has humbled me and taught me the perseverance required to see a project through to the end, even when I wanted to give up. I have many people to thank for their support and encouragement throughout this journey. First and foremost, I extend my deepest appreciation and gratitude to my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Susan De La Paz. Without her guidance, kindness, and extreme level of patience, I would never have been able to complete such a monumental task. She has been a steadfast guide, offering invaluable advice and unwavering support for my research. Her belief in my potential, coupled with her empathy and understanding, has been a constant source of strength. I am profoundly grateful for her guidance, mentorship, and friendship.

Next, I want to thank my former student-athletes. If I had never had the pleasure of working with each of them and helping them navigate the landscape of being both athletes and students, this research would have never come to light. I especially want to thank one student in particular who challenged my belief that all students could succeed. His willingness to believe in my system and in himself academically ultimately drove me to this research study. I also want to thank all of my participants; without them, there would be no study. They willingly opened up to me and welcomed me into their lives as Black student-athletes, sharing how they navigated their experiences as students, athletes, and Black individuals.

I want to thank my parents for their support, even when they didn't understand why I was "still writing" every time they called. My sister, Michelle Williams, for

listening to me, holding me accountable when I wanted to stop, and offering support. I especially thank those who have been my biggest cheerleaders—Jamarlon Ellis, Jason Johnson, April Carroll, Fatina Lamar and Ronnie Riley.

Lastly, I want to dedicate this dissertation to my Grandma Iona, who pushed me to become a teacher over 20 years ago. She recently lost her battle with Dementia as I was preparing for my defense, I want to dedicate this to her. Despite never finishing high school, she always pushed me to excel academically. I know that she and my Grandpa are smiling down on me.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Problem Statement.....	1
NIL and Transfer Policies: Changing the Collegiate Landscape.....	3
Racialization and the Black Student-Athlete	4
Theoretical Frameworks	6
CRT and Sports.....	7
Community Cultural Wealth (CCW).....	7
Purpose of the Study	8
Synopsis of Projects.....	9
Study Design and Methodological Approach	11
Research Questions	11
Research Instruments	12
Grounded Theory Framework.....	13
Positionality	15
Significance of the Study	16
Organization of Dissertation	18
Glossary	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	20
Background	21
Critical Race Theory	23
Higher Education	24
Counter-Storytelling	27
Community Cultural Wealth.....	30
Racialization of the Student-Athlete	35
Identity Foreclosure and the “Student-Athlete” Label.....	39
Frontstage and Backstage Identity	42
Possible Selves.....	43
The Student-Athlete Collegiate Experience.....	46
HBCU vs PWI.....	46
Athletic Support Service Programs.....	51
Conclusion	52
Chapter 3: Research Methods	54
Research Design.....	55
Recruitment.....	56
Participants.....	57
Theoretical Sampling	57
Final Sample	59
Grounded Theory	59

Data Sources and Data Collection	60
Semi-structured Interviews	60
The Pie Graphic Organizer	61
Counter-Storytelling as Enactment of CRT	62
Data Management	64
Data Collection Procedure	64
Open Coding	67
Constant Comparative Method	70
Axial Coding	72
Selective Coding	74
Interrater Reliability	75
Trustworthiness	76
Triangulation and Credibility	77
Confirmability	77
Evolution of Research Questions	77
Integration of Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks	79
Researcher Reflexivity	79
Conclusion	81
Chapter 4: Findings	83
Overview of Participants	84
Introduction to Individual Stories	85
Participant Profiles	86
The Invisible Disability	86
Something to Prove	90
I Pretended to be Prepared for College	91
All I've Ever Known Is My Sport	93
Against All Odds	94
Life After Sport	95
Defying the Stereotype	98
The Dreamer	99
Overcoming Adversity	102
Transformed Experience	104
Counter-Storytelling	106
Data Analysis Map	107
Levels 1 and 2: Open Codes and Categories	108
Levels 3 and 4: Thematic Analysis	110
Realizing Societal and Self-imposed Expectations	111
Resistance	111
Uncovering Differences in HBCU vs. PWI Climate	116
Social Capital	116
Familial and Navigational Capital	125
Search for One's Identity Outside of Sport	130
Aspirational Capital	130
Summary	134
Level 5: Interrelating the Explanations	135
Level 6: Theory: Influences	136

Conclusion	137
Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications	139
Realizing Societal and Self-Imposed Expectations: Resistance Capital.....	141
Uncovering Differences in HBCU and PWI Climate: Social Capital	142
Determining How to Navigational and Athletic Dreams: Familial and Navigational Capital	146
Searching for One's Identity Outside of Sport: Aspirational Capital	149
Frontstage and Backstage Identity	153
Impact of Institutional Contexts on Identity Development and Cultural Capital in Black Student-Athletes	156
Implications and Recommendations	157
Recommendations and Future Research	161
Providing Mentorship and Support.....	164
Promoting Cultural Competence.....	164
Creating Inclusive Programming	164
Limitations	166
Conclusion	167
APPENDIX A	170
APPENDIX B	171
APPENDIX C	172
APPENDIX D	173
APPENDIX E.....	175
APPENDIX F	177
APPENDIX G	187
References.....	197

List of Tables

Table 1 Themes of Perceptions of Achievement in Pilot Study	10
Table 2 PWI Participant Demographics	87
Table 3 HBCU Participant Demographics	88
Table 4 Initial Codes	110
Table 5 HBCU vs. PWI: Community Cultural Wealth.....	112

List of Figures

Figure 1 The Pie Graphic Organizer	66
Figure 2 Thematic Findings Map.....	109
Figure 3 Racial & Athletic Identity: Role Model	123

Chapter 1: Introduction

“When I discover who I am, I’ll be free.”
Ralph Ellison (1952, p. 103)

Problem Statement

The underrepresentation of people of color in leadership positions is a problematic aspect of American higher education and college athletics that demands attention. In the landscape of higher education leadership roles, a significant majority of higher education leaders were identified as individuals of White ethnicity, with a considerable number comprised of White men. Lapchick (2023) reported that over 80% of chancellors, presidents, athletic directors, faculty athletic representatives, and conference commissioners were identified as White. Additionally, around 65% -75% of chancellors, presidents, athletic directors, faculty athletic representatives, and conference athletic directors, nearly 50% of faculty athletic representatives, and about 70% of conference commissioners were identified as White men.

Indeed, college athletics encompasses a vast student population, with over 480,000 students participating annually (Musico, 2020). Within this cohort, Black athletes constitute around 16%. They are especially concentrated in revenue-generating sports like men’s basketball and football, representing around 53% and 49%, respectively (Byrd, 2021; S. Harper, 2018). However, the significant lack of representation of people of color in leadership roles is concerning. According to NCAA Demographics, 17% of men’s head basketball coaches and 9% of men’s head football coaches at non-HBCU institutions are Black. In contrast, at HBCU institutions, 90% of men’s head basketball coaches and 93% of men’s head football

coaches are Black. Additionally, the NCAA demographics database reports that 14% of athletics directors and 11% of coaches across all NCAA teams are Black. This disparity is particularly notable given the significant presence (some might call it an overrepresentation) of Black student-athletes and their contributions to college sports. It is imperative that leadership positions reflect the racial diversity seen in campus populations and college athletic teams and recognize the complex interplay of external and internal factors, including the absence of adequate support systems, that shape the identity and experiences of student-athletes, especially those from marginalized backgrounds.

Research has shown that when Black student-athletes lack support systems that address their mental, academic, cultural, and social needs, they often prioritize their athletic identity over their racial and academic identity (J. Howe, 2020; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). The overemphasis on the athlete role among student-athletes inadvertently fosters a divide between their academic and athletic identities, leading to challenges in transitioning between these roles (S. J. L. Foster & Huml, 2017). This overidentification with the athlete role restricts students from adequately exploring their interests, needs, aptitudes, and values beyond their athletic identity as they navigate the structured and demanding environment set by college coaches. Student-athletes' schooling experiences, college choices, and athletic scholarships are all rooted and validated in their athletic pursuits, further solidifying their athletic identity (Despres et al., 2008; McEwen, 2010; Saffici & Pellegrino, 2012). As a result, their identities often become strongly associated with athletics, leading to conflicting priorities between sports and academics.

The intersection of being a Black student-athlete adds an additional layer of complexity, as these individuals must navigate the nuanced challenges associated with balancing their racial identity, athletic commitments, and academic pursuits (Cooley et al., 1991; Flowers, 2015). This balancing act involves strategic negotiation and navigation across multiple spaces (Flowers, 2015), compounded by the pronounced influence of collegiate sports on campus culture. Specifically, Black student-athletes often perceive their athletic ability as a primary avenue toward success (Ramsey & Brown, 2017). However, the lack of sufficient social support to foster holistic identity development may result in an overemphasis on their athletic persona, overshadowing other dimensions of their identity.

NIL and Transfer Policies: Changing the Collegiate Landscape

In recent years, significant changes in collegiate athletics have had profound implications for student-athletes, particularly in relation to their holistic identity development. Two key developments are the introduction of the Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policies and the new NCAA transfer rule that allows athletes to transfer and play immediately. The NIL policy, which was enacted in July 2021, permits student-athletes to monetize their personal brand through endorsements, sponsorships, and other business ventures. Being a Black student-athlete already comes with its challenges of exploitation and the pressure to conform to certain stereotypes, which in turn impact their schooling experiences (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Cohen et al., 2024; Simiyu, 2012). NIL does offer opportunities for financial gain and increased visibility for Black student-athletes (Coackley et al., 2024).

However, it also presents challenges in the potential of being commercialized and an overemphasis on their athletic identity.

The recent NCAA transfer rule, which allows student-athletes to transfer to another institution and be immediately eligible to compete, has accelerated the movement of athletes between programs. This rule has led to a significant increase in transfers as athletes seek better opportunities or more favorable conditions (Cohen et al., 2024). For Black student-athletes, this shift can have mixed effects. On one hand, it provides greater flexibility and autonomy in managing their athletic careers. On the other hand, the frequent movement between institutions can disrupt their educational and social stability, potentially hindering their holistic identity development and integration into campus communities (Stanford, 2023).

Both NIL and the new transfer rule impact the holistic identity development of Black student-athletes. The commercialization of their name, image, and likeness can overshadow their academic and personal growth, reinforcing the notion that their value is primarily derived from their athletic performance. Concurrently, the ability to transfer and compete immediately allows students to move to a more positive athletic and academic environment. However, this situation can lead to instability and challenges in forming lasting social connections and academic success. Given these dynamics, my study is situated within this tumultuous period in collegiate athletics, and these factors are likely to impact my findings.

Racialization and the Black Student-Athlete

In higher education, the experience of Black student-athletes is influenced by racialization, athletic identity, academic pursuits, and gender (Armstrong & Jennings,

2018; Carter, 2008). Negotiating this intersectionality means contending with internal and external struggles, navigating biases associated with race and athletic identity while proving themselves academically (Kohli et al., 2017; Ramsey & Brown, 2017; Steinfeldt et al., 2010). Research demonstrates that students' racial beliefs and identity significantly influence their educational perceptions and achievements (Sellers et al., 1998). For Black student-athletes, their experiences often include feelings of isolation, judgment (Bimper et al., 2013), and undervaluation in academic settings (Comeaux & Savage, 2023), influencing their views on achievement and success (Giuffrida, 2003)

Balancing academic individuality, race, and sport creates a complex challenge, leading to potential isolation in classrooms despite finding support within athletic communities (Flowers, 2015). Understanding the racialization of the student-athlete involves recognizing the distinct challenges faced by student-athletes, whose identities are intricately woven with athletic pursuits. While all college students face social adaptation, career exploration, and intellectual growth hurdles, student-athletes bear the added responsibility of rigorous training schedules, frequent travel, and the need to master complex team strategies (Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Hill et al., 2001).

The demanding structure imposed by collegiate sports often limits student-athletes' personal exploration beyond their athletic identity, delaying their independence and skewing their perception of academic achievement (Despres et al., 2008). Particularly for Black student-athletes, the emphasis on athletic identity, reinforced by campus sports culture, intensifies the challenges of navigating the

intersection of race, sports, and education within higher education institutions. These findings (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Bandura, 2000; Despres et al., 2008; Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Hill et al., 2001; Ramsey & Brown, 2017; Steinfeldt et al., 2010) emphasize the importance of addressing the unique intersection of sports, race, and academics in the lives of Black student-athletes and the need for support systems to facilitate their success across arenas.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical race theory (CRT) is a foundational framework that posits racism as a pervasive and ever-present aspect of daily life (Beamon, 2014). For Black student-athletes at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), racism is, therefore, an integral facet of their everyday life. Originating in legal studies during the 1970s, CRT was pioneered by scholars such as Patricia Williams (1995), Richard Delgado (1989, 1990), Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), and Derrick Bell (1980). The theory examines the salience of race, interest convergence, and the social construction of race (Elnaiem, 2021; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998). In the field of education, it explores themes like the intercentricity of racism, the challenge of dominant ideology, the commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and the use of interdisciplinary approaches (Bimper et al., 2013; Jolly & Chepyator-Thomson, 2022; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Yosso, 2005).

One of the central concepts within CRT is intersectionality, introduced by Crenshaw (1989, 1991). This concept describes how race, class, and higher education (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Gayles & Comeaux, 2018; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011) intersect to impact Black student-athletes' perceptions of their past, present,

and future possible selves. As Donnor (2020) emphasized, CRT allows for a comprehensive understanding of the forces that have constructed a system where Black athletes are celebrated on the field but often denied opportunities for educational attainment and empowerment.

CRT and Sports

In sports, there is often a narrative of colorblind racism that purports that racism is a thing of the past, a narrative that contradicts the realities of Black student-athletes navigating their identities as minorities within higher education institutions (Hylton, 2010). CRT challenges the notion of colorblindness and meritocracy, allowing the voices of the oppressed to counter the dominant discourse (Bimper, 2014). CRT not only allows for the examination of these experiences but also calls for concrete action and intervention programs to address racial inequalities within these systems.

Community Cultural Wealth (CCW)

In this dissertation, the concept of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) was found to be a useful framework for analyzing data that I collected. Yosso (2005) characterized CCW as an asset-based model that focuses on various forms of capital possessed by communities of color. This model is a continuation of CRT and aims to challenge the deficit thinking that is often used to represent these communities. This perspective refutes dominant ideologies and White privilege while validating the experiences of people of color. By starting from the viewpoint that people of color possess multiple strengths, CCW enables researchers to identify and appreciate the rich cultural wealth that originates from their homes and communities.

Yosso (2005) categorized culture into six distinct areas: navigational, social, familial, linguistic, aspirational, and resistance. Culture is defined as behaviors and values that are learned, shared, and exhibited by a group of people. These cultural assets are utilized by people of color as they navigate and challenge systemic racism. The main goals of identifying and documenting cultural wealth are to transform education and empower people of color to utilize assets already abundant in their communities. It challenges the dominant narratives about marginalized groups and acknowledges their unique forms of capital (Ofoegbu et al., 2021; Yosso, 2005).

These forms of capital—aspirational, navigational, social, and familial—contribute significantly to the cultural wealth of Black student-athletes. They play a crucial role in fostering their academic and professional development by providing the necessary support systems and resources. Together, these forms of capital empower Black student-athletes to overcome barriers and achieve success both academically and professionally (Cooper et al., 2017). CCW explores important aspects of identity within the cultural environment of Black student-athletes that exist to help them deal with dominant societal and institutional power structures (Jolly & Chepyator-Thomson, 2022; Yosso, 2005). The study emphasizes the importance of understanding and leveraging the cultural wealth of Black student-athletes to help them succeed despite systemic barriers and the necessity for institutions to address these inequalities to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how the Black student-athletes academic, athletic, and racial experiences are impacted by internal and external

factors, and ultimately influence self-perception. The study aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the Black student-athlete by shedding light on the relationships between different facets of their identities and their academic, athletic, and racial self-perceptions at three time points (past, present, and future). Identity perceptions are shaped by a complex interplay of society, family, athletics, social media, and personal factors. By understanding how these factors influence the way Black student-athletes perceive themselves, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of what is needed to support their overall academic success. The findings of this research have implications for coaches and sport leadership, which may lend to the development of more effective intervention programs, both at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Such programs can offer tailored support to help Black student-athletes navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by their unique identity and social context.

Synopsis of Projects

I conducted a pilot study before completing the dissertation to gain an initial understanding of my first two aims—to identify how racial and athletic identity influence how Black student-athletes perceive themselves academically and to identify when these roles, identities, and personal characteristics were formed. I investigated how Black student-athletes' high school and college schooling experiences shaped their perception of academic achievement through a series of individual interviews and analyzed my data using qualitative methodology.

Those interviews led me to understand what shaped college student-athletes' perceptions of academic achievement. Table 1 lists family, race, student-athlete

identity, institutional context, and sports engagement as having important roles in shaping how student-athletes define and perceive achievement. Notably, the interviews highlight the significance of social, navigational, and familial capital in shaping how participants defined academic achievement.

Table 1

Themes of Perceptions of Achievement in Pilot Study

Familial Influences (Familial)	● Parents providing incentives and emotional support. ● Parents modeling importance of academics at an early age. ● Maternal support
Institutional Environment (Navigational & Social)	● Contingency plan. ● Sports teams pushing the importance of academics. ● Experiences through matriculation
Sport Involvement (Navigational)	● Being part of a team creating its own support. ● Influencing how they measured success. ● Creating a structured environment of support
College Preparation (Navigational)	● Transition from high school to college. ● As an athlete, thinking about college earlier than peers. ● High school environment
Systems of Support (Familial & Social)	● Athletic academic center ● Parents providing protection and support. ● Support from community members and school environment
Race & Athlete Student Identity (Resistance)	● Schooling experiences reinforcing stereotypes of racial and student-athlete academic identity. ● Stereotypes ● Academic support reaffirming students' athletic and racial identity

The findings highlight that academic assistance (familial capital), sports participation (social capital), and the intersection of race and athletic identity (navigational and resistance capital) collectively contribute to the student-athletes understanding of achievement.

The findings of my pilot study further reinforce the significance of the social and academic dimensions (navigational capital) of a student's campus experience in shaping their perceptions of achievement, aligning with prior research (Tyson et al., 2005). For Black students and Black student-athletes, the concept of a supportive and inclusive campus community, often likened to a surrogate family, emerges as a crucial factor (Bonner, 2000, 2001; Davis et al., 2002; Flowers, 2015; Ogbu, 2003). This sense of belonging and support that comes with familial and social capital not only serves as a motivator but also plays a pivotal role in propelling them toward academic success (Bandura, 2000; Kohli et. al, 2017).

Participants in the pilot study specifically emphasized the importance of familial and social capital through their academic administrators who fostered an environment conducive to academic achievement. These administrators offered words of encouragement, held the student-athletes accountable, and provided a safe space where they felt understood, all of which contributed to the development of a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging (Tinto, 2017), in turn, was instrumental in helping the student-athletes recognize the intersection of their academic and athletic identities.

Study Design and Methodological Approach

Research Questions

The research questions aimed to address the following inquiries:

RQ1. What does Black athletes' reflection on their different identities reveal about their most significant athletic, academic, and racial experiences?

RQ2. How does the type of institution (HBCU vs. PWI) an athlete attends impact perceptions of their present and future self?

Research Instruments

My dissertation expanded on the pilot project by conducting interviews with 22 student-athletes from various college sports divisions, including Division I (Power 5 and mid-major), Division II, and Division III/Junior College. In exploring the experiences of Black student-athletes in higher education, I utilized grounded theory techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of their identities and challenges. My primary data collection tool was the use of a graphic organizer referred to as The Pie or The PIE method in the counseling field, which has been employed with different populations over time to intentionally examine and visualize various aspects of the participants' identities (Cowan et al., 1978; Rafaeel, 2022; Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). In my study, this approach enabled participants to actively engage in the process of reflecting on and articulating the different roles, characteristics, and identities they held, thus providing a detailed and nuanced understanding of their self-perceptions.

This instrument allows one to assess both actual and ideal conceptions of self, allowing for the examination of the discrepancy between perceived actual selves and desired selves (see Appendix F). By dividing a blank circle into sections representing different dimensions of the self, individuals can express the importance they attribute to each aspect without limitations on the number of selves or roles described (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). Strauss and Goldberg's (1999) study explored how men perceive themselves during their transition to fatherhood and its

subsequent impact on their lives. The findings highlighted that men prioritize their role as a father over being a spouse or engaging in leisure activities, showcasing a reevaluation of priorities after the birth of a child. Their study also revealed that men's evaluations of their ideal selves relate to their adjustment to fatherhood, influencing their childcare involvement, psychological well-being, and attitudes toward parenting.

The findings and methodologies discussed in Strauss and Goldberg (1999) offer valuable insights that can be adapted for examining Black student-athlete identity. The Pie method allows for the student-athlete to assess notions of self and possible selves based on racial, athletic, and academic experiences in high school and college with an additional examination of their future selves. Exploring shifts in self-perception across different contexts and life stages allows for a better understanding of how Black student-athletes prioritize various aspects of themselves and how they affect their identity development. Moreover, integrating racial experiences into the Pie method allows for an intersectional analysis, revealing how factors like race, gender, and athletic identity intersect to shape their experiences.

Grounded Theory Framework

Grounded theory was instrumental in guiding my research on Black student-athletes, particularly through its techniques such as coding, memo writing, and theoretical sampling. Charmaz (2008) emphasized that grounded theory is both an inductive and abductive method, enabling researchers to develop focused and insightful analyses through a dynamic process of data collection and analysis. The inductive nature of grounded theory ensures that findings are closely tied to the data,

while the abductive approach elevates the analysis, allowing for higher levels of theoretical abstraction. The iterative process of moving between data and analysis enabled the identification of key themes related to how these athletes navigate and construct their identities within different institutional contexts.

Although I employed these grounded theory strategies to enhance data analysis and uncover emergent themes, my approach diverged from the traditional use of grounded theory, which emphasizes generating theory directly from data. Instead, I adapted these techniques to facilitate an iterative process of data collection and analysis, which was crucial for capturing the complexities and nuances of the participants' experiences. This methodology allowed me to systematically explore and identify emergent themes related to identity, cultural capital, and systemic challenges. I was also able to capture the nuanced ways in which the unique environments of HBCUs and PWIs shape the identity development of Black student-athletes. While my use of grounded theory was more focused on applying its techniques rather than adhering strictly to its theoretical generation approach, it effectively supported my exploration of how Black student-athletes navigate their experiences and the interplay of their identities across different institutional contexts.

By integrating the Pie graphic organizer, grounded theory, and counter-storytelling, my aim was to provide a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of how the disparity in diverse leadership and the significant presence of Black student-athletes in high-revenue sports impact their experiences in higher education. This approach not only provides valuable insights into the internal and external factors shaping Black athlete identity based on personal experiences, beliefs, cultural

background, societal expectations, racial stereotypes, and interactions with peers and coaches but also offers valuable insights for fostering more inclusive and supportive environments for Black student-athletes.

Positionality

My personal and professional experiences have shaped my understanding of the Black student-athlete experience. For over 11 years, I worked in college athletics, serving as a Director of Basketball Operations for a women's basketball team, a learning specialist for football and Olympic sports, and an academic advisor for a Division I Power 5 basketball team. During this time, I watched students struggle academically despite having the potential to excel. Many explained to me that the emphasis on sports over academics in high school and middle school prevented them from fully exploring their academic capabilities. I also witnessed athletes returning from professional play, struggling to discover their identities outside of sports. Graduates often came back seeking help to navigate life post-graduation and grappling with their identity outside of their sport. After graduation, some students sought my assistance as they struggled to adapt to life without the perks of controlled schedules, branded clothing, private flights, and fine dining—benefits that had overshadowed their personal development.

This provided me with firsthand insight into these students' experiences. Personal relationships with some of these individuals deepened my understanding of their needs, particularly the importance of creating supportive spaces where they could develop a sense of belonging. This perspective was important in helping student-athletes navigate the intersection of their academic and athletic identities

(Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Tinto, 2017). The pilot study I conducted emphasized the critical role of academic administrators in fostering navigational and social capital for Black student-athletes, laying a strong foundation for my current research and highlighting the need for supportive structures to promote their academic success.

This perspective informed my research design, particularly in exploring how CCW and CRT frameworks can highlight the experiences of Black student-athletes. My goal was to highlight how systemic challenges and institutional practices impact their academic and athletic lives and advocate for supportive measures that foster academic success and personal growth. By integrating my personal experiences into the research, I aimed to provide a richer understanding of the Black student-athlete experience.

Significance of the Study

Numerous studies have delved into the multifaceted impact of experiences at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) on the identity development of Black student-athletes, exploring various dimensions such as Black athlete identity and academic identity (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Bimper & Harrison, 2011; Bimper et al., 2013; Bandura, 2000; Cooley et al., 1991; Despres et al., 2008; Flowers, 2015; Gayle & Comeaux, 2018; Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Hill et al., 2001; Howe, 2023; Kohli et. al, 2017; Ramsey & Brown, 2017; Steinfeldt et al., 2010; Strayhorn, 2008, 2012). Findings from this literature collectively suggest that Black student-athletes often require a holistic support system, encompassing elements such as social integration, college leadership of color, identity development programming,

opportunities to explore interests outside of their sport, and a heightened sense of belonging to foster a more comprehensive sense of self.

As a former athletic administrator, I was interested in understanding the high school, college, and racial experiences that influenced the Black student-athlete identity. The aim of this dissertation was to understand the relationship of Black student-athletes, athletics, academics, and racial identities to establish a sustainable model geared towards improving the overall college experience for Black student-athletes through inclusive programming. This, in turn, can pave the way for a more equitable trajectory for their success during and after their college years.

While the present study investigated how race, athletics, and academics have influenced Black student athletes' perceptions of self and identity development, it primarily centers on Division I student-athletes from both PWIs and HBCUs. Conducting individual interviews with student-athletes afforded me the opportunity to focus on strengths and challenges that student-athletes face, whether academic, racial, or career-oriented; this research seeks to empower them in their life pursuits. Ultimately, my goal is to uncover the motivating factors shaping the academic, athletic, and racial possible selves of Black student-athletes.

The objective of this study is to conduct a thorough assessment of the intersections between participants' racial, academic, and athletic identities, identifying potential conflicts that arise within the realm of higher education. This study expands upon the groundwork laid by my pilot project that delved into the perspectives of achievement among Black student-athletes. Furthermore, it adopts research methodologies used by Strauss and Goldberg (1999) in their examination of

self and possible selves during the transition to fatherhood and adapts approaches employed by Rafee (2022) and Cowan et al. (1978) that are described elsewhere.

Organization of Dissertation

This study represents a traditional five-chapter dissertation format. Chapter 1 presents the problem statement, synopsis of projects, research questions, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the related literature and research relating to the problem's investigation. The chapter expands on CRT and counter-storytelling, CCW, the complex interplay of identity, and seminal studies on Black student-athletes. Chapter 2 also provides a comparative analysis of HBCUs and PWIs in the context of Black student-athletes experiences and concludes with a discussion of current NCAA student-athlete development programming. Chapter 3 provides the research methodology and procedures used to gather the data for the study. Chapter 4 provides findings that emerge from the study. This was accomplished across each research question individually and then followed by a summary of findings in relation to the overarching theme of the results. Finally, Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings and recommendations for future research.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Power 5	The five athletic conferences that are considered most prominent and influential
Division I	Highest level of college sports and includes many of the largest and most well-known universities and athletic programs. must meet standards set by NCAA members, multiyear, cost of attendance scholarship (NCAA, 2024)
Division II	Must meet standards set by NCAA members, partial athletic scholarship
Division III	Must meet the admissions standards set by the school, no athletic scholarship
Identity Foreclosure	Refers to commitment to the athlete's role in the absence of exploration of other aspects of identity.
Sport Leadership	Athletic Academic Advisors, Athletic Directors, Learning Specialist, Associate/Assistant Athletic Directors, Coaches
Navigational Capital	Skills of maneuvering through social institutions, specifically institutions that were not created for people of color
Aspirational Capital	The ability to maintain hopes and dreams even in the face of academic and racial barriers
Linguistic Capital	Social skills attached through communication
Resistance Capital	Knowledge and skills obtained through oppositional behavior through challenging inequality
Social Capital	Network of people and community resources
Familial Capital	Social and personal human resources; familial and community networks

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“Play the game, but don’t believe in it – that much you owe yourself ...

Play the game, but raise the ante, my boy. Learn how it operates,

learn how you operate.”

—Ralph Ellison (1952), *Invisible Man*

In this chapter, I delve into several key concepts surrounding the experiences of Black student-athletes in higher education and how they impact identity development. Following my data analysis, I returned to my literature review to examine Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), the experiences of Black student-athletes at HBCUs versus PWIs, and how other studies used CRT to examine these experiences. Additionally, I looked into current NCAA policies on life skills and identity development for student-athletes.

First, I discuss CRT and how the tenet of counter-storytelling offers a powerful framework for understanding and challenging dominant narratives that perpetuate racial stereotypes and inequalities. Secondly, I examine the CCW model (Yosso, 2005) and explain how it complements CRT by emphasizing the unique talents, strengths, and experiences of students of color, which stem from their communities’ cultural assets and wealth. These assets are brought into their college environments, providing a framework to understand their experiences from a strength-based perspective. I then discuss the complex interplay of identity, considering internal factors, such as personal experiences and beliefs, and external factors, like societal expectations and racial stereotypes. Seminal studies regarding

these topics with Black student-athletes are then shared, including possible selves as a tool for examining their possible and actualized identities. I then provide a comparative analysis of HBCUs and PWIs in the context of Black student-athletes experiences. I end by discussing the current role NCAA programming plays in shaping student experiences and supporting the identity development of Black student-athletes in higher education.

Background

Historically, Black student-athletes have expressed feelings of isolation and a low sense of belonging due to racial stereotyping as an athlete and student of color on PWI campuses (Carter-Francique, 2015; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Jolly & Chepyator-Thomson, 2022). These racial stigmas can lead to negative experiences and feelings of differential treatment in academic, social, and athletic settings. Many students also experience a delay in the development of independence due to the strict structure of meetings, training, and structured study hall (Cooley et al., 1991; Despres et al., 2008; Flowers, 2015; Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Hill et al., 2001; Strayhorn, 2008, 2012). Students' perceptions of professors' and peers' beliefs and assumptions of their athletic and academic ability contribute to their feelings of isolation and academic motivation.

Parham (1993) highlighted some of these academic and social challenges that Black student-athletes face in an examination of the 1990's intercollegiate student-athletes. Parham shows that they face developmental challenges similar to non-student-athletes but with additional challenges unique to being a student-athlete (Carter-Francique, 2015). According to Parham, they incur six additional challenges

that include (a) balancing athletic and academic endeavors; (b) coping with social isolation and participation in student activities; (c) managing athletic success; (d) managing their athletic health to including injury and rehabilitation; (e) negotiating personal relationships with coaches, parents and family, teammates and peers, and the community; and (f) adjusting to athletic retirement and transition to life after college athletics (as cited in Carter-Francique, 2015, p. 159). Coakley (2009) similarly identified six factors contributing to the isolation of Black athletes on campus, which undermines their academic commitment and capability. These factors include (a) racial and athletic stereotypes hindering the formation of supportive social relations, (b) excessive time spent on athletic tasks, (c) unengaging campus activities, (d) a campus environment unappealing to Black students, (e) discomfort among White students in interacting with Black peers, and perceptions of privilege among White students. Coakley noted that these challenges create academic struggles for the student-athlete and emphasized the importance of creating a sense of belonging on campus.

The fact that Parham (1993) and Coakley (2009) derived similar challenges within 16 years of each other shows that there have been longstanding challenges and barriers faced by Black student-athletes in higher education. Additionally, research emphasizes the importance of addressing systemic issues such as social isolation, racial and athletic stereotypes that hinder social relations, and unengaging campus activities. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing strategies and interventions to support Black student-athletes and promote their academic success and overall well-being in college. This literature review sought to provide background

on how these factors, feelings of isolation, alienation, and the transition to post-college life, compounded by systemic racism within college campuses and athletic departments, have historically influenced the identity development and perceptions of Black student-athletes.

Critical Race Theory

The theoretical lens of CRT was used as an explanatory method in the data analysis of the present study. CRT aims to analyze the influence of race and racism on people of color in the United States and dismantle the hegemonic system of White supremacy (Bimper et al., 2012; Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Donnor, 2005; Howe & Johnston-Guerrero, 2021; Patton et al., 2007; Williams, 2020; Yosso, 2005). The theory is used to view race as a historically based social construct embodying past and ongoing racial subordination (Donnor, 2021; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Acknowledging the role of race and racism in the lives of people of color and recognizing how it embodies both historical and ongoing racial subordination is important for understanding the experiences of Black student-athletes.

By viewing these experiences through an asset-based perspective, we can better appreciate the strengths and resilience that Black student-athletes bring to their academic and athletic pursuits. For example, Jolly and Chepyator-Thomson (2022) analyzed how a sense of belonging for Black student-athletes is influenced by their perceptions of race, inclusion, and social activism. The analysis of participants' responses in their study highlights how CRT principles such as intercentricity of race, interest convergence, and counter-storytelling help in understanding the experiences of Black athletes in college and provide a framework for understanding the

participant's awareness of their racial identity and perceptions of inclusion, activism, and belonging.

Drawing on CRT principles, scholars can interrogate how racial dynamics perpetuate systemic inequalities within the NCAA and athletic departments, examining how race intersects with power structures and revealing the devaluation of Black student-athletes academic achievements (Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Patton et al., 2007). Studies utilizing CRT, such as Donnor (2005), worked to examine how to advance CRT pioneer Bell's (1980) interest convergence principle, a theory that states that racial progress often occurs only when it aligns with the interests of the dominant group (Elnaiem, 2021; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Shih, 2017), as an analytical lens to understand the experiences of Black football student-athletes. Through his analysis, Donnor showed how CRT enables a deeper understanding of how Black student-athletes navigate and make sense of their educational experiences amidst systemic challenges and practices that may contribute to their marginal academic performance.

Higher Education

Critical scholars in higher education often draw upon CRT legal scholarship, ethnic studies, and seminal works by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Solórzano (1998) to examine race in educational contexts (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). Much of the application of CRT to K-12 and higher education stems from the research of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), who explored CRT in the context of how race intersects with educational experiences and outcomes. Additionally, Solórzano (1998) extended the application of CRT to higher education by examining how racism

operates within college and university settings and its impact on the campus experiences for Black student-athletes.

The CRT shifts the focus away from viewing communities of color through a deficit lens, recognizing them instead as reservoirs of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and networks often overlooked and undervalued. In higher education, CRT scholars focus on disrupting majoritarian frames that privilege Whiteness by examining themes such as colorblindness, selective admissions policies, and campus racial climate, which, when taken together, contribute to a more nuanced understanding of race in educational praxis (Farmer & Farner, 2020; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Yosso, 2005). For example, Howe and Johnston-Guerrero (2021) examined the experiences of Black male student-athletes in higher education, advocating for systemic changes to ensure equitable opportunities for both athletic and academic development.

Howe and Johnston-Guerrero (2021) employed CRT in their examination of the dynamic experiences of Black student-athletes. They highlight how hegemonic powers within athletic departments and higher education institutions can work against Black student-athletes. Their aim was to dismantle these systems of power through the stories of the Black male student-athlete, showing how exploitation and education can be experienced simultaneously. In the field of education, Solórzano (1998) identified five tenets: (a) the intercentricity of race and racism, (b) the challenge to the dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches for CRT that can inform the experiences, theory and White spaces within higher

education. Yosso (2005), in particular, used this framework to challenge “the way race and racism impact educational structures, practices and discourses...This acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower” (p. 74).

Research such as that conducted by Comeaux and Savage (2023) examined how racialized experiences within educational structures impact the experiences of Black student-athletes, supporting what Yosso (2005) refers to as the contradictory nature of education. In their 2023 study, participants expressed feeling unprepared for career opportunities and advancement beyond sports. They felt they were directed towards academic paths and majors that would not jeopardize their eligibility to participate in sports. Through the use of a CRT lens, Comeaux and Savage (2023) were able to demonstrate how the centrality of experiential knowledge and the intercentricity of race and racism manifest in the hegemonic powers within athletic departments and higher education institutions, working against the interests of Black student-athletes. This research highlights the need to shift perspectives and leadership within campus athletics to better support these students.

Within post-secondary education, systemic racism has led to numerous challenges faced by Black male student-athletes, including discrimination, stereotyping, social isolation, academic neglect, and limited leadership opportunities (Cooper, 2012). The experiences at PWIs, characterized by the dominance of White individuals in leadership roles, reinforce the theory of Whiteness as property. Harris (1993) argued that Whiteness operates as a form of property, conferring upon those

who possess it various societal privileges, including legal rights and social status. By framing Whiteness as property, it shows the systemic inequalities within society. This further enforces the argument that racism is a part of everyday life and the college campus, and even more so, the college athletic environment is a microcosm of this, with White leadership having control over policies and resource distribution.

Counter-Storytelling

Critical race methodology challenges traditional research paradigms and methods that silence or distort the experiences of people of color, drawing explicitly on their lived experiences through methods such as storytelling, family histories, biographies, and narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2005). Ultimately, counter-storytelling serves as a powerful tool for challenging deficit narratives and amplifying the voices of marginalized communities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Allowing the student-athletes' experience to be shared as a counter-story to “strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 33). Bimper (2015) added that counter-storytelling gives voice to the voiceless by recognizing the power behind the experiences of people of color in challenging this dominant discourse of colorblind racism in sports.

A CRT lens is critical in contextualizing the narratives of the oppressed, and in this particular study, the narratives of the Black student-athlete experience—academic, racial, and athletic—allow them to challenge the discourse of cultural racism that states that they do not care about education or that their hopes and aspirations are only sport-related. This is why storytelling and counter-storytelling in

CRT, which gives the Black student-athlete power through voice, is necessary (Bimper, 2015; Bonilla-Silva, 2009).

Counter-stories challenge dominant narratives by telling the stories of marginalized voices, exposing and analyzing racial privilege, and furthering the struggle for racial reform (Billings & Tate, 1995; Patton et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2019). CRT acknowledges the importance of personal and community experiences. It argues that we should value the knowledge of people of color. Their lived experiences provide a shared reality to counteract and challenge the dominant discourse.

Storytelling is a critical piece of CRT, as it provides a qualitative methodology that focuses on the experiences and stories of students of color to help expose and analyze stories of the dominant discourse (Dixson, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2003). Solórzano (2001) examined the campus climate experienced by Black students at three PWIs. Through her use of counter-storytelling, she captured the voices and recounted the experiences of students' feelings of invisibility, low expectations, and assumptions about how they got into college. These findings would not be possible without the voices of the oppressed and their experiences. In other instances, researchers (Adeyemo, 2022; Donnor, 2005; Beamon, 2014) examining the Black male athlete experiences utilized counter-storytelling to voice their social and educational realities, challenging their stereotypes about their intellect and motivations for participating in sports. Similarly, Cooper and Cooper (2015) utilized storytelling techniques to analyze and amplify the voices of Black student-athletes at HBCUs. Their work demonstrated through the voice of the Black student-athlete that the dominant narrative portraying HBCUs as unsustainable, unproductive, and

inferior to PWIs is unfounded. Instead, they highlighted a range of institutional practices within HBCUs that fostered a positive educational experience for students.

This shows just how much the experiences and stories of people of color can not only counter the dominant discourse but also create a community of shared experiences (Bimper, 2015; Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Donor, 2005; 2006; Dixson, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In each of these examples, counter-storytelling served as a powerful tool for amplifying marginalized voices, challenging mainstream perspectives, and advocating for social transformation. By centering the experiences of those who are often marginalized or silenced within broader discourse, these studies aimed to foster understanding, empathy, and awareness of the diverse lived experiences within their respective communities (Cooper & Hawkins, 2014). It allowed them to tell their story by exposing, analyzing, and challenging stories that come from racial privilege.

Counter-storytelling helps highlight systems of oppression within college athletics and negative power relations and provides a deeper insight into the experiences of the Black student-athletes on campus. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by Black student-athletes by offering their narrative (Adeyemo, 2022; Beamon, 2014; Cooper et al., 2017; Donnor, 2005).

The CRT allows for a deep analysis of the dominant political structures that exist within sports and higher education. When combined with counter-storytelling, it provides a voice for individual and communal experiences that allow for a deeper understanding of systematic racism within college sports and how these experiences

affect how Black student-athletes perceive their past, present, and future possible selves. These stories must then be examined through a CRT lens for deeper analysis to move us to action and improve the educational experiences of students of color (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Comeaux, 2010, 2018; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). It is not enough to just hear their stories; athletic administrators must create action and intervention programming to provide a safe space and equal experiences to their White peers.

Community Cultural Wealth

Yosso (2005) developed the concept of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) to challenge deficit thinking and explore the power of culture in communities of color. Its theory emphasizes the problematic nature of framing cultural capital solely within the context of White norms. According to this theory, there are several types of capital that empower individuals to maintain hopes and dreams by leveraging their cultural knowledge from family and community networks and utilizing social contacts for support to navigate through environments that feel unsupportive (Adeyemo, 2022; Carter-Francique, 2015). CCW provides an added layer of empowerment for Black student-athletes by showing how their culture is an asset versus a deficit in success.

Despite the overlap in people of color discussed in Yosso's (2005) framework and athletes competing in Division I sports, there have not been many who have explored the development of capital among Black student-athletes (Cooper et al., 2017; Bimper, 2016; Bimper et al., 2012; Jolly & Chepyator-Thomson, 2022; Harry, 2023; Ofoegbu et al., 2021). The most commonly cited types regarding Black

student-athletes are navigational, familial, and social forms of capital. Explanations of these terms and relevant research are now reviewed.

Yosso (2005) emphasized how the strengths and experiences that Black students bring to their college environment are an appropriate approach for understanding their access to and experiences in college. Social capital provides Black student-athletes with essential support systems that help them navigate their academic and athletic demands and challenge stereotypes. More recently, Bimper (2016)'s study of Black student-athletes explored how participants access social capital through student-athlete development programs. The study assessed students who participated in the athletic department's annual leadership program, The Ship, which aimed to serve Black student-athletes through educational programming and mentorship. The second program, The Anchors, was also through an athletic department that hosts an annual student-athlete mentoring program that assigns student-athletes to mentors from the university community. His findings showed that in analyzing the student-athlete experience in each program it is important to provide programming with in-group (intercentricity of race) and out of group (extend cross-cultural networks) programming to provide students with connection with and through community and cultivate cross-cultural ties. The student's experience showed just how impactful race is in the experiences and connection with social capital of Black student-athletes at PWIs.

Black students need and look for academic and social support from the campus community, and those who receive it experience a form of social integration (Guffrida, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2009). Student-athletes of color find community

through their teammates and other athletes, but this may not keep them from feeling isolated while in the classroom. The student-athletes' perceived experience is based on lived experiences of feeling isolated (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Melendez, 2008), judged, and sometimes undervalued as a student. These lived experiences shape students' perception of achievement and may push some to become academically successful but may cause others to give up (Giuffrida, 2003). Whereas CRT stems from how race and racism is an everyday operation in our society (Beamon, 2014), CCW allows us to examine salient identities within the Black student-athlete's cultural environment to help navigate these hegemonic structures (Cooper et al., 2017; Jolly & Chepyator- Thomson, 2022; Yosso, 2005). Understanding such identities is important for addressing systemic inequalities and fostering inclusive environments in college athletics.

Culture is a crucial aspect for students of color, encompassing behaviors, values, and traditions that may challenge deficit models and "at-risk" labels often applied to them in educational settings. Ladson-Billings (1998) emphasized the overlooked cultural identities of people of color within educational institutions, suggesting they possess distinct cultural wealth that can enhance their academic engagement and overall educational experiences. Cultural wealth, derived from Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, acknowledges the unique assets, knowledge, skills, and networks within communities of color, contrasting with the dominant cultural norms associated with cultural capital (Billings & Tate, 1995; Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Yosso, 2005). CCW centers on the impact of race and racism,

highlighting how assets and resources within communities of color serve as inherent wealth despite societal barriers and inequities.

Studies have shown on-campus social support structures, such as academic advisers and tutors, play a crucial role in the academic success of Black student-athletes, aiding them in balancing academics and athletics (Carter-Francique et al., 2015). Acknowledging the significance of social support and its potential impact on the matriculation and experiences of Black student-athletes, institutions can better support these individuals in achieving academic and athletic success (Bimper et al., 2012; Yosso, 2005). The importance of the Black student-athletes' engagement in educationally purposeful activities is seen throughout the research in regard to developing a sense of belonging, which allows for purposeful engagement and is essential to academic persistence. Daily interactions with faculty, staff, and peers on campus are paramount to Black student-athletes' connection to the college campus and acculturation (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Harper, 2010, 2012, 2018; Strayhorn, 2008, 2012; Tinto, 1987, 2017).

Ofoegbu et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study using semistructured interviews and employed CCW as their guiding framework. Their research specifically focused on navigational capital among Black student-athletes transitioning out of sports. Relationships played a significant role for Black student-athletes, both within and outside of sports, involving family, coaches, teammates, and support systems. This study expanded on research on cultural capital and how it operates within intercollegiate athletics by showing how participants leveraged their cultural backgrounds and resources to earn an education. Similarly, Cooper et al.

(2017) conducted a qualitative study using semistructured interviews. They employed CCW to explore various forms of capital and CRT to examine how systemic racism and institutional structures impact the experiences of Black female athletes at both PWIs and HBCUs. Their study aimed to identify key influences on these athletes' educational experiences, utilizing the CCW framework to highlight individual and environmental factors. In their study, Cooper et al. found that whereas participants utilized all five types of capital (familial, resistant, aspirational, social, and navigational) to navigate their college experience, familial capital emerged as the most important source of support in comparison to coaches, advisors, and other individuals.

In the study, Cooper et al. (2017) also revealed that different forms of capital were interconnected. For example, they observed that Black student-athletes who had strong social capital were able to navigate the barriers they faced while attending a PWI and familial capital connected with social capital as the student-athletes frequently relied on their family and community networks for support. Both studies emphasize the importance of leveraging cultural backgrounds and resources to pursue education, expanding on the understanding of cultural capital within intercollegiate athletics.

Given the pervasive influence of race and racism in both college athletics and society at large, social support becomes essential for Black student-athletes to navigate the complexities of higher education and sports successfully. Coupled with the social pressures of being Black in America, Black student-athletes must negotiate their identities to excel academically and athletically. Therefore, a critical

examination of the value of social capital and social support in the lives of Black student-athletes is imperative. By acknowledging the significance of social support and its potential impact on the matriculation and experiences of Black student-athletes, institutions can better support these individuals in achieving academic and athletic success (Bimper et al., 2012; Francique et al., 2015; Yosso, 2005).

In the study of race and sports, CRT can help highlight systems of oppression and negative power relations. Researchers have reported utilizing CRT, CCW, and social capital theories to explore how Black Student-athletes navigate the challenges that come with attendance at a PWI. Each of these frameworks interconnects with the acknowledgment of racism, oppression, and the importance of culturally relevant support and validation of the power behind their culture (Adeyemo, 2022; Bimper, 2015; Cooper et al., 2017; Carter-Francique, 2015; Ofoegbu et al., 2021). It challenges the dominant narratives about marginalized groups and acknowledges their unique forms of capital.

Racialization of the Student-Athlete

Steele and Ashley (2020), in their systematic literature review of academic and athletic identities, found that contemporary research on the identity of the student-athlete has focused on some of the following items: (a) the development of their athletic and academic identity through their university experiences, (b) stereotype threat, (c) career motivation and (d) role conflict. Their review found the importance of university and sport practitioners understanding identity development of the student athlete to create more programming/athlete development initiatives (Steele & Ashley, 2020). People have multiple identities that are typically defined

based on the different roles that play out in their lives. Each role helps create the individual's identity. The following will define the student-athlete identity in regard to sport and academics and the Black identity in regard to sport and academics.

To better understand the impact external and internal factors have on the racial, athletic, and academic experiences of Black student-athletes, it is important to know the dynamics that come with the Black student-athlete experience. For example, several researchers have found that personal motivation, extended playing seasons, emphasis on results, media, and the need to win contribute significantly to the student-athlete identity (Hill et al., 2001). Like the general college student, student-athletes face social adjustment, career exploration, and intellectual growth challenges. However, unlike the general college student, the student-athlete has the bonus and burden of practice, travel, and memorization of team plays.

Simiyu (2012) conducted a qualitative study using CRT to analyze systemic racism and institutional structures affecting Black student-athlete experiences. Simiyu highlighted the enduring significance of collegiate sports, particularly the involvement of Black athletes, in shaping college life, emphasizing that there is a need to address the disconnect between athletics and the core mission of higher education. His literature review explored various issues, including the legacy of racism and discrimination, labor of Black athletes on campus, the intersection of sport and race ideology, and the academic challenges faced by Black student-athletes. It emphasized the racialized learning environment prevalent in PWIs., where Black athletes encounter obstacles in balancing athletic and academic success.

The intersection of race and sport has become deeply embedded within the identities of Black male and female student-athletes (Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Harper, 2009). This intertwines the personal aspects of being a Black male or female student-athlete with their athletic endeavors, shaping both who they are and what they do on and off the field or court. Racialization challenges the Black student-athlete experience based on their intersecting identities. The racial, athletic, academic, and gender identities all intersect to create a competing and conflicting agency within higher education (Carter, 2008; Ispa-Landa et al., 2015).

For example, Armstrong and Jennings (2018) conducted a qualitative study with semistructured interviews, using CRT as a guide in examining the intersection of race, sport, and higher education, particularly focusing on the experiences of three Black male student-athletes. Their small number of participants allowed for deep insights into their experiences and challenges. They found that the participants were active agents in shaping their experiences as Black male student-athletes and that each demonstrated a deep understanding of the complex systems within their communities, universities, and the institution of sport. All participants understood how their race and sport impacted their educational experiences. Their insights reflected a centralized race consciousness, revealing how race permeated their cultural upbringing, socialization, and identity formation, particularly in relation to their status as athletes. Armstrong and Jennings (2018) believed their findings show that Black student-athletes are critical theorists and understand how race intersects with factors such as social class and gender, which could impact their experiences at a PWI.

The overemphasis on the athlete identity among Black male student-athletes has also perpetuated the stereotype of the “dumb jock.” This stereotype, coupled with the overrepresentation of Black males in athletics, has seeped into the perceptions of many within the general student population at PWIs (Donnor, 2006). Consequently, these associated forms of racism, isolation, and stereotyping contribute to the challenges that Black student-athletes face in persisting at PWIs. In Harper et al.’s (2013) synthesis, the methodology involved a comprehensive review of existing studies on Black student-athletes, drawing from 40 years of published research. Harper et al. examined data from the six major athletic conferences and compiled lists of high- and low-performing institutions to illustrate the varied experiences of Black student-athletes. They closely examine the racial dynamics that Black students encounter at PWIs and offer insights into how they might navigate racist educational environments.

Harper et al. (2013) highlighted consistent documentation of racial issues for Black undergraduates, with recent studies focusing on feelings of alienation and a lack of belonging, perpetuating the anti-intellectual myth that Black students are academically incapable. Harper et al. argued that this stereotype is exacerbated by the overrepresentation of Black students in college athletics, where they are often perceived as “Niggers with balls who enroll to advance their sports careers and generate considerable revenue for the institution without learning much or seriously endeavoring to earn their college degrees” (Harper et al., 2013, p. 701). This perception stems from the pervasive overidentification of Black students with their

athletic identity, the institutional role in shaping the educational experiences of Black athletes, and the stigma associated with being an athlete, particularly at PWIs.

Some researchers found that society and media play a significant role in shaping the identity of the Black student-athlete through the portrayal of success and wealth being associated with athletic ability, reinforcing the idea that focusing on sports leads to upward mobility (Beamon, 2010; Howe, 2023). Other researchers have found that athletic identity becomes a defining aspect of self for many Black student-athletes, specifically male student-athletes since most of the research has focused directly on the Black male student-athlete (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Bimper et al., 2013; Beamon, 2012; Harrison et al., 2011).

Identity Foreclosure and the “Student-Athlete” Label

Student-athletes often struggle with defining their identity outside of sports, which impacts their academic and racial identity (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Hawkins, 2014; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014). This, in turn, causes neglect of other potential career paths, and this lack of ability to develop in other areas has often been referred to as foreclosure (Beamon, 2012; Bimper & Harrison, 2011; Howe, 2023). Notably, the attachment to an athletic identity, cultivated from a young age, often leads to the prioritization of sports over academic pursuits, potentially limiting career options and complicating the transition post-sports (Cooley et al., 1991; Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Despres et al., 2008; Flowers, 2015; Strayhorn, 2008, 2012).

Athletic identity takes the focal point for many Black male student-athletes, whereas in other cases, they are found to navigate their academic and personal identities as they navigate societal expectations and racial stereotypes (Bimper et al.,

2013; Cooper et al., 2017, 2019; Howe, 2013; Steinfeldt et al., 2010). The athletic, racial, and student identities intersect and become stigmatized, leading to a complex understanding of self for Black student-athletes.

Bimper et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study with semistructured interviews, using CRT to investigate the self-perceptions of seven Black male student-athletes to discern how they managed the dual role of student and athlete during their college experience. These researchers found that participants feared that an overly strong athletic identity could distort their sense of Blackness and masculinity. The participants acknowledged the complexity of how their identities intersect with societal perceptions of masculinity and Blackness. “Many of the participants seemed fearful in their explanations that too high of an athletic identity could potentially distort and, in some fashion, recast what it means to be Black for them in an unhealthy manner. Both their athletic identity and their Black racial identity appear to be salient, highly complex identities that are at the core of how they define themselves (Bimper, 2013, p. 125).” The findings highlighted the intricate relationship among athletics, race, and identity formation, emphasizing the necessity for establishing a culturally relevant educational environment to foster the academic and holistic development of Black student-athletes.

The negative connotations of being perceived as primarily an athlete overshadow other identities and perpetuate stereotypes. Black male student-athletes are often automatically stereotyped as athletes, which leads to assumptions about their race (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Beamon, 2012; 2014; Bimper et al., 2013; Comeaux, 2010; Harrison et al., 2011; Jolly & Chepyator-Thomson, 2022; Oseguera,

2010). The label of “student-athlete” can sometimes feel confining, overshadowing other facets of their identity, whereas the label of “superstar” can, at times, elevate and insulate them from certain forms of racism experienced by other Black students (Howe, 2023).

Coaches, peers, and the community often fixate solely on their athletic achievements, neglecting other dimensions of their identity. For the Black male athlete, this label can prompt them to defend their academic abilities and prove their dedication to their studies (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Fuller, 2017; Fuller et al., 2017; Fuller et al., 2020; Griffin, 2017; Howe, 2023; Stone et al., 2012). Jolly and Chepyator-Thomson (2022) conducted a qualitative study with semistructured interviews, utilizing CCW as a framework to examine various forms of capital Black student-athletes leverage. CRT was used to analyze to examine the systemic and structural challenges participants experienced, such as using negative societal perceptions as academic motivation, often feeling the need to overcompensate for racial marginalization.

This need to overcompensate for racial marginalization is known as the “prove them wrong” syndrome, which drives them to excel in both academics and athletics to counteract the stereotypes and biases they encounter (Moore et al., 2003). According to Steele (1997), “When one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one’s group applies...this predicament threatens one with being negatively stereotyped, with being judged or treated stereotypically, or with the prospect of conforming to the stereotype” (as cited in Moore, 2003, p. 67). Jolly and Chepyator-Thomson’s (2022) study revealed that this mentality is a response to the

lack of support and inclusion as athletes strive to prove their worth and capabilities in an environment that often undermines their potential.

Frontstage and Backstage Identity

The student-athlete's concern regarding perception by others and, in turn, its impact on how they present themselves to others is known as frontstage and backstage identity. This process, known as impression management, involves consciously or unconsciously adjusting behavior, appearance, and actions depending on the social interaction to make a certain type of impression (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). In attempts to shape and influence a certain image of themselves to the public, the student's identity can influence their behaviors and perceptions of self. Goffman (1959) suggested that this can be performed frontstage or backstage. The front stage involves presenting an identity that aligns with what you believe others expect or perceive of you, whereas the backstage is where your true self can thrive and exist authentically, away from external expectations and scrutiny (Williams et al., 2020).

Throughout my experience working with student-athletes, I saw that the student's backstage identity was often stunted due to the need to perform on the frontstage for some of the most important years of identity development. The frontstage identity for all Black students is what has been referred to as code-switching, where a marginalized group adjusts their behavior to fit the dominant culture (McCluney et al., 2019). This frontstage identity is taught by family and their community as they navigate White spaces. As an athlete, there is an added layer of social media, coaches, parents, and the responsibility that comes with representing your university and wearing the uniform. In this research, the front and backstage are

considered a source of identity for student-athletes that is impacted by these external and internal forces.

Possible Selves

Oyserman (2008; 2011) is a prominent psychologist who has studied the concept of “possible selves” and defines it as mental representations of the self in potential future states. He refers to future states as “guideposts” that help individuals navigate their current choices and behaviors by providing a vision of what they aspire to become or avoid becoming. Studies like Hickey and Roderick (2017) conducted in-depth interviews, using Goffman’s dramaturgical metaphor (1959) and Markus and Nurius’s (1986) notion of possible selves as a theoretical framework. Their research examined how professional athletes’ identities are shaped by both the expectations of their audiences and the motivational significance of ‘possible selves’ when explaining transitions from their careers in sports. Their study suggests that athletes can reimagine their athletic identity during transitions by envisioning their potential future selves and bringing attention to other aspects of their identity. Hock et al. (2003), developed an intervention program using possible selves for student-athletes at Kansas University. Their findings found that students participating in the program had higher levels of goal identification.

Similar to Hock et al. (2003), Giannone et al. (2017) developed an intervention called Identity Matters aimed to enhance athlete identity development and future possible selves. The intervention involved exploring possible selves, identifying barriers to growth, and creating a sense of future possible selves. Furthermore, Anderman et al. (1999), Frazier (2012), Kao (2000), and Oyserman et

al. (2006) have also examined possible selves through the lens of race, utilizing methods such as surveys and semistructured interviews. They found that Black students have fewer balanced possible selves than students of other racial backgrounds who focused on academics and awareness of stereotypes, and their impact on their self-identity would help with their perceptions of achievement.

Possible selves play into the belief that a person's present identity is influenced by both their past and possible future selves. Most studies look at one temporal direction of either their past or predicted selves. A person's present identity influences the imagined and understood experiences of their past and future selves. It has been found that having strategies to work with alongside possible selves can yield positive behavioral changes. Self-authorship is one potential strategy that involves individuals making decisions guided by self-reflecting on their relationships and experiences, thus allowing individuals to shape their decisions about possible selves (Magolda, 2001; Pizzolato, 2003). Self-authorship helps individuals trust their internal voice, build an internal foundation, and secure internal commitments (Magolda, 2001).

In a college study on race differences in possible selves, Oyserman et al. (1995) conducted a quantitative study using surveys to measure participants' expectations for their future selves (possible selves). The study aimed to show how Black students perceive their future selves in relation to academic and work goals and the strategies they use to achieve them. While there was no difference in the balance of possible selves between races, Black students were found to have fewer balanced possible selves focused on academics but compensated with more strategic

approaches to their academic achievement (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Oyserman et al. (1995) suggested that being aware of stereotypes and visualizing oneself as succeeding as a group member from a social context would help with achievement. Whether or not an individual is associated with a group or social context can positively or negatively influence their possible selves. It can create a positive expected possible self or alleviate the individual fears.

Many studies over the years have examined how possible selves influence motivation and learning in people's lives. Hock et al. (2006) and Beamon (2012) found that 70% of Black male student-athletes expected a career in professional sports, which showed a struggle with delineating their lives and future selves away from sports and on to other potential achievements and possible future selves (Beale, 2012; Walker & Harrison, 2019). Cameron (1999) found that possible selves are influenced by social group membership and the perceptions of the group (Fletcher, 2007).

Understanding possible selves is important for evaluating disparities among Hispanic, Mexican, Latin American, Black, and White students, as it aids in creating effective intervention programs aimed at reducing negative outcomes (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Frazier (2012) conducted a qualitative study using in-depth interviews and focus groups, applying CCW as a theoretical framework. Frazier identified a gap in the literature regarding high-ability Black males and suggested that examining possible selves could provide valuable insights into the self-concept of Black students. Many studies have focused on the negative stereotypes associated

with possible selves versus the perspectives of high-achieving students (Aronson & Good, 2002; Carey, 2023; Oyserman & Terry, 2006; Steele, 1997).

Frazier's (2012) approach highlights how racial identity specifically impacts perceptions of self and how navigating institutional barriers, such as systemic racism, influences their perceptions of their past, present, and future selves. This literature review on possible selves directly aligns with the focus of my current research by examining how Black student-athletes envision their past, present, and future selves. It helps to explain how their experiences in sports, academics, and race shape their self-concept and identity.

The Student-Athlete Collegiate Experience

This section emphasizes the importance of the type of institution in shaping Black student-athletes' experiences, highlighting key differences between HBCUs and PWIs. Research on these differences is briefly shared, illustrating how institutional environments impact the identity development and overall experiences of Black student-athletes.

HBCU vs PWI

Cooper and Dougherty (2015) employed a qualitative methodology utilizing semistructured interviews to investigate the experiences of Black student-athletes at both a Division I HBCU and a PWI. They applied CRT as a way to analyze the racial dynamics and systemic issues influencing these athletes' experiences. Their research found that the campus climate at Division I PWIs is often unwelcoming and unsupportive of Black student-athletes. In contrast, HBCUs were found to cultivate higher levels of academic achievement, institutional commitment, and a sense of

belonging to Black student-athletes (Bimper & Harrison, 2011; Comeaux, 2010; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Person & LeNoir, 1997). Studies comparing Black student-athlete experiences across institutions have revealed that Black student-athletes at HBCUs generally reported more positive relationships, higher engagement, and greater satisfaction than PWI Black student-athletes (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012; Cooper et al., 2017). On the other hand, research has also found that Black student-athletes at PWIs may be recruited primarily for their athletic abilities, which leads to feelings of isolation, as mentioned earlier (Bimper et al., 2013; Comeaux & Savage, 2023; Jolly & Chepyator-Thompson, 2022).

Some studies found that Black male student-athletes at both institutional types were satisfied with their overall experience, but HBCU student-athletes had more interaction with their faculty than PWI student-athletes (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Person & LeNoir, 1997). Comeaux and Savage (2023) and Cooper et al. (2017) conducted in-depth interviews with Black student-athletes on the impact of their racial and athletic experiences at their institution. Both studies used CCW as a theoretical framework to examine the types of capital Black student-athletes accessed while navigating their college and athletic experiences. They found that at HBCUs, having supportive and genuine professors, providing an athletic study hall within an academic building on campus, coaches reinforcing academic standards, and implementing a triple level of accountability involving an academic coach, athletic academic advisor, and university academic advisor contribute to the academic success and holistic development of their student-athletes. These institutions foster an

organizational culture that encourages involvement in educationally purposeful activities, such as leadership development and community engagement.

In other instances, Steinfeldt et al. (2010) conducted in-depth interviews to examine how racial identity intersects with athletic identity to impact the athlete experience for Black student-athletes. They used this method to provide insight into how athletic identity impacts the overall development of Black male football student-athletes at PWIs. Steinfeldt et al. (2010) discovered that a strong athletic identity can sometimes hinder personal growth by emphasizing sport-related achievements. Conversely, athletes encouraged to engage in non-sport activities experienced greater personal growth and a broader sense of self as they developed interests and skills outside of sports.

Other studies also highlighted significant differences between PWI and HBCU student-athletes and the commercialization of sport. For example, Cooper (2013), in his semistructured interviews, used CCW as a framework to explore how social capital played a role in their academic success. They sought to examine the influence of organizational culture at a DII HBCU on the experiences of Black male student-athletes. His findings showed that contrary to PWIs, the HBCU provided an educational environment where Black male student-athletes felt supported and nurtured. Participants highlighted their involvement in educationally purposeful activities that provided leadership development and community engagement. Unlike the experience of Black student-athletes at HBCUs, those at PWIs often identify more strongly as athletes. This stronger athletic identity is due to the extensive time commitments required for their sport, which limits their ability to engage in

educationally purposeful activities on campus (Bimper et al., 2015; Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Garrison, 2024; Harper, 2009).

Research shows that HBCUs offer culturally relevant curricula and specific institutional practices and prioritize fostering nurturing interpersonal relationships, which help bolster a sense of belonging and holistic development among Black students (Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Cooper et al., 2017). Cooper et al. (2019) used a mixed methods approach of semistructured interviews and surveys with CRT as a theoretical framework and CCW as a way to explore how cultural capital influenced how they navigated systemic racism and institution structure in higher education. Cooper et al. examined holistic development support programs at HBCUs and PWIs and their impact on Black athletes, primarily focusing on Black males. Their findings highlighted the benefits of culturally relevant programs, indicating a desire for increased Black representation, mentoring, and supportive experiences on predominantly White campuses.

For instance, Charlton (2011) conducted interviews and focus groups to gain insight into the experiences and challenges faced by Black student-athletes. They found that student-athletes absorbed the institution's core values through informal interactions with coaches and administrators, who emphasized holistic care, set high expectations, and provided necessary support (as cited in Cooper 2013). These efforts aligned with the fundamental principles of HBCUs, emphasizing collectivism, academic excellence, and persistence (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012, 2014). This literature highlights the critical role of culture in facilitating positive developmental

outcomes for Black students in higher education (Allen et al., 2007; Cooper, 2013; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010).

Since HBCUs are non-Football Bowl schools (FBS), they are less affected by things like conference realignment and increased commercialization that occurs with FBS schools. With the impact of college realignment comes increased travel, increased media, and even less time to be devoted to exploring outside identities. Despite these differences between the HBCU and PWI Black student-athlete experience, both value the importance of earning a college degree (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Hawkins, 2014; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Meldenez, 2008; Sellers, 1992).

Unlike the PWI student-athlete, the HBCU student-athlete in Cooper and Dougherty (2015) reported higher levels of social satisfaction and spent around two hours less time in athletics compared to their peers at PWIs. These findings suggest that HBCU student-athletes experience more well-rounded and holistic identity development than PWI student-athletes. It appears that the HBCU experience promotes a more comprehensive development, allowing students to explore opportunities and connect more with peers outside of their sports and athletic departments.

Insights on current and past studies on the Black student-athlete's HBCU and PWI experiences align well with my research goal of understanding how the institutional environment (HBCU vs. PWI) impacts their perceptions of the present and future self. My current study will provide a new perspective by integrating possible selves in the understanding of the Black student-athlete experience. Furthermore, examining the type of institution provides a new approach to

understanding how different environments shape Black athletes' perceptions of their present and future selves.

Athletic Support Service Programs

The NCAA Life Skills Program. The NCAA created a program in 1991, once known as CHAMPS/Life Skills and now solely Life Skills, that aims to provide a total development program for student-athletes that is an example of 'next generation' HIP. The program aims to support student-athlete development in five key component areas, including academic excellence, athletic excellence, personal development, career development, and community service, emphasizing the importance of career counseling, degree completion, personal growth programs, community service, and leadership development, among other components, to prepare student-athletes for success both during and after their collegiate careers (NCAA Life Skills).

In April 2023, the NCAA took another step towards college athletic reform by moving towards more modernized regulations to ensure college athletes receive more comprehensive support beyond their athletic careers. The benefits are often referred to as the "holistic student-athlete benefits model" (D1 Board of Directors," 2023). This new reform takes place in August 2024, with Division I institutions being mandated to provide various forms of assistance during a student-athlete playing career and for some time after. Schools must offer degree completion funds and scholarship protection, along with academic support and career counseling services.

The requirements will extend to holistic life skills such as career preparation, nutrition, and diversity and inclusion training. The NCAA has shown that they will ensure institutions are providing these required levels of support through a revised

penalty structure that could even penalize coaches and post-season bans if these areas of service are not being provided. These initiatives emphasize a shift towards prioritizing the holistic development of student-athletes, preparing them for success beyond their athletic endeavors, but still do not require programming specific to identity development outside of sport.

Conclusion

The narrative of the Black student-athlete has often been overlooked, but there is a growing movement among these athletes to voice their concerns, primarily through social media. However, there is still a significant gap in fully representing their stories and lived experiences. CRT has emerged as a valuable framework for scholars to analyze and deconstruct these experiences, particularly in understanding how sports reflect broader racial issues in society. Scholars have utilized CRT to delve into the lived experiences of Black student-athletes through counter-storytelling, revealing the systemic inequalities present within sports.

Similar to CRT, CCW has been an area of focus in studies on the Black student-athlete experience. By providing counter-stories and using CCW as a tool to examine the perceptions of past, present, and future possible selves among student-athletes, a deeper analysis can be conducted. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of how factors such as unequal representation in positions of power, limited educational opportunities, institutional factors, systemic racism, and microaggressions experienced by Black student-athletes shape their perceptions of themselves both now and in the future.

There is also a notable gap in the literature regarding the examination of possible selves, specifically within Division I Black student-athletes. The impact of racial identity is significant, as it affects how Black student-athletes perceive themselves and their potential, allowing for an exploration of how these perceptions are influenced by systemic barriers and stereotypes associated with their racial identity. Additionally, considering the type of institution (HBCU vs. PWI) provides a new approach to understanding how different environments shape Black athletes' perceptions of their present and future selves.

The literature also examines the concept of impression management, allowing for an exploration of how Black student-athletes use frontstage and backstage performance in their college experiences. This examination of possible selves through the lens of the Black student-athlete's frontstage and backstage identity provides a new approach to understanding their experience and how they navigate institutional structures.

This framework helps in understanding how institutional support, or the lack thereof, influences athletes' self-concept and aspirations. By integrating possible selves with insights into systemic barriers, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of how racial identity and institutional dynamics affect Black student-athlete's self-perceptions and experiences. By addressing how racial identity and systemic barriers impact Black student-athletes' self-perceptions, the current research aims to fill this gap, exploring their most significant athletic, academic, and racial experiences and how institutional type influences their perceptions of their present and future selves.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

“The world is a possibility if only you’ll discover it.”

— Ralph Ellison (1952, p. 181), *Invisible Man*

The purpose of this study was to explore how the Black student-athlete’s academic, athletic, and racial experiences are impacted by internal and external factors and ultimately influence perceptions of self. My objectives for this research were to identify and understand (a) how racial and athletic identities influence how Black student-athletes perceive themselves academically; (b) when these roles, identities, and personal characteristics were formed and shaped; (c) what motivates Black student-athletes to achieve academically; (d) intersections among athletics, race, gender, and socioeconomic status; and (e) the lived academic experiences of Black student-athletes.

In this chapter, I present the methodological decisions I made throughout the research to gain a deeper understanding of Black student-athlete identity and address gaps in the form of social capital, race, and athletic experiences impacting their development within higher education. Based on these objectives, the research questions guiding this study included:

RQ1. What does Black athletes’ reflection on their different identities reveal about their most significant athletic, academic, and racial experiences?

RQ2. How does the type of institution (HBCU vs. PWI) an athlete attends impact perceptions of their present and future self?

I first present the research design and the rationale for my choice, providing a foundation for the study. I then describe the process for recruitment, including the participants and theoretical sampling methods used. Following this, I detail the data collection, data analysis, coding processes, and trustworthiness. Finally, I discuss my research reflectivity, examining how my perspectives and experiences influenced the study.

Research Design

To conduct an in-depth exploration and analysis of the internal and external factors on the academic, athletic, and racial identity perceptions of Black student-athletes, I used grounded theory techniques to explore my qualitative data. Using these techniques, I sought to identify the relationships between Black student-athletes academic, racial, and athletic identities and their perceptions of possible selves. This approach had several advantages in a study on how perceptions of self-influence the Black student-athletes academic, athletic, and racial identity.

This qualitative method allowed for an examination using multiple methods to obtain a holistic perspective by analyzing real-world data (Cooper & Hall, 2006; Creswell et al., 2003; Harry et al., 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Using a grounded theory approach provides an opportunity to develop a theoretical understanding of data collected from the beginning. Grounded theory enabled the voices of the Black student-athlete participants to emerge, providing me with a process for understanding how race, athletics, and academics influenced their motivations and perceptions of self.

Recruitment

I began my recruitment process using convenience sampling with Division I, Power 5 Black student-athletes. Convenience sampling is defined as recruiting participants who are easily accessible to the researcher (Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2015). I began by reaching out to potential participants through established relationships with student-athletes and colleagues within the college athletics community. This involved contacting colleagues and student-athletes.

I have colleagues in several universities in the mid-Atlantic who either worked or had connections within their respective college athletic departments who helped me directly contact potential participants. Once colleagues identified suitable candidates, they facilitated the introduction by connecting the student-athlete with me via email or text. I was able to contact my former student-athletes directly. I provided detailed information about the study through email communication (see Appendix D) clarifying any specific criteria, such as being a Black student-athlete. Subsequently, the student-athletes received a recruitment email outlining the study details. Upon expressing interest in participating, students were given a Doodle poll to schedule their interview. All recruitment procedures were conducted remotely, and participants electronically signed consent forms through Qualtrics prior to their individual interviews.

My colleagues are from institutions across various regions of the United States, including the East Coast, West Coast, Midwest, South, and Southwest. Four colleagues were affiliated with PWIs, while the remaining four were associated with HBCUs. These colleagues represented a diverse range of professional roles, including

coaches, assistant athletic directors, academic counselors, learning specialists, and professors of sports management.

Participants

This sample consisted of student-athletes ranging in age from 18 to 22 who were enrolled in Divisions I, II, and III universities and community colleges. There were 45% male and 54% female student-athletes. All but one student identified as Black, and the remaining students identified as Hispanic and Afro-Guyanese. There were 73% Division I athletes, with 41% playing for Power 5 institutions. Interestingly, 18% later transferred, whereas 23% of my participants were still playing or attending a Power 5 institution).

Theoretical Sampling

The number of HBCU student-athletes was lower when I used convenience sampling to recruit my sample. At this point in the research, there were fewer HBCU student-athletes than PWI. There was also a potential importance in better understanding when student-athletes started playing their sport and when they realized they were being identified as an athlete. Additional participants were recruited through outreach to former players and peers via social media to address these gaps, broaden the participant pool, and address the need for diversity between HBCU and PWI settings. Seven additional interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was achieved. The literature process of coding and analyzing data, continuing until theoretical saturation, ensures a comprehensive exploration of perspectives and a thorough development of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The method employed for theoretical sampling involved incorporating additional interview questions and introducing a new group of participants to the study sample, specifically PWI versus HBCU Black student-athletes with current eligibility from Division I, II, III, and community college. Initially, I interviewed a sample of Black student-athletes in May of 2022. After reviewing the initial set of interviews conducted in May, I identified the need to expand the pool to reach saturation and include a more diverse representation of HBCU and PWI student-athletes.

In June of 2022, I added more participants to enhance the diversity and depth of the data. The interviews continued until no new significant information or themes emerged, resulting in 22 Black student-athletes. This indicated that theoretical saturation had been reached, as the addition of more participants no longer contributed new insights or themes to the study. Theoretical sampling provided valuable and practical ways to ensure I met saturation (Butler et al., 2018; Charmaz, 2006; Ligita et al., 2019).

In sum, my goal was to capture a nuanced understanding of how institutional factors such as institutional culture, resources (cultural and institutional), and support services influence the experiences and identity development of Black student-athletes at PWIs versus HBCUs. I used theoretical saturation to choose a subset of individuals whose experiences were most helpful to understanding my topic, resulting in 10 participants.

Final Sample

In the final sample, two HBCU student-athletes and one PWI participant attended predominantly Black high schools (PB); two were homeschooled, while the remaining five attended predominantly White (PW) or diverse high schools. Regarding the sport participants played, 30% were men's basketball players, 20% were women's basketball players, 20% were football players, and 30% participated in a combination of softball and gymnastics.

I focused on my participants' perceived and self-identified roles at three distinct time points: (a) high school (past self), (b) their current (collegiate self), and (c) their future (possible selves), with a specific focus on racial identity. The importance of racial and athletic identity cannot be understated for Black student-athletes as prior researchers contend racial identity intersects with their lived experiences, revealing feelings that their academic and personal identities are overlooked or dismissed by peers and society (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Beamon, 2012; Bimper et al., 2013; Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Howe, 2023). Thus, this exploration is intended to discern insights into dynamic and nuanced aspects of the Black student-athlete identity, considering the influence of internal and external factors.

Grounded Theory

Utilizing grounded theory techniques allowed for a collection of data that examined how the research participants explained their interview statements, their actions, and the setting itself. Analyzing data collected through interactions and responses from the Pie allowed me to begin to analyze the research participants'

actions and words to construct theories grounded in my data (Charmaz, 2006). I did this by coding transcriptions of the student-athlete interviews, their graphic organizer, and field notes. I looked for patterns in regard to the student's experiences with academic success. I then employed the constant comparison method to code the interview data and memos into prevalent categories that corresponded with my participant's voices. After coding, I used Harry et al.'s (2005) model of data analysis to systematically analyze how student athletes' perceptions of themselves changed over time, which is further explained in Chapter 4.

Data Sources and Data Collection

My data sources were qualitative, based on observations and ideas shared during semi-structured interviews and written information gleaned from a graphic organizer referred to as "the Pie," which was the main vehicle for helping participants to assess both actual and ideal conceptions of self (Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). This tool is described more fully below.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes. A semi-structured interview technique permits data collection and participant reflection (Patton, 2002). Creswell (2009) suggested that research guided by an interview protocol is best utilized to construct a study to understand how people construct, interpret, and make meaning of their experiences. Students were asked questions about their experiences with race, athletics, and academics, and the questions were modified based on sequence and wording from one participant to another.

The Pie Graphic Organizer

The central instrument in the study was the Pie, which was originally devised by Cowan et al. (1978) and has been used in the counseling field to understand varying aspects of an individual's psychological sense of self. In 2022, Rafee's thesis advisor provided the Pie graphic organizer by email. The original instrument examined the past (high school), present (college), and future selves of the student-athlete, and I added the final section on their racial perspectives of self.

The Pie graphic organizer was employed as a distinctive methodological tool designed to intentionally explore and visualize the various facets of the participants' identities. This approach enabled the participants to actively engage in the process of reflecting on and articulating the different roles, characteristics, and identities they held. By asking participants to draw slices of a pie to represent these aspects, the research provided a visual and interactive means of understanding the complexity and importance of different identity components in their lives. This method not only facilitated a deeper exploration of identity but also helped uncover the interplay between these identities and the participants' experiences in educational and athletic contexts.

By completing the Pie graphic organizer, I was able to learn how my participants perceived themselves during high school and college, how they saw their racial experiences athletically and ideal conceptions of self. The Pie measure acts as a tool for helping individuals diagram different aspects of their personality and identity. The instrument allows for assessing both actual and ideal conceptions of self (Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). The Pie also does not restrict the number of roles that can be used

to describe perceptions of self. Here, I used the Pie to assess the notions of a past self, collegiate (current) self, hoped-for possible selves (future), and racial self, providing a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted identities of Black student-athletes beyond their athletic roles.

Counter-Storytelling as Enactment of CRT

I used counter-storytelling as an enactment of CRT. Counter-storytelling amplifies the voices of marginalized individuals within their respective contexts. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) and Cooper and Hawkins (2014) both employed counter-storytelling to highlight the experiences of marginalized students in higher education. Focusing on Chicana and Chicano undergraduate and graduate students and Black male student-athletes in each instance, counter-storytelling provided a platform for individuals in these studies to share their stories, challenge prevailing perspectives, and acknowledge the validity and significance of their experiences. In these studies, data from focus groups, individual interviews, existing literature, and professional and personal experiences were used to create counter-stories that illuminated the challenges and triumphs of these individuals.

This approach aligns with CRT in education, which focuses on understanding the experiences of people of color within the educational system and emphasizes the importance of centering the knowledge and experiences of marginalized individuals. CRT allows for the oppression and negative stereotypes that exist within race and sport to be highlighted, and researchers have argued that due to the stereotyping, microaggressions, and constant battles with race, sport, and academic identity that student-athletes deal with continually, CRT storytelling and counter-storytelling are

useful in research on student-athletes on campus (Beamon, 2014; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

By utilizing a CRT methodology of counter-storytelling, this study centers on the voices and experiences of Black student-athletes in higher education. The use of the Pie measure, originally developed by Strauss and Goldberg (1999) and Cowan et al. (1978), was expanded in time to include the future (Rafae, 2022). This study also extends upon Rafae's (2022) graphic organizer and allows for a deeper exploration of possible racial selves within the context of athletic and academic experiences.

Counter-storytelling disrupts dominant narratives and challenges systemic inequalities by amplifying the perspectives of marginalized individuals. By examining the past, present, and future experiences of Black student-athletes through the adjusted Pie measure, my study can uncover the complex interplay between race, athletics, and academic aspirations. Through counter-storytelling, Black student-athletes are able to articulate their lived realities, confront racialized barriers, and assert their agency in shaping their identities and futures.

After completing the Pie, I conducted a semi-structured interview (see Appendix F) with each participant to ask follow-up questions on their perceptions of race. The students were asked questions such as, "How important is race to your sense of who you are?" "How important is your sport to your sense of who you are?" and "When and how did you become aware of your racial identity?"

Data Management

The interview audio recordings were transcribed and provided to participants, who then reviewed the transcription and gave any additional thoughts. I assigned a pseudonym to each participant, described here, to protect the individual's identity.

Data Collection Procedure

Perceptions of possible selves were gathered through semi-structured interviews and by exploring students' Pie graphic organizer (Figure 1), contributing to a holistic understanding of the experiences and development of Black student-athletes. Prior to beginning the recording, I confirmed with the participants that they were still okay with consenting to the interview and recording. The interviewee was provided a JotForm link to complete the Pie (see Figure 1) during the interview.

Using grounded theory techniques in the coding process was instrumental in shaping and refining the interview questions throughout the research process. Initially, broad, open-ended questions were designed to elicit rich, detailed responses from participants, focusing on their experiences, challenges, and perceptions in both academic and athletic contexts. Initial questions, such as "What was your high school experience like?" and "When did you start playing your sport?" were designed as warm-ups to help participants recall their high school and college experiences. Based on participants' responses, the questions became more focused. Using open-ended questions to prompt participants to share detailed accounts of their experiences. For instance, asking "What was your most memorable academic experience?" and "When did you start playing your sport?" allowed participants to provide rich, narrative responses.

Following these warm-up questions, I introduced participants to the Pie graphic organizer as a tool to visualize and articulate their roles, identities, and personal characteristics. I then asked them to think about and write down three memorable high school experiences, discussing why these stood out. They listed important roles, identities, and characteristics that defined them in high school. They drew slices in the circle to represent these aspects, adjusting the size of the slices based on their significance. They left blank spaces for parts of their identity that were still being explored or not fully understood. Participants were instructed to create a legend for their circle, explaining what each letter represents within their pie. During this process, I was able to observe their uncertainty and fear of making mistakes as participants would ask for reassurance as they answered the questions.

I followed the same process for college experiences, having participants list and discuss significant roles and identities. They drew and labeled slices in the Pie graphic organizer to represent their college selves. Participants were asked to consider their future identities and how their roles and characteristics might evolve. They visualized this in the Pie graphic organizer, noting any expected changes or new aspects of their identity. The larger the slice, the more significant the role, identity, or characteristic was to them.

Figure 1

The Pie Graphic Organizer

THE PIE

Instructions: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

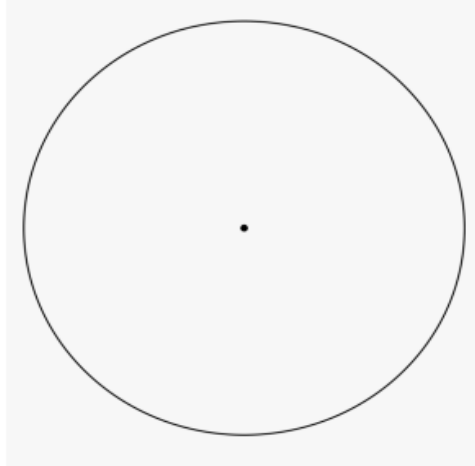
This section is about high school. When you think about experiences in high school, what 3 things come to mind?



List the important roles, identities, and personal characteristics that describes you in high school.



In this next section, you will be shown an empty circle like the one below.



In the final section of the graphic organizer, I asked them to reflect on their racial identity and list three things that came to mind regarding their academic and athletic experiences. Participants listed important roles, identities, and characteristics they would use to describe their racial and athletic identity. Follow-up questions delved deeper into their racial experiences and their impact on their sense of self. The follow-up questions facilitated a deeper understanding of their racial experiences that took on a therapeutic tone.

Questions were framed to uncover and address issues related to race, identity, and systemic challenges. For example, questions like “How important is race to your

sense of who you are?” and “How did your racial identity impact your experiences at school?” were designed to elicit responses that reflect the significance of race in the participants’ lives. Questions explored the significance of race, sport, and academics to participants’ sense of identity. I had participants discuss social factors influencing their identity, such as family, peers, and social media, and I asked them to examine their awareness of their racial identity and how they believed others perceived them. Finally, the impact of racial identity on their school experiences and its continuing influence on their lives was explored.

The core questions, including those from the Pie graphic organizer—such as asking about their three most memorable moments from high school and college, their identities, characteristics, and roles they would use to describe themselves—remained consistent throughout the research. These foundational questions provided a stable framework for gathering comparable information across interviews.

Open Coding

The research employed two main types of analysis to initiate coding: line-by-line and focused coding. Saldaña (2009) outlines several cycles in the coding process, with the first cycle ranging from a single word to an entire page of text, while subsequent cycles become more succinct. I analyzed and coded the interview transcriptions line-by-line and focused coding techniques. Line-by-line analysis involves naming individual lines or segments of data.

In this study, I deconstructed data into component parts using a flexible strategy as described by Charmaz (2006). I conducted line-by-line coding to thoroughly examine the data, ensuring openness to all possible theoretical directions.

Following line-by-line coding, I used focused coding to examine the most frequently occurring initial codes.

I spent the summer of 2022 analyzing data with the help of a research assistant who was an intern. For this study, my research assistant provided a different perspective, having very little knowledge of college athletics and student-athlete experiences. Her unfiltered perspective allowed her to call attention to potential biases in my interpretations. Together, we reviewed 22 interview transcripts to develop a set of open codes. As Harry et al. (2005) recommended, I reviewed these codes, comparing and contrasting them to identify the common features among them to cluster them into “conceptual categories” related to the students’ identity development. For example, four codes (“equating as athletes,” “siblings,” “mentor,” and “leading by example”) became subsumed under the category leadership, indicating aspects of how athletes defined the role of leadership.

As part of our open coding approach, counting references to words and phrases across the dataset was included. This technique allowed us to uncover recurring patterns and salient themes within the data. We gained insights into the prevalence and significance of various concepts by tallying the frequency of specific words and phrases. For instance, when analyzing interview transcripts, we systematically counted occurrences of key terms or phrases related to participants’ experiences with their desire to represent their race in a positive light and what it meant to be a Black student-athlete. This process enabled us to identify dominant themes and emerging patterns early in the analysis.

This process resulted in a set of 18 categories that were separated by HBCU versus PWI, which represented a range of information gathered about the Black student-athlete experience of how their sport, academics, and race influenced their identity development. My assistant and I condensed codes iteratively, eliminating and rearranging some categories.

This resulted in careful attention to which codes were closer to the purpose of the study and those that were less important. After this analysis, codes like the reference to being “well-rounded” were shifted to “multidimensional identities.” Moreover, the codes “maintaining and overthrowing oppression” were eliminated, and three additional codes, “stress,” “mental health,” and “balance of academic and sport,” were placed as a subset under educational experiences. After reviewing the full set of interview codes and categories, we tested the codes and categories for clarity and reliability. A sample set of transcripts was read again to compare separate coding of the same data.

This analysis informed the refinement and development of follow-up questions, which were tailored to the unique responses and experiences of each participant. For instance, when participants discussed their early involvement in sports and their awareness of being identified as athletes, I observed themes related to how they were perceived and treated differently in school. Using the constant comparison method, I compared new data with existing findings, which helped focus follow-up questions on these emerging themes.

While the Pie graphic organizer questions remained the same, follow-up questions were adjusted based on each participant’s responses. For example, if a

participant mentioned feeling treated differently in school because of their athletic status, I would ask additional questions to explore this theme in more depth.

Similarly, if a participant expressed reluctance to use the term “athlete,” I would inquire about their reasons and how they defined their identity through other aspects such as leadership or academic roles.

Constant Comparative Method

The constant comparative methodology was used to first compare incidents applicable to categories and then integrate categories and their properties. There are four stages of the constant comparative methodology: (a) comparing incidents, (b) integrating categories, (c) delimiting the theory, and (d) writing the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; as cited in Kolby, 2012). During the constant comparison method of analysis, I utilized the following questions to help create the categories: (a) What is the purpose of the study? (b) What is the data telling us? (c) What are the common topics amongst the participants? (d) What differences exist between the HBCU student-athlete and the PWI student-athlete?

As Creswell (2012) stated, following the development of the core categories, the development of the theory begins. Using these questions as a guide helped center the research on the study’s main purpose and how the data was telling the story of the Black student-athlete. As the interviews progressed, we compared the interview data to identify emerging themes and develop the questions above. We created prevalent categories following the memo process and initial coding. The data was rich, and it was very easy to get distracted from the purpose of the research; therefore, following initial coding, a second analysis of the data occurred, in which we answered

previously stated questions. Responses to the questions enabled us to finalize core categories. Once final categories were created, sub-codes were placed under these categories in relation to the particular category. There was no numerical reliability rating because the goal was consensus, with each point of difference being debated and clarified until the research assistant and I agreed on the appropriate usage of the codes.

Completing this initial coding process with my assistant allowed me to “gain a clearer rendering of the materials and greater accuracy” of what is being analyzed” (Charmaz, 1983, p.112). Separating the data in this way allowed me the opportunity to discover patterns within each area based on the institution. When searching for coded data, it is essential to categorize them not just for similarities in terms, thoughts, and phrases but also for differing perspectives that appear in specific themes (Saldaña, 2009).

In the initial coding process, memoing (see Appendix A) was used to establish thematic ideas and common codes. “Memos are the theorizing writeup of ideas about substantive codes and their theoretically coded relationships as they emerge during coding, collecting and analyzing data, and during memoing” (Glaser, 1998, p. 54). Memoing allowed me to find broader contextual themes emerging from the data. It also allowed for a deeper analysis of what the Black student-athletes were expressing in their experiences. This initial step in coding allowed us to examine where there were gaps in the categories that emerged from the first round of coding and new questions that came with analysis.

The Pie graphic organizer was then analyzed to determine how the student-athletes perceived themselves. “Because interviews occurred on Zoom, I was able to observe participants as they completed the various Pie graphic organizers. Participant observation allowed me to collect complete data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). My main goal during these observations was to understand nonverbal and verbal information to determine a more complete story of the participants’ lived experiences.

Axial Coding

Corbin and Strauss (1999) developed a coding paradigm that was defined as six subcategories: (a) phenomenon, (b) causal causation, (c) strategies, (d) consequences, (e) context, and (f) intervening conditions that help explore your research fully. For example, causal causation explores the factors that lead to the occurrence of the phenomenon, which in this study includes a lack of representation in leadership and the dual pressure of athletic and academic performance. The phenomenon subcategory helps to understand what you were exploring. In this instance, the phenomenon is the overall experience of Black student-athletes in higher education, particularly focusing on how they navigate their identities and system challenges in both PWI’s and HBCU’s. Chapter four will provide further detail on this phenomenon.

I examined the initial codes using axial coding to group open codes into categories to better understand the nuances of the Black student-athletes experiences. Since data collection and analysis are intertwined to ensure any theories or findings emerge from the data itself, it helps buffer against confirmation bias that comes into play. This is completed by reading through the codes to identify common

experiences. While memoing and completing initial codes, common experiences were noted and placed on the Miro brainstorm board (see Appendix A), which is a visual collaboration board, to evaluate deeper.

Axial coding enabled the identification and connection of key themes that emerged during the data analysis, guiding the development of follow-up questions during the interview. This process ensured that the interviews were deeply aligned with the research objectives and theoretical frameworks, allowing for a focused exploration of the participants' experiences. Furthermore, I incorporated interview questions about the support participants wished to receive regarding academics and their sense of identity and belonging as Black athletes on campus.

Throughout this process, I began adjusting the initial codes to show a deeper understanding between experiences and outcomes. The outcome of these experiences is the consequence, which can be the actual or expected outcome. This iterative process of evolving my questions based on the participants' responses while keeping the Pie graphic organizer questions consistent allowed for a more nuanced understanding of their lived experiences and the significance of the "athlete" label. By continuously adapting my questions to reflect the emerging themes and insights from the data, I was able to delve deeper into the participants' perspectives and capture a more comprehensive view of their experiences.

Corbin and Strauss (1999) recommended that after finding common experiences during open coding to look for causal conditions of that phenomenon. Once common experiences were discovered, transcripts were analyzed in depth for

causal conditions. These causal conditions were integral in understanding how racial, athletic, and academic experiences impacted perceptions of self.

Context is the details that describe the phenomenon or circumstances in which the strategies take place, such as the type of institution (PWI vs HBCU), the support systems in place, and the racial and athletic climate. Intervening conditions and context are similar, but intervening conditions look at demographic information and how that may influence strategies (Delve, 2022). In this study, I examined both intervening conditions, such as race and school environment, and situational aspects that influence the participant's experience, such as parental influences and societal expectations. This dual exploration of context allowed me to gain a deeper insight into specific conditions that may have influenced their perceptions of self. In this final phase, the initial codes were revisited and examined based on common experiences, intervening conditions, and context to create the final codes. The final codes were developed and placed on an Excel sheet divided by the following categories: (a) realizing self-imposed expectations, (b) uncovering differences in HBCU and PWI climate, (c) determining how to navigate educational and athletic dreams, and (d) searching for one's identity outside of sport.

Selective Coding

According to Strauss and Corbin (2008), the last stage of grounded theory is selective coding. This stage involves linking axial categories to create a central theme that can summarize the findings and conceptualize the categories during axial coding. Strauss and Corbin further clarify selective coding as the process of identifying and choosing the core category, systematically connecting it to other categories,

validating those similarities and relationships, and then completing categories that need further refinement and development. Refining the major categories with the selection of a core category allows grounded theory to emerge (Kolb, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

This central category is sometimes referred to as the storyline, “If the core category is found, the storyline of the research is set or, as Vollstedt (2015) writes, the path is detected that leads the way through all the trees so that the wood can finally be seen” (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019, p.434). Memos were kept throughout the analysis to construct summary reflections. The summary reflections, memo writing, and final codes helped to develop the storyline, and through constant comparisons of the raw data and theoretical saturation, the storyline was discovered.

Interrater Reliability

I completed interrater reliability checks before completing a second round of open coding. To facilitate this process, I trained my assistant, and we discussed relevant literature on grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell et al., 2003). We practiced coding collaboratively, using memoing techniques and reviewing findings from 11 transcripts. Utilizing Miro software, we collaboratively developed a story map (see Appendix A) delineating the nuances and commonalities between PWI and HBCU student-athletes and subsequent themes. As the primary investigator, I coded all of the PWI transcripts (11), and the secondary investigator (research assistant) coded the 11 HBCU transcripts. Following coding, 30% of transcripts were reviewed which encompasses four HBCU transcripts and four PWI transcripts. We agreed 90% and then discussed disagreements to reach a 100% consensus about a code before

moving forward. During the initial coding process, I had 10 initial main codes regarding the PWI transcripts, and my assistant had nine initial main codes. Following our discussion, we agreed on a final list of nine codes that included (a) educational influences, (b) athletic experiences, (c) multidimensional identities, (d) leadership, (e) transformation, (f) stress, (g) fear of making a mistake, (h) racial consciousness, and (i) more than an athlete. There were over 25 sub-themes. From initial open coding, we then took to NVivo to break transcripts into excerpts for a second round of open coding.

Trustworthiness

The research involved several rounds of data analysis to ensure the researcher did not influence the results. The use of a research assistant, memoing, discussion, and reliability checks helped to ensure the results were grounded in the data. These steps helped to ensure the data was trustworthy. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are four specific components to trustworthiness: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Stahl & King, 2020). Trustworthiness is a shared reality where commonality is found in the process. Credibility can be found through member checks, triangulation, or even peer debriefing. Data triangulation and investor triangulation were used to show credibility in this research through the use of a research assistant and peer, which all examined the same phenomenon. Through peer debriefing with my research assistant, I was able to receive a detached reaction to the initial research findings

Triangulation and Credibility

Triangulation usually depends on the convergence of data gathered by different methods; in addition, it can also be achieved using the same method gathered over time. This study uses methodological triangulation (through the use of the Pie and interviews), data triangulation (transcript audits and the Pie), and investigator triangulation (co-researcher review for bias in interpretation).

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research is shown when data is reviewed repeatedly throughout data collection and analysis to ensure the results can be repeated. “In order to subject one’s research to auditing, there must be some objective reality present. Rather than constructing a reality in findings, qualitative researchers who believe and pursue objectivity rely on constructs like precision and accuracy in their research practice and the involvement of other researchers” (Stahl & King, 2020). Confirmability was shown in this research through repeated review of the codes between the researcher and researcher assistant to create a clear coding schema that identifies the codes and patterns found in the research. My assistant was able to provide a fresh perspective to review the findings in each stage of coding.

Evolution of Research Questions

At the outset of my research, my primary interest was in understanding how Black student-athletes’ perceptions of their past, present, and future possible selves are shaped by their athletic, racial, and academic identities. However, as I began analyzing the data through the grounded theory approach, the research questions naturally evolved. Grounded theory, with its iterative and flexible nature, allowed for

this evolution, as it emphasizes the generation of theory from the data itself rather than starting with a predetermined hypothesis (Charmaz, 2008).

Initially, my questions were broad and centered around the students' self-concepts across different identity domains. However, as themes emerged from the data, I began to notice distinct patterns relating to the impact of institutional type—HBCU vs. PWI—on the students' identity development. This realization led to a refinement of my research questions, now focusing on how the campus climate and experiences at these institutions specifically influence the identity development and possible selves of Black student-athletes.

Additionally, the analysis revealed the significance of particular athletic, academic, and racial experiences in shaping these identities. This prompted further investigation into what these different identities reveal about the participants' most significant athletic, academic, and racial experiences. By exploring these layers, I gained a deeper understanding of how Black student-athletes navigate their identities in varying institutional contexts and how these identities reflect the key experiences that have shaped their journeys.

By embracing the iterative nature of grounded theory, I was able to allow the data to guide the evolution of my research questions, leading to a more nuanced and contextually relevant understanding of Black student-athletes' identity development across different institutional environments and the significant experiences that define these identities.

Integration of Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

Following the initial data collection, the preliminary findings indicated the need for a deeper theoretical understanding. This led to an extensive literature review on CCW, specifically focusing on how this framework could shed light on the experiences of Black student-athletes. Additionally, the review included a deeper investigation into Black student-athlete experiences in higher education, as well as the NCAA life skills program, to contextualize the findings within the broader landscape of college athletics. The insights gained from the literature review were integrated into the ongoing analysis. The theoretical frameworks of CCW helped provide a more nuanced understanding of the participants' experiences. This iterative process ensured that the study was grounded in both empirical data and relevant theoretical perspectives.

Researcher Reflexivity

My roles in college sports have provided me with unique insights into the academic and personal challenges faced by Black student-athletes. I have worked with student-athletes who have played professional basketball, football, and soccer, as well as those who entered college as premier players but did not get the same opportunities at the collegiate level. Over the years, I have witnessed their struggles academically, mentally, and physically. They often faced challenges related to identity, academic skills, and mental health. My background has sensitized me to the systemic challenges and cultural wealth of Black student-athletes, allowing me to approach this research and these interviews with a nuanced understanding of their experiences.

My positionality allowed me to foster a shared identity with participants, facilitating trust and openness, encouraging richer, more candid responses. Students became very comfortable discussing race and sport, revealing both their positive and negative experiences in school. I had to remain vigilant about my biases during interviews to ensure I created an environment where participants felt comfortable expressing diverse viewpoints, even those that might differ from my own experiences.

To address potential biases, I engaged in continuous reflexive conversations with a research assistant, discussing my thoughts and reactions throughout the research process. This practice helped me remain aware of how my positionality might influence my interpretations. By acknowledging and reflecting on my positionality, I aim to enhance the depth and rigor of this research. This reflective approach not only enriches the data collection and analysis processes but also ensures that the voices and experiences of Black student-athletes are represented authentically and respectfully. To collect counter-stories, I created a safe and supportive environment where participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences. This approach ensured that their voices were heard and valued.

Line-by-line coding was important for me during the first cycle because it forced me to review the data from the student's perspective rather than solely relying on my own experiences. Initially, I understood from the interviews that the student-athletes were consciously pushing against stereotypes and assumptions brought on by societal messages to show that they were more than just athletes. However, this was something family and mentors taught them in many instances. The coding process

and perspective of the research assistant provided a different and deeper insight into their experiences and how they impacted their perceptions of themselves racially, academically, and athletically. This approach ensures that the research findings are not only theoretically grounded but also practically relevant, reflecting the real-world challenges and opportunities faced by student-athletes. The insights gained from this research can help inform policies and practices that better support Black student-athletes in navigating their academic and athletic journeys.

Conclusion

An in-depth examination of possible selves through a qualitative, interactive interview using the Pie allowed for a deep analysis of how race, academics, and athletics influence how Black student-athletes perceive themselves and their possible selves. With the use of counter-storytelling and grounded theory, this not only allowed for a rich data analysis of just what the Black student-athlete has to say about their lived experiences but also a strong visual image through the Pie of how and why they perceive themselves the way they do. Taking this study from an asset perspective versus a deficit perspective allows for a chance to provide a sense of power to the Black student-athlete because it allows them to truly reflect on who they are as a student, as an athlete, and as a person of color and begin to paint a picture of what that means and how it has affected their lived experiences. The next chapter provides the results of these efforts.

By integrating grounded theory techniques and counter-storytelling, I ensured that the interview process was not only about gathering data but also about validating and amplifying the voices of Black student-athletes. The interview questions evolved

based on the data collected, allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences. The Pie graphic organizer provided a visual and interactive way for participants to articulate and reflect on their identities. This combination of methodologies allowed me to gather rich, detailed data on the identities and experiences of Black student-athletes, providing valuable insights for my research.

Chapter 4: Findings

“What and how much had I lost by trying to do only what was expected of me
instead of what I myself had wished to do?”

— Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (p. 244)

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of internal and external factors on the academic, athletic, and racial identity perceptions of Black student-athletes. In this chapter, I present the findings of my study. The research questions were:

RQ1. What does Black athletes’ reflection on their different identities reveal about their most significant athletic, academic, and racial experiences?

RQ2. How does the type of institution (HBCU vs. PWI) an athlete attends impact perceptions of their present and future self?

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the participants. The second section addresses the first research question by presenting the participant profiles. Following this, the next section incorporates the data analysis map to provide an answer to the second research question. It explores how resistance, social, familial, navigational, and aspirational capital influence the self-perception of present and future self, specifically focusing on the impact of institutional type. Finally, the last section offers a comprehensive summary and discusses the data in relation to the study’s theoretical framework.

Overview of Participants

This section presents an overview of the ten Black student-athletes selected from the original cohort of 22 participants, chosen to highlight the core themes emerging from the data analysis. These ten participants were selected because of their personal experiences were most informative in understanding how institutional factors such as culture, resources, and support services influence the identity development of Black student-athletes. The final sample consists of ten Black student-athletes, evenly split between those attending PWIs and HBCUs. The PWI participants were all from Division I Power 5 institutions, where the intensity of sports programs was characterized by rigorous schedules involving travel, practice, strength and conditioning sessions, study hall, and team meetings.

In contrast, the HBCU participants were drawn from both Division I and Division II schools, where the focus was more on campus culture, and the athletic experience varied accordingly. HBCU participants emphasized the social culture, the empowerment of being surrounded by peers who looked like them, and the support they received from faculty and staff. In contrast, PWI participants focused more on their athletic experiences, the role of athletic academic staff, and the need to represent themselves as campus leaders and role models for their teammates.

The selected group represents a diverse array of sports, including gymnastics, basketball, football, and softball. Notably, each participant's high school experience significantly influenced either their choice of college or the challenges they faced during their initial transition. The majors chosen by the participants included Family Science, Constitutional Studies, Sociology, Entrepreneur and Corporate Innovation

(Master's), Information Science, Kinesiology, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Sports Management, and Psychology. Many participants expressed a desire to pursue a master's degree, while those who left to pursue professional sports careers planned to return and finish their degree, further reflecting the strong influence of their parents on their academic ambitions.

Among these 10 participants, four—Dougy, Luke, David, and Hailey—provided particularly insightful perspectives. Family, especially fathers, played a significant role in shaping participants' attitudes towards academics and work ethic. In some cases, fathers served as their coach or taught at their high school, further influencing their academic journeys. The profiles of some reveal Black student-athletes who navigated negative racial experiences in high school or faced skepticism about their academic abilities. Many resisted the “athlete” label, striving instead to demonstrate their roles as leaders, role models, and scholars. RQ1. What does Black athletes' reflection on their different identities reveal about their most significant athletic, academic, and racial experiences?

Introduction to Individual Stories

To address the first research question, this section delves into the personal narratives of these ten student-athletes, providing detailed accounts of their most significant past and present experiences that have shaped their identity development. The focus is on illustrating how institutional factors, such as culture, resources, and support services, impact their identities as Black student-athletes.

The profiles of these 10 individuals are summarized in Table 2 and Table 3, showcasing a balanced representation of five student-athletes from HBCUs and five

from PWIs. Each participant is introduced with a pseudonym, followed by a summary of their athletic and academic background. These narratives offer rich, representative illustrations of how each individual's experiences contribute to their identity development within their respective institutional contexts. To answer my first research question, I use information about the students' most significant past and present experiences that influenced their identity development, sharing descriptions of each primary participant's athletic and academic background to provide rich, representative illustrations.

Participant Profiles

The final sample included five HBCUs and five PWI student-athletes. Each individual is introduced with a pseudonym followed by a summary of his or her most significant experiences.

The Invisible Disability

Jamar is a Division I, Power 5 PWI men's basketball player. He is a Family Science major who began playing basketball when he was 11. Jamar's most significant athletic, academic, and racial experiences athletically, academically, and racially highlight his journey of identity development through the power of community, support, and personal resilience.

Table 2*PWI Participant Demographics*

Participant (n=5)	Gender	Hometown	Sport	Division	HS	Major	Year	Age of Sport	Summary
Jamar (2)	M	PA	MBB	I (P5)	PB	Family Science	Junior	11	Pushed academics to be seen as more than his learning disability and sport.
Dougy	M	MD	MBB	I (P5)	PW	Info Sci	Soph	8	Parents emphasized majoring in an area that gave a career after sport (went pro sophomore year).
Emma	F	MD	WGY	I (P5)	D/HS	Sociology	Senior	3	5 th year student prioritized sport, hindering identity development.
Jenny	F	PA	WGY	I	HS	Constitutional Studies	Soph	6	Childhood sport and homeschooling created identity struggles.
Luke	M	GA	MFB	I (P5)	PW	Entrepreneur and Corporate Innovation	Grad	5	5 th year faced a pivotal experience and, despite beliefs, graduated from a top business program.

Note. MBB: Men's Basketball, WGY: Women's Gymnastics, WBB: Women's Basketball, MFB: Men's Football; PW: Predominantly White; D: Diverse; HS: Homeschooled; Soph: Sophomore; Grad: Graduate

Table 3*HBCU Participant Demographics*

Participant (n=5)	Gender	Hometown	Sport	Division	HS	Major	Year	Age of Sport	Summary
David	M	NC	MBB	I	PW	KNES	Senior	4	Walk-on player extensively discussed ambition for professional football.
Ellie	F	IL	WBB	I	PB	Pharm Sciences	Junior	11	Expressed the power and inspiration felt in STEM classes with only students of color.
Ricky	M	MD	MFB	II	PB	Sport Mgmt.	Senior	4	Emphasized work ethic, education and not seeing color or racism.
Gabby	F	NJ	WSB	I	D	Sport Mgmt.	Junior	14	Discussed experiences on how sport and college impact mental health.
Hailey	F	CA	WBB	I	PW	Psych	Junior	7	Discussed extensively her transformational experience in attending an HBCU

Note. MBB: Men's Basketball; MFB: Men's Football; WBW: Women's Bowling; WTE: Women's Tennis; WSB: Women's Softball; KNES: Kinesiology; PW: Predominantly White; D: Diverse; HS: Homeschooled; Pharm Sciences: Pharmaceutical Sciences; Sport Mgmt.: Sport Management; Psych: Psychology

Reflecting on his high school years, Jamar did not feel fully prepared for college. He attributes his sense of readiness to the people around him rather than the school's preparation. In high school, Jamar prioritized academic achievement, staying out of trouble, and building friendships over his identity as a basketball player. Although basketball was important, he did not want it to define him entirely. A significant influence in his life was a Black teacher who consistently helped him with schoolwork, countering the low expectations and stereotypes of his high school and the community. Her guidance, alongside other positive role models, and his mother played a crucial role in shaping his academic pursuits and overcoming adversity.

Transitioning to college, Jamar expected to encounter racial biases at his PWI but instead found support from peers and academic administrators who treated him equitably. His academic success is attributed to his persistence and the support he received, emphasizing the importance of friendships, grades, and basketball. Jamar described his academic journey as challenging, particularly the transition from high school to college, where the workload and class dynamics were significantly different. Despite these challenges, making his family proud remained central to his motivation and success. In his own words, "Grades make my mom happy." He did not allow his learning disability to define him and his experiences; rather, it made him work harder. "The invisible identity" best describes Jamar as he persevered through college coursework despite his learning disability, an identity the outside world did not see when they watched him on the court.

In college, Jamar prioritized leading by example, maintaining good grades, and supporting his teammates both on and off the court. His leadership roles and

supportive nature were integral to his college experience and development. His identities as a leader, friend, and athlete have shaped his experiences and relationships, aiding in his college experience and growth. Despite the initial challenges, Jamar's resilience and the support from his community have been pivotal in his journey of identity development and success.

Something to Prove

Dougy is a Division I, Power 5 PWI men's basketball player. He was an Information Sciences major who began playing basketball when he was six. Raised with a strong emphasis on academic excellence by his parents, particularly his military father, Dougy felt the pressure to maintain high grades to prove that athletes can excel academically. This was reinforced by his parents' insistence on having a solid backup plan in case a professional basketball career did not materialize. Dougy attended a predominantly White Catholic high school, where he excelled academically and athletically, feeling both privileged and burdened by the higher standards to which he was held. He became a leader and role model, often feeling like the "big star" everyone looked up to. The sense of brotherhood Dougy developed at his all-boys school was a highlight of his high school experience, forming unexpected and lasting friendships that he continues to cherish.

In college, Dougy continued to prioritize academics, working hard to balance his studies with the demands of being a student-athlete, which he did until he was drafted into the NBA. Despite only attending college for 2 years, he made a significant impact, forming strong bonds with his teammates and athletic staff, which contributed to the positive and transformative experience he discussed. Dougy's

dedication to his academic pursuits was evident as he chose a challenging major that would provide him with career opportunities post-basketball. Dougy's experience in college was marked by personal growth and the development of leadership skills. Although he was initially reluctant to see himself as a leader, his role as a prominent athlete on campus necessitated that he set a positive example for others. He valued being seen as more than just an athlete, emphasizing his identity as a student.

Despite the challenges of balancing academics and sports, Dougy found joy and fulfillment in his college experience. He recognized the importance of being a role model and the impact his actions had on those around him. His journey from high school to college and then to professional basketball was shaped by his intrinsic motivation to excel in all areas of life, always working to transcend the typical athlete stereotype. Dougy's story highlights the power of community, support, and personal resilience in shaping a successful and multifaceted identity. "Something to prove" best describes Dougy as he speaks at length about his desire to show his peers and society that athletes are more than just their sport and have academic capabilities.

I Pretended to be Prepared for College

Emma is a Division I, Power 5 PWI gymnast. She is a sociology major who began gymnastics when she was three. Her high school experience was significantly impacted by her involvement in gymnastics, which led to academic struggles and feelings of being behind. Her dedication to gymnastics was driven by the goal of earning a college scholarship, which led her to prioritize the sport over other aspects of her life. Emma transitioned from homeschooling to private school and then to public school, each bringing different experiences and levels of diversity. Despite

these transitions, she consistently felt academically underprepared, particularly in math. The demands of gymnastics often caused her to miss school, making it difficult to form connections with peers and teachers. Emma's remark, "I pretended to be prepared for college," highlighted student-athletes' struggles with navigating the transition from high school to college.

This intense focus on gymnastics continued into her college years, where Emma felt more prepared athletically than academically. Emma's college experience was marked by a sense of being treated primarily as an athlete rather than a student. Her dedication to gymnastics and the expectations placed on her as a captain overshadowed other aspects of her identity. She felt that her coaches emphasized athletic success over academic achievement, which influenced her to adopt the same mentality. This focus on athletics negatively impacted her grades and mental health, as she struggled to meet the expectations of being a perfect leader in the gym while neglecting her academic responsibilities and ultimately rendering herself academically ineligible. Despite the promise of academic support during recruitment, Emma found that the reality did not meet her needs, especially given her learning disability. She felt that her accommodations were not effectively communicated or utilized, further hindering her academic performance.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought an unexpected positive change for Emma. The transition to remote learning allowed her to excel academically for the first time, as she could learn at her own pace and review materials as needed. Emma achieved honor roll during this time, which was a significant milestone in her academic journey. Throughout her college years, Emma struggled with the balance

between her athletic and academic identities. However, as she approached the end of her gymnastics career, Emma began to explore other interests, such as fashion and trendsetting, influenced by her mother. This exploration marked a shift in her identity as she sought to redefine herself beyond the realm of gymnastics.

All I've Ever Known Is My Sport

Jenny is a Division I, Power 5 PWI gymnast. She is a Constitutional Studies major. She began gymnastics when she was six. “All I’ve ever known is my sport” best describes Jenny as she dealt with isolation and overemphasis on sport due to being homeschooled and spending most of her time between the gym and doing her coursework at home or while traveling. With gyms located over an hour away, Jenny’s schedule required her to be at the gym by early morning, leaving no time for traditional schooling. As a result, she missed out on typical high school experiences like prom and social events. This isolation and intense focus on gymnastics shaped her identity, with her academic efforts driven by her mother’s insistence on having a solid educational foundation to fall back on.

Jenny’s homeschooling journey meant she had to rely on her own motivation to stay on track academically. Her identity was primarily that of a student-athlete, with additional self-descriptions such as “weird” and “obsessive” due to her limited social exposure outside of family and gymnastics, struggling to understand who she was beyond her sport. Over 50% of her Pie measure was dedicated to figuring out who she was outside of gymnastics, highlighting a strong desire for self-discovery. Transitioning to college, Jenny faced new challenges. College was her first experience in large social settings for academics, requiring significant self-motivation

and hard work. The college environment demanded that she balance sports and academics more effectively, especially given her coach's strong emphasis on academic success. Jenny struggled to balance her academic responsibilities with the demands of gymnastics, often feeling fatigued from competitions and travel. Despite this, she put a strong emphasis on being social and seeking validation and attention from her peers. This desire for social connection and acceptance became a significant part of her identity in college.

Against All Odds

Luke is a Power 5 Division I, PWI football player who started playing football before he was seven. He is an Entrepreneur and Corporate Innovation major who transferred from one Power 5 institution to another for the opportunity to have a stronger experience playing football. Initially, Luke struggled with a lack of interest in academics during his early high school years, primarily focused on playing football. A pivotal moment came when a dedicated teacher provided individualized attention, helping him grasp the content and develop effective study strategies. This teacher's commitment, coupled with his parents' emphasis on excelling academically, significantly boosted his motivation and confidence, transforming his approach to education. Luke's identity as a role model and businessman began to take shape during high school when he launched his own business, demonstrating his entrepreneurial spirit. Despite his athletic success, Luke expressed a desire to understand his purpose beyond sports, acknowledging that while his identity as an athlete is fundamental, he seeks broader personal and professional fulfillment.

His college experience at two Power 5, PWI's was transformative and multifaceted. Luke described his college years as "life-changing," noting that they played a crucial role in his personal growth and the development of his identity. He highlighted the importance of building relationships and the unforgettable experiences that shaped him. Athletically, memorable victories, such as defeating a top-ranked team, were defining moments.

Academically, he faced significant challenges, including balancing rigorous coursework with his athletic commitments and dealing with racial stigmatization. One of his most significant experiences academically at his PWI was being one of the few Black students in his business program, which led to feelings of isolation and the perception that he was primarily seen as an athlete. A particularly negative experience with a professor who expressed bias toward him reinforced this sentiment. Despite these challenges, Luke's intrinsic motivation and resilience drove him to succeed. He also overcame the doubts of an academic advisor who did not believe he could handle the demands of a prestigious business program. By meeting all the requirements in one semester to get accepted after being steered toward a different major, Luke proved his capabilities and graduated before transferring to another institution.

Life After Sport

David is a Division I, HBCU men's basketball player. He is a Kinesiology major who began playing basketball when he was four. His high school experience was marked by both positive and negative aspects. Initially, he attended a PW high school for 3 years before transferring to a predominantly Black (PB) school for his final year. His father, a teacher at his high school, played a significant role in his

academic and athletic life. David reflects on high school as a period of significant growth, shaped by the challenges of racism and sports. He shared that these experiences, particularly at PW high school, contributed to his development and resilience.

In high school, David spoke of a desire for acknowledgment and recognition beyond his athletic accomplishments. David stated,

A lot of people don't really see me as a person; sometimes they just see me, as you know, oh, I remember you when I played against you in high school, or I remember. I remember you from this AAU tournament when you had 35 points or something like that and I'm just like that's cool, but if all you remember me from school is a whole bunch of points in a basketball game, then either I'm doing something wrong or it's something wrong with you."

David's reflection on being seen as more than just a basketball player emphasizes this sentiment, highlighting the importance of being valued for one's multifaceted identity.

Racism was a significant factor in David's high school experience, especially after the 2016 Trump election, which intensified racial tensions and direct confrontations. He directly stated, "After Trump got elected, it got really, really bad, and the kids got really bold. They would, you know, say stuff to you like directly in your face. They would like spit at you and do all kinds of crazy stuff so I was dealing with that, for 2 years, really." He observed that many Black classmates at his PW high school chose to assimilate into White culture rather than embrace their racial identity. Navigating racial dynamics was pivotal in shaping his understanding of identity.

Transferring to the PB high school was transformative for David. He described it as the greatest experience of his life, providing him with a more

comfortable environment where he could freely express himself, especially in basketball. The supportive and positive atmosphere at the PB school contrasted sharply with the racism and restrictions he faced at the PW school. This change improved his mental health and renewed his enthusiasm for school and sports.

Despite these challenges, David felt prepared for college. His high school experiences at the PB school and his family support were instrumental. He initially struggled with not having any college offers for basketball, but eventually, he caught the attention of a college scout and began his college basketball journey. His first college experience at a PWI was described as a roller coaster marked by challenges and growth. However, transferring to an HBCU after 1 year brought opportunities and a rich cultural environment that he found deeply fulfilling.

David emphasizes the unique culture of HBCUs, highlighting the sense of community, vibrant social life, and supportive atmosphere during basketball games. This environment allowed him to thrive both as a student and an athlete, fostering a sense of belonging and pride. His identity development was significantly influenced by his experiences at both PWI and HBCU. At the HBCU, David embraced the concept of “Black excellence,” challenging stereotypes and striving for success in a supportive community. He sees himself as a leader, learning from mentors and observing successful individuals in his community. “Life after sport” best describes David as he speaks of the many opportunities he has received while attending an HBCU to explore identities and experiences outside of sport and best describes David as he speaks of the many opportunities he has received while attending an HBCU to explore identities and experiences outside of sport.

Defying the Stereotype

Ellie is an HBCU, Division I women's basketball player. She is a Pharmaceutical Science major who began playing basketball when she was six. During high school, Ellie attended two different schools: a PW Catholic school and a PB public school. Her initial experience at the PW school was challenging, as she faced a noticeable racial divide and a sense of being out of place. However, her transition to the PB school was smoother, where she felt more comfortable and supported, particularly by the teachers who were more willing to provide extra help.

Academically, Ellie found that the rigor of the PW school was not significantly different from the PB school. However, the support from teachers at the PB school made a notable difference in her experience. Her father's emphasis on the importance of obtaining a college degree also influenced her academic motivation, reinforcing the expectation that a high school diploma alone was not sufficient. Ellie consistently took on leadership roles throughout high school, both on the basketball court and in various organizations. Despite describing herself as reserved and not very vocal, she was action-oriented and decisive, which helped her lead by example. She acknowledged a desire to become more vocal and network more effectively as she transitioned to college.

In college, Ellie faced the challenge of balancing her demanding major in pharmaceuticals with her athletic commitments. She felt the pressure of a heavier workload compared to her teammates, which required her to develop strong time management skills and determination. She emphasized the power and inspiration she feels when she walks into her STEM classes and sees only students of color.

“Defying the stereotype” best describes Ellie because she pursued a challenging major while playing her sport. Being a STEM major allowed her to be a representative for other Black student-athletes, showing that athletes are able to pursue any major.

Her leadership role evolved as she became one of the few returning players on her team, necessitating a more vocal and supportive presence for her new teammates. Encouraged by her advisor, she also became an ambassador for her major, further developing her communication skills. Despite being introverted and valuing her alone time, she recognized the importance of being involved and vocal within her team and academic community. Her basketball career in college required more effort and dedication than in high school, pushing her to continuously improve her skills. Ellie’s identity was strongly associated with leadership in both her athletic and academic pursuits. She saw determination as representing her academic efforts and leadership as representing her athletic contributions; this balance was important to her as she navigated the demands of being a student-athlete.

The Dreamer

Ricky is a walk-on Division II, mid-major HBCU football player. He is a Sports Management major who began playing football when he was four; he was surrounded by the sport due to his family’s deep involvement, including a cousin in the NFL. His high school journey spanned two different institutions, each with unique characteristics and challenges.

In his first high school, a PB blue-ribbon institution, the emphasis was on academic excellence and maintaining high grades. This environment instilled a strong

academic discipline in Ricky, driven by the school's high standards and his parents' insistence on academic success. Despite the rigorous academic demands, Ricky excelled, consistently maintaining good grades. However, he felt that the coach at this school prioritized immediate football success over the long-term development and college ambitions of the players, which led Ricky to transfer.

Ricky's second high school was a PB school that offered more flexibility in academics and a stronger focus on athletic college preparation. Teachers were more lenient, allowing late submissions to help students achieve better grades. This environment also provided Ricky with greater athletic opportunities, as he played alongside more talented teammates, some of whom went on to play in the NFL. This transfer allowed Ricky to receive better support from his father, who was also his coach and actively assisted him and his teammates in pursuing their athletic goals by organizing football camps and contacting college coaches.

Ricky's role as a leader was evident throughout his high school years. He consistently took on leadership positions, driven by his commitment to hard work and his desire to set a positive example for his teammates. His perfectionist tendencies were influenced by his father's high expectations, leading him to strive for excellence in everything he did. However, this drive for perfection also brought challenges, as Ricky had to learn the importance of discipline and the ability to handle setbacks without getting discouraged.

As he transitioned to college, Ricky continued to emphasize the roles of discipline, leadership, and hard work. His college experience was unique, having taken a year off from athletics, which gave him a different perspective on his journey.

Ricky acknowledged the perks of being a student-athlete, including the academic preparedness he gained from his high school experiences. He maintained his high academic standards, making the most of the support systems available to him in college. Ricky's college experience also highlighted his personal growth and development. He continued to evolve as a leader, becoming more vocal and taking on greater responsibilities within his team. His identity as a hard worker and a perfectionist remained strong, but he also began to focus on self-discovery and understanding who he wanted to be beyond football. Ricky recognized that his athletic journey was just one part of his life and that personal growth and maturity were essential as he looked toward the future.

Ricky's most significant experiences are characterized by his transitions between colleges, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and his athletic career. Initially, Ricky attended a college where he did not play football and focused solely on his academics, achieving a high GPA of 3.9. The experience of living away from home and adjusting to a new lifestyle was different but rewarding for him. The pandemic, however, forced him to return home, but he continued to excel academically during this period, and he eventually transferred to an HBCU. At his HBCU, Ricky faced the challenge of integrating back into college sports while maintaining his academic performance. This transition was unique and eye-opening, as he learned about the business side of college sports and the level of commitment required to succeed when he says,

Everything I've got, I've earned, haven't been given anything. I'm still working right now I'm still working to get where I want to be now, but it was it was a good transition. I'm just starting to see the reality of college sports, though, like the business side of it. Um, that's one thing I do, I am taking note

of, and I'm realizing. That it is a business, and it's not the same as high school, where people just go and play the game it was a tough transition, not tough; it was a unique transition, like, just seeing that different side of the football world.

Despite these challenges, he found the experience rewarding and embraced the supportive community at his HBCU, which provided numerous opportunities for growth and development. Ricky's skill set and determination were continuously pushed by his experience at the HBCU, where he felt the need to prove that athletes from Division II schools could compete at the next level. He took pride in his role as a leader and mentor, particularly to his younger brother, whom he wanted to set a positive example for. He also aimed to reach out to others who lacked role models, hoping to provide guidance and support. "The Dreamer" best describes Ricky as he continues to express his desire to play professionally despite his small level of exposure at his Division II institution.

Overcoming Adversity

Gabby is a Division I HBCU women's softball player. She is a Sports Management major who began playing softball when she was 14. She reflects on her high school and college experiences, emphasizing how well-prepared she felt for college academically. In high school, she benefited from coursework that, while not overly rigorous, taught valuable skills such as proper email communication and time management, which she found important for college preparation. Her involvement in various groups and organizations, often in leadership roles, helped her develop a strong sense of responsibility and leadership.

Gabby highlighted the diversity within her high school charter school, noting the differences between the inclusive academic environment and the predominantly

White athletic department. She observed a disparity in athletic preparation between her peers, often linked to accessibility and financial resources. Despite these challenges, her high school experience provided a solid foundation for her college education. Her parents, both highly educated HBCU graduates, emphasized the importance of academics over athletics from an early age. This guidance instilled in Gabby a commitment to excelling in both areas. She initially played basketball but switched to softball in high school, embracing the new sport despite starting later than her peers.

Transitioning to college was particularly challenging for Gabby due to losing her father during the COVID-19 pandemic to COVID. This event compounded her struggles, leading to feelings of guilt and selfishness for leaving home. She found solace in softball, which provided a sense of normalcy and routine. However, her mental health struggles were significant, and an athletic administrator's concern led her to seek counseling, which she initially resisted but eventually found beneficial.

Gabby's racial identity and connection to the HBCU culture were important to her, and she was influenced by her parents' values and stories of their time at an HBCU. She wanted an environment that was supportive and culturally affirming. In college, she identified strongly as a student-athlete, a role that balanced her commitment to both sports and academics, as emphasized by her parents. Her second year in college was more positive, partly due to the supportive friends and roommates who helped her through moments of sadness. "Overcoming adversity" best describes Gabby as it shows her resilience and adaptability in the face of significant life changes.

Transformed Experience

Hailey is a Division I, mid-major HBCU women's basketball player. She is a Psychology major who began playing basketball when she was seven. She attended a private PW Christian high school, where she observed that while there was diversity among students, many of the minorities were involved in sports or other activities like music and dance. The general student population consisted mostly of wealthier White students.

Racial issues were prevalent but often masked by the school's emphasis on faith. She founded and led the Black Student Union despite resistance from the school administration, which had previously prevented the formation of such a group. Hailey explains why when she states,

We were told every year was a different reason. It was because it was excluding, they would say, but I mean, there's the French club, Chinese club, and then. The other reason was they were allowed to have those clubs because they had a language. They said we didn't have a language. It was just, they were just making up each year as to why we couldn't have the Black student union. And then, when they, let us have it, like the year prior to when it was actually the Black student union, we couldn't call it the Black student union; we had to call it like brothers and sisters in Christ, or something like that.

This experience, coupled with playing multiple sports, advocating for Black culture, and dealing with racial issues, shaped her identity. She was outspoken and often advocated for what she believed was right, a trait she attributed to her mother. Hailey also had a mentor in high school who taught African American literature, shaping her into a person who values education.

Hailey attended this high school primarily because of the sports opportunities, as the public high school in her area did not offer a serious basketball program. Her involvement in basketball exposed her to various environments, including playing

with PB teams in Oakland, which helped her embrace her Black identity. However, her racial awareness and identity as a Black woman were shaped by the contrasting environments she navigated. Playing basketball with a diverse team in Oakland, she faced comments about “acting White,” which spurred her to embrace her Black identity more fully. Hailey’s sport was a central part of her life, influenced by her family’s deep involvement in athletics. Her mother and father coached her and her siblings, making basketball a family affair. Despite the challenges of being a coach’s child, Hailey grew to appreciate the mental toughness and resilience that sports instilled in her.

Academically, Hailey felt well-prepared for college and confident in her knowledge of research and writing skills. From a young age, she aspired to attend an HBCU, influenced by her parents’ experiences and her desire to be surrounded by Black excellence and empowerment. However, she initially did not realize that HBCUs had Division I basketball programs, which influenced her decision-making later on.

Transitioning to college, Hailey initially attended a PWI in the South, where she encountered more severe racial issues than she had anticipated. This environment was challenging, filled with political and cultural divides, leaving her feeling unsafe and out of place. This led to feelings of regret, confusion, and anger. Eventually, she transferred to an HBCU after 1 year, where she found a supportive community, positive experiences with coaches and teammates, and a strong sense of pride in Black excellence. The positive support from her professors and peers contrasted sharply with her experience at the PWI. She felt that coaches and faculty at her

HBCU genuinely wanted her to succeed, offering encouragement and resources to help her thrive both academically and athletically. This transition allowed her to explore her identity beyond basketball, embracing her Blackness, discovering more about herself, and enhancing her intellectual capabilities.

This support contrasted sharply with her experience at the PWI, where she felt marginalized. Hailey's desire to be recognized for her intelligence and not just her athletic ability became a driving force. She expressed a desire for self-discovery beyond basketball, wanting to be seen as more than just an athlete. Hailey's significant experiences—from facing racial challenges in high school and college to finding a supportive community at her HBCU—deeply influenced her identity development, reinforcing her resilience, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to breaking stereotypes, achieving excellence, and not being seen just for her athletic ability. “Transformed experience” best describes Hailey as she speaks at length about the power, inspiration, and enlightenment that came with her transition from a PWI to an HBCU.

Counter-Storytelling

In answering this research question, I also followed Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) method to create counter stories, aligning existing literature on the topic and my professional experiences working with Black student-athletes to form each participant's story. Each individual interview was the first form of data in the research, acting as the primary source. The data was reviewed, and specific examples were highlighted from each of the 10 participants using the critical lens of race and the experiences of the Black student-athlete to examine themes such as realizing

societal and self-imposed expectations and determining how to navigate educational and athletic dreams.

Counter-storytelling was used to understand how socially constructed perceptions of the Black student-athlete inform their athletic and academic experiences on campus. Similar to Solórzano and Yosso, I then examined secondary data with a specific focus on identity, “Front and Backstage presentation,” and *The Invisible Man*. I began to draw connections between the literature and the individual interview data. In both the interview data and literature, there were similar emotions being expressed regarding the perception of change over time (past, present, and future), and consistent parallels were identified between Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and the Black student-athlete. There was a need to be seen as more than an athlete (Bimper et al, 2013; Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Fuller et al., 2020; Griffin, 2017; Howe, 2023; Ofoegbu et al., 2021), a desire to prove society wrong (Bandura, 2000; Cooley et al., 1991; Despres et al., 2008; Jolly & Chepyator-Thomson, 2022; Flowers, 2015), the use of CCW as a resource to navigate their athletic and academic dreams (Ofoegbu et al., 2021), and invisibility (Bimper et al, 2013; Ellison, 1952; Howe, 2023). Once the various sources were compiled, their most significant experiences as Black student- athletes searching for identity and acknowledgment outside of their sport were clearly evident.

Data Analysis Map

The second research question was: How does the type of institution (HBCU vs. PWI) an athlete attends impact perceptions of their present and future self? To answer the second research question, I first share my data analysis map (see Figure

2), which reveals how student-athletes' perceptions of themselves changed over time. After sharing this information, I provide a detailed synopsis of how the type of institution impacts the Black student-athlete's perceptions of self, their present and future self, focusing on resistance, social, familial, navigational, and aspirational capital.

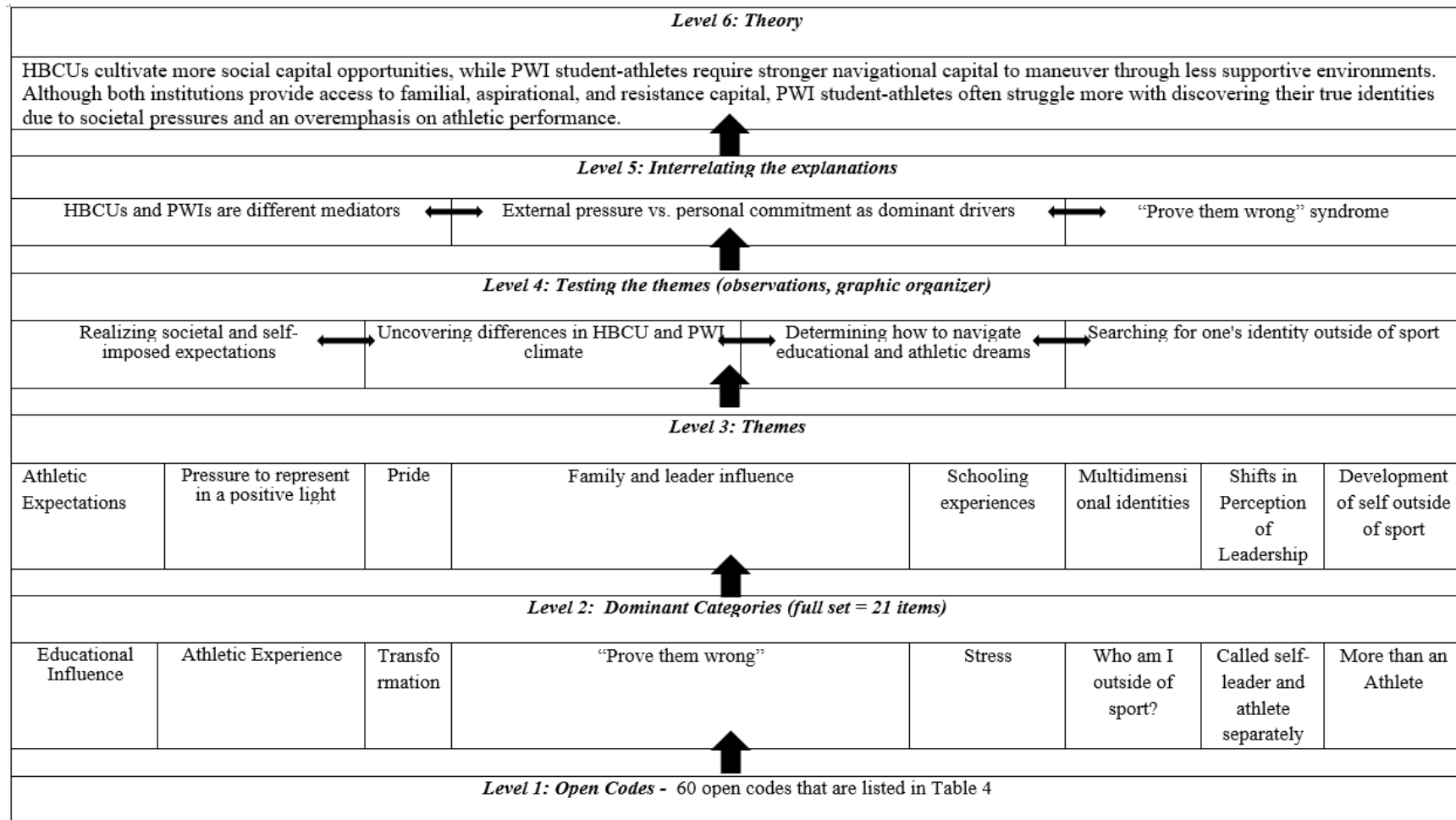
Levels 1 and 2: Open Codes and Categories

Level 1, the initial set of 60 codes listed in Table 4, captured various aspects of the student-athletes' experiences and perceptions. As I progressed to Level 2, I grouped these open codes into dominant categories (educational influences, athletic experience, transformation, stress, prove them wrong, who am I outside of sport, called self-leader and athlete separately, and more than an athlete).

By using this data analysis map, I was able to trace the evolution of student-athletes' self-perceptions through CCW from their past experiences, through their current challenges and achievements, to their future aspirations. This method provided a comprehensive framework for understanding how their identities are continually shaped and reshaped by both internal and external factors. The themes that emerged highlighted the dynamic nature of self-concept and the significant impact of their educational and athletic environments on their overall sense of self.

Figure 2

Thematic Findings Map



*Table 4**Initial Codes*

PWI	HBCU
Educational Influences (HS, College) Familial support	Educational Influences (HS, College) Familial support
Athletic experiences Connotation Influential experiences	Athletic experiences Connotation Influential experiences
Multidimensional (HS, College, FS) Fighting the athlete/academic conflict	Multidimensional (HS, College, FS) Fighting the athlete/academic conflict
Leadership Equating as athlete Sibling Mentor Leading by example - not vocal	Leadership Equating as athlete Called themselves leader and athlete separately. Sibling Mentor Leading by example - not vocal
Transformation (HS - College - FS) Second-Sight - True Self Transition Success Career-focused Uncertain	Transformation (HS - College - FS) Second-Sight - True Self Transition
Stress - Mental Health (College) Balance of academic and sport Pressure/Holding race on back as a role model "Prove them wrong syndrome"	Stress - Mental Health (College) Balance of academic and sport
Racial Consciousness (positive, negative, colorblindness) - navigating (HS (not all), College/ Black Athlete) Social Construction of the black athlete Perceptions by peers/society Internal Pressure Told vs. Assumed behavior Media Influence Black Pride	Racial Consciousness (positive, negative, colorblindness) - navigating (HS (not all), College/ Black Athlete) Social Construction of the black athlete Perceptions by peers/society Black Pride Internal Pressure Told vs. Assumed behavior
More than an athlete (HS, College, FS) Maintaining and overthrowing oppression Critical Consciousness (Review deeper) Well-rounded (multi-dimensional) Need for achievement Invisible to critical consciousness	More than an athlete (HS, College, FS) Multifaceted identities well-rounded

Levels 3 and 4: Thematic Analysis

Focusing on the participants' perspectives, I found seven predominant categories in the first round of interviews. They included (a) athletic expectations, (b) pressure to represent race in a positive light, (c) pride, (d) family and leader influence,

(e) schooling experiences, (f) multidimensional identity development, (g) shift in perception of leadership and (h) development of self outside of sport.

From these seven categories, four main themes emerged, providing a comprehensive explanation of how Black student-athletes perceive the impact of their racial, athletic, and academic experiences on their identity based on institution type through their access to CCW (see Table 5): (a) racialized self-imposed expectations, (b) uncovering difference in HBCU and PWI climate (c) Determining how to navigate educational and athletic dreams and (d) search for identity outside of sport. These themes are now explained in detail.

Realizing Societal and Self-imposed Expectations

This theme relates to shifts that participants experienced from high school to college to future selves. Self-imposed expectations among the participants stemmed from various societal and interpersonal sources, including social media, stereotypes, the media, and peer influence. These expectations often manifested in their pursuit of perfection, excellence, and validation in both athletic and academic arenas, driven by the desire to counteract negative stereotypes, uphold a positive public image, and meet the high standards set by external narratives.

Resistance

In CCW, resistance capital is the resistance to stereotypes and the ability to succeed in spite of stereotypes. Each athlete's experience persevering through real and, at times, perceived stereotypes and beliefs regarding identity and what they can accomplish show this.

Table 5*HBCU vs. PWI: Community Cultural Wealth*

HBCU vs. PWI: Community Cultural Wealth		
	HBCU	PWI
Aspirational	Resilience in overcoming barriers to academic success despite stereotypes & biases	Resilience in overcoming barriers to academic success despite stereotypes & biases
Navigational	Strong social, personal & institutional relationships Support staff, coaches & athletic staff provide support	Academic & institutional relationships are less pronounced Support staff, coaches and athletic staff provide support
Resistance	Embracing resistance to stereotypes	Embracing resistance to stereotypes
Social	Community, campus & social networks for holistic identity development. Availability to join campus organizations Pride & motivation from a predominantly Black campus community Strong sense of belonging.	Less access and time to community & campus resources (outside of athletics).
Familial	Parental influences (Father) Respect for family values, influence, traditions, & knowledge.	Teammates as a subset of family & community support. Parental influences (Father) Respect for family values, influence, traditions, & knowledge.

For example, Dougy expressed a desire to challenge stereotypes and redefine his identity beyond being solely seen as an athlete¹. Despite the societal labeling of primarily being an athlete, Dougy pursued academic excellence and sought recognition for his intelligence. His determination to excel academically and prove his intellectual ability reflects his aspiration for a multidimensional identity, one that goes beyond athletic achievements. The HBCU student spoke of a shift to better understanding their cultural identity and developing a better understanding of their purpose outside of sport. David said he found opportunities for growth during his time at the HBCU, with professors and the institution regularly sending out information on community and internship opportunities.

Resistance came in other ways as well with the Black student-athlete participants, from perfectionism to the desire to “prove them wrong.” However, all navigated challenges related to athletic performance, intrinsic motivation, and perfectionism/fear of making mistakes. There was this sense of needing to prove to some unknown individual that they were capable of succeeding not just athletically but academically. “Prove them wrong” emerged as a form of resistance to stereotypes.

Eight of 10 participants expressed feeling pressure to represent their race in a positive light. All 10 participants highlighted the significance of being both Black and an athlete, using overwhelmingly positive words and phrases. This theme was

¹ A point of clarification in this section, four of ten participants (Dougy, Luke, David and Hailey) gave information that was especially insightful, so more context will be shared from them.

particularly pronounced among participants from PWIs, who emphasized the need to counteract negative stereotypes and demonstrate their capabilities.

There were certain words that were expressed by these students as they reflected on their desires to represent their race in a positive light. Words (and a phrase) such as “tough”, “standard,” “higher responsibility,” “best,” “harder,” “higher,” “mean,” and “fight” came up as they spoke about feeling like being Black came with being put at a higher standard than their peers in addition to the pressure of “always having to be on your best behavior.” There were only one to two references from the three HBCU students who mentioned this feeling, and there were two HBCU students who did not mention it at all. Unlike the HBCU students, there were PWI student-athletes who averaged between 14 references and four references on feelings of pressure, and all the PWI participants mentioned some perspective. Alongside words that frequently came up, conversations on heightened scrutiny, pressure to prove themselves, feelings of being singled out and subject to unfair treatment and unfair treatment compared to their peers. Each of them aims to keep their heads up and excel academically to break the stereotype and access resistance capital.

Some of the most common words and phrases used were “culture,” “important,” “pride,” “excellence,” “confident,” “being seen as people,” “embrace culture,” “identity,” and “platform.” These words came across both the PWI and HBCU participants and showed that despite some of the pressure to represent their race in a certain light and the intrinsic motivation to try and prove others wrong, there was a sense of pride and power that came with the title of being a Black athlete. This

discussion began when they completed their final section of the graphic organizer, which was related to racial perceptions of self. Participants talked about the challenges faced as a Black athlete and dealing with stereotypes, racism, and prejudice. They speak at depth about expectations and perceptions society has of Black athletes with a pervasive influence coming from social media. Dougy and Luke both made mention of how social media brings on an added layer of pressure when he says, “Obviously it’s, it’s even tougher. It was tough way back then... it’s even tougher now because of social media, and everybody’s on social media, and everybody has, has to say something, and it’s hard to block all of that.” He continued on with how tough it can be to be put under this level of pressure,

You can say to Colin Kaepernick situation he’s...He took a knee now he’s Blackballed... As an athlete, it is way worse, I won’t say. I mean, obviously got money regardless, but yeah, how to a higher pedestal the most it can really break you if you do not like that. And I’m like it’s tough to always recover from that because people always look at that one aspect that they disagree with, so I mean it’s tough as a Black athlete.

Dougy referenced feeling like being treated as if he was above everybody else or being held at a higher standard 14 times. He went on to say, “I mean obviously being an athlete is tough, but you being a Black student athlete is even tougher you know. Because you’re, you gotta fight so many stereotypes and so many ways... in order to be successful in society.”

The experiences of being a Black athlete in gymnastics had its own extra layer, shedding light to the struggles faced due to their race. Emma, for instance, felt pressure to conform and be on her best behavior during gymnastics meets. She watched as the differentiated treatment was obvious between her Black teammates

and the rest of the team. Emma felt the pressure to represent her race positively and saw herself as a leader for other Black athletes.

Jamar saw being a Black athlete as needing to be a leader and needing to excel to combat stereotypes. Luke took this perspective even further with the comment that as a Black athlete you need to be twice as good to overcome biases. The experiences of these Black student-athletes illustrate how they leveraged resistance capital to confront and challenge stereotypes, societal expectations, and racial biases. Across their journeys, they demonstrated resilience, determination, and a drive to defy the limitations imposed by societal perceptions. The counter- stories of each of these Black student-athletes highlight how they exemplify resistance capital to confront adversity, challenge stereotypes, and assert their identities in the face of societal expectations.

Uncovering Differences in HBCU vs. PWI Climate

The importance of distinct educational environments at PWI's and HBCU's was so great that it became evident as an important theme with social capital being the most important difference. In my study, each student's experience at either an HBCU or PWI revealed distinct influences of social capital.

Social Capital

In CCW, social capital refers to having a network of people and community resources to guide and support one's goals. In college, the PWI student-athletes experienced a heightened focus on athletics and felt an increased pressure to prove their academic capabilities. Their identity became strongly tied to their sport, and as they neared graduation, they expressed a need to find purpose outside of athletics.

The students who attended Power 5 institutions felt a higher level of pressure to represent their race in a positive light with the added pressure they felt from social and digital media. They felt the pressure to be “perfect” and to positively represent the Black community, often driven by the stereotypes and expectations placed upon them. All participants began to recognize and take pride in their cultural identity, understanding the importance of representing their race positively. This recognition and pride evolved through various stages of their athletic and academic careers.

The HBCU student-athletes emphasized a shift towards embracing Black culture and identity. Hailey states, “I would just say all HBCUs are really prideful in their school and just Black excellence, period. And then excitement is just I’m excited for this fresh start and change, of finding myself again...And I feel like at an HBCU, you, I can truly be myself and live freely with no judgment.” In contrast, David’s talks of Black excellence with his voice and words demonstrating a strong sense of pride. David emphasizes when he says,

I don’t want to be any different. I’m proud of, you know, who I am. I am unapologetic, unapologetically Black. There’s not enough anything in this world that I could do. Anybody could do. Anybody could say that’s going to make me feel bad about myself or maybe, you know, feel worse about myself or like lower my self-esteem because of you know what I look like.

The HBCU participants experienced a stronger sense of Black excellence and cultural pride through their campus communities. They felt more authentic and less pressured to conform to external expectations, seeing their environment as one that celebrates and supports Black identity. This setting allowed them to embrace their true selves and focus on their personal and athletic growth without the added burden of constantly proving their worth.

The PWI participants saw being a Black student-athlete as an honor and a source of power. In examining the perspective of the Black student-athlete experience at a PWI versus an HBCU, a notable difference came to the forefront showing that how they define Black pride is different based on their experiences. One difference that stands out is how they speak on Black pride. Black pride does not come from being at the university or being around students of color, but more so what it represents to be a Black student-athlete. Jamar and Dougy both acknowledge the importance of representing their race positively, with Jamar emphasizing society and historical challenges faced due to being Black and the power that comes with these historical experiences. “So, when they, when they say Black athlete or African American athlete that speaks of power and who I am.” Dougy also highlights the role of playing his sport and the importance of being a strong role model for his race and the younger generation of Black athletes. Their cultural identity developed through the lens of representing themselves and their community, understanding the societal implications of being a Black athlete. They often felt the dual pressure of excelling athletically while maintaining a positive image to counteract racial stereotypes.

The HBCU student-athletes experiences show the significance of social capital in shaping the collegiate experience of Black student-athletes. Hailey and David’s transitions from PWIs to HBCUs highlight the transformative impact of attending a university where there is a strong sense of community and shared racial identity. In particular, Hailey’s reflections on her time at a PWI emphasize the challenges she faced due to the lack of value placed on diversity and the

marginalization of minority students. “Personally, I just felt like at a PWI, they didn’t really value, especially the PWI I went to. A really small it was a little under 1,500 students in a small conservative town. And they didn’t really put their value in students who came from different backgrounds, or who struggled in different ways, or even just athletes.” In contrast, her experience at an HBCU was characterized by a supportive environment where there was a strong emphasis on student success and holistic identity development. By being surrounded by peers and faculty who shared similar backgrounds and experiences, she felt empowered to define her identity beyond just being an athlete.

They benefited from opportunities provided by the campus community, including support from athletic administrators and faculty members. For example, in Gabby’s unique transition to college with her father passing away from COVID, Gabby was fortunate to have an athletic administrator who demonstrated genuine concern and facilitated access to counseling services. Gabby eventually sought support and continued counseling sessions throughout subsequent semesters. The social capital provided through her Black advisor referring her to the counseling center helped Gabby navigate a space that she did not believe belonged to people of color, causing a shift in her college (present) identity and ultimately providing her a sense of peace in her subsequent semesters at her institution.

The type of institution difference regarding how student-athletes manage unsupportive environments becomes evident. For instance, Hailey’s decision to transfer from a PWI where she felt racism, lack of support, and, at times, isolation indicates a strategic choice to enter an environment where she believed her cultural

identity would be recognized and valued. In contrast, her experience at an HBCU was characterized by a supportive environment where there was a strong emphasis on student success and holistic identity development. By being surrounded by peers and faculty who shared similar backgrounds and experiences, she felt empowered to define her identity beyond just being an athlete.

David was the only other student who transferred from a PWI, and his decision-making was similar to Hailey's. His description of HBCUs as fostering a sense of community and belonging suggests that student-athletes navigate institutional structures by building support networks that align with their cultural and personal needs. David spoke of opportunities to work in the community, teach and mentor kids at basketball camp, and work as a coach, which he believed came about because of his attendance at an HBCU and professors and community that reach out to students for opportunities. That environment allowed him to grow and gain new opportunities to develop who he was outside of his sport. Ricky also spoke of the culture that came with being a student-athlete at an HBCU, speaking highly of the energy and fun that came with his experience when he says, "the games, the band, the energy winning like championships, everything all of those fundamentals," are what made being a student-athlete at an HBCU a transformative experience.

Additionally, David's reflection on conversations with friends who attended PWIs highlights the pervasive challenges faced by Black student-athletes in predominantly White institutions. "I didn't know how much of a difference, it made to go to an HBCU versus a PWI. My friend said, I made a pretty good decision, because they said that their life inside of a PWI was, it sucked you know, cuz they

were like the minority. Constantly judged if they mess up and it's a big problem. Going into a predominantly Black school, you would think that while I do believe we are a big family here, that is one thing we do look after each other." The sense of isolation and judgment experienced by his friends at PWIs further reinforces the importance of institutional culture and support systems in fostering a positive academic and athletic experience.

This campus culture and the building of support networks are very different experiences for PWI participants. Luke spoke about an experience with a professor that highlights the importance of challenging institutional biases and advocating for support systems that recognize the needs of the Black student-athlete. During our discussion, Luke described an experience with a professor that negatively impacted his perception of a particular class. The incident and class stand out because of the professor's biased attitude toward athletes. When someone mentioned the team's victory, the professor reacted negatively, expressing her disdain toward athletes and implying that the team would likely start losing soon. He said, "I knew what type of time the teacher was on when I first had the class and she saw me in there... She's like, yeah, I really, I really hate athletes, and I was just like sitting there like, oh yeah, don't think this teacher and I can get along. I just think they're haters." This negative experience made this student look at the instructor and course differently, as he was already one of the few Black students and even fewer athletes in his major.

Student-athletes who attended HBCUs discussed faculty support more than student-athletes who attended a PWI. They did not discuss feelings of not being supported by athletic staff or faculty, but instead, very strong and powerful

conversations about how they have guided their experiences helped with mental health issues. They provided support in navigating identities and opportunities outside of sport.

The contrast between the HBCU participants and the negative encounter described by the PWI participant with a dismissive professor illustrates how institutional support and understanding impact their experiences. While Hailey found support and empowerment within her HBCU community, the lack of recognition for the challenges faced by student-athletes at PWIs can hinder their academic success and create feelings of isolation outside of sport. For example, in Emma's case, she had to overcome barriers in coaches' expectations versus her academic goals and expectations. Despite feeling pressured by her coaches to prioritize gym attendance over academics, Emma's aspiration to succeed academically remained unwavering. Still, she felt the pressure to meet the expectations of her coach to be a leader in the gym to the detriment of her grades. The pressure affected her mental health and, eventually, her grades. She talked about an experience with her coaches when she stated,

So, I'm like okay well I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. Like, it may be fake, but clearly, they like what I'm doing so I'll keep doing that. But everything else went to the wayside, like my grades went to the wayside. I became tired to do like the school work and stuff like that. And like they saw they saw me not doing good in school because they get the weekly reports and they mentioned it ...but then they finished the conversation off by, well you're doing great in the gym, keep up the good work.

According to Emma, the coaches were so concerned with how her absence from the gym would impact her team that she felt an internal desire to continue to make her coaches happy to the detriment of her grades and eligibility. "And I would

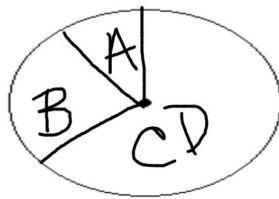
ask that; I asked if I could stay extra time in study hall and not come, and not come into the gym. Like, come into the gym an hour late, but like they did not want that because of how it would look to everybody else.” After becoming ineligible due to her perceived understanding that the coaches expected more from her on the mat than in the classroom, her internal drive to succeed academically empowered her to overcome this failure and become a successful graduate.

There was one very important similarity in experiences: no matter the institution, each participant expressed an overwhelming feeling that he or she had to work hard, fight, be perfect, and be a role model. Figure 3 shows examples from two PWI and two HBCU Pie measures.

Figure 3

Racial & Athletic Identity: Role Model

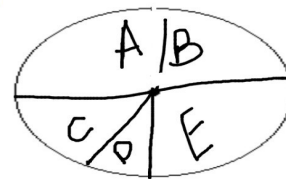
was to you. Leave a blank space in the circle to represent a part of your identity that you are still exploring, or do not understand, and/or have not named yet.



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

A= Rule Breaker
B= Inspiration
C= Fighter
D= Underdog

was to you. Leave a blank space in the circle to represent a part of your identity that you are still exploring, or do not understand, and/or have not named yet.

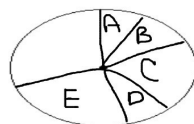


To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

A: Hard Worker
B: Fighter
C: Role Model
D: Motivator
E: Faithful

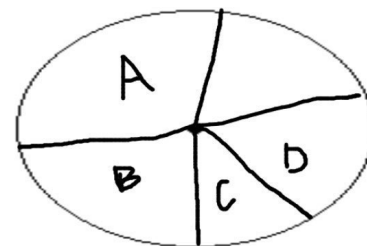
Imagine that the circle represents how you perceive your racial identity in terms of academics and athletics.

Draw slices in the circle to show the different roles, identities, and personal characteristics that would possibly describe you. In the display below, click on the icon with the black circle and choose the smallest circle some, or even none of the roles you typed in the box above. The bigger the slice, the more important the role, identity and personal characteristic was to you. Leave a blank space in the circle to represent a part of your identity that you are still exploring, or do not understand, and/or have not named yet.



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

A= Role model
B= the example
C= self awareness
D= "best of the best"
E= having balance



A. Be 2x Better
B. Represent
C. Can't mess up
D. Perfection
E. Purpose

There is definitely a different sense of pride when each student steps on campus as a student- athlete, but that pressure, that feeling of the need to be more, to work harder, is amplified. Working harder may look different in each institution - meaning at the HBCU, they could feel motivated to work harder, whereas we heard from the PWI student-athlete there was a need to prove to others they are “more than just an athlete.”

In their future selves, 80% spoke of continuing to shape their role in the Black community, with some speaking of being a role model for younger siblings or family members or just leaders in the community and making an impact. Their evolving understanding of their identity influences their aspirations and their desire to positively impact future generations. The counter-stories of these student-athletes demonstrate how social capital, including access to supportive networks, shared cultural experiences, and representation plays a vital role in shaping their collegiate experiences and fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment.

The PWI was not created with the students of color in mind (Ofoegbu, 2021; Vargas, 2023), and this is one of the most obvious reasons navigational capital looks different for HBCU student-athletes versus those attending PWIs. In the PWI experience, they are navigating being the “star on campus.” Professors and, in some cases, academic advisors they perceive as being unsupportive. Their need to show high achievement and prove themselves as capable academically is their way of navigating this experience, whereas the HBCU student-athletes are navigating being a student at an institution that was created with them in mind.

In these student-athletes' counter-stories, Black pride is defined and experienced by student-athletes at HBCUs, highlighting the importance of social capital in shaping their cultural identity and sense of belonging. The sense of pride and empowerment associated with attending an HBCU resonated with all HBCU participants. They sought an environment where they could embrace their racial identity and be surrounded by peers of a similar racial background, allowing them to explore their identities outside of sports more comprehensively. Unlike their PWI counterparts, their focus extended beyond athletics to include personal growth and cultural understanding. While PWI student-athletes navigate the challenges of representing their race in predominantly White spaces, HBCU student-athletes find strength and affirmation in a community that celebrates and uplifts Black identity.

Determine How to Navigate Educational and Athletic Dreams. During college, words such as transformation, self-discovery, community, maintaining a balance of athletics and academics, and the search to find self outside of sport highlight this era of the student's experiences. In determining this theme, it became clear how each of the participants' familial and navigational capital led to the development and evolution of their self-perceptions over time.

Familial and Navigational Capital

In CCW, navigational capital illustrates how Black student-athletes utilize academic, social, personal, and institutional relationships to navigate challenges within college athletics. Familial capital examines how Black student-athletes use the social and cultural resources from their family to navigate challenges within college and sports. Support from family, coaches, and athletic staff was seen in both HBCU

and PWI student-athletes. Resiliency to maneuver through unsupportive environments was prevalent among PWI student-athletes.

In fact, the most significant experiences for Black student-athletes were related to their parents' powerful influence. They shaped their work ethic, perceptions of academic achievement, and racial identity. Awareness of identity began with the foundational support from the family. This led to cultural grounding and a sense of belonging that equipped them with the resilience and values needed to navigate the complexities of college life. Familial capital provided ongoing support, encouragement, and motivation, helping them to persevere through challenges and maintain cultural pride. As they progressed through college, this support evolved, influencing their self-perception and identity development. The lessons learned from family about dealing with adversity and staying true to one's cultural heritage became essential as they encountered and adapted to the diverse climates of HBCUs and PWIs. Family influence thus contributed significantly to students' reflections on their past selves.

In examining factors outside of their schooling and athletic experiences, eight participants spoke of family or community influences that impacted their athletic and academic experiences, with Ellie and Emma being outliers. The remaining eight participants highlighted moments where family influenced their athletic and academic endeavors, which shows how strong parental involvement and influence are for Black student-athletes. Fathers significantly influenced Black student-athlete's athletic and academic experiences in six participants through their guidance, support, and emphasis on education. Two of the six participants had fathers who taught in the

school system, and four had parents with master's and doctoral degrees who pushed and influenced the students to take similar paths once they entered college. Their parents heavily influenced eight out of ten participants to strive for academic achievement and not to make their sport a primary focus.

Ellie's father instilled a strong academic mindset in her, emphasizing the importance of obtaining a college degree. Ricky's father provided crucial support in his athletic journey, actively assisting him in pursuing opportunities and advocating for his best interests by taking him to football camps and contacting college coaches. Luke also attributed much of his athletic development to the significant influence of his father, who actively coached him and provided training across various sports, including football, basketball, and track. His father's continuous support and guidance fueled Luke's ambition to excel in athletics, shaping his determination to strive for greatness in sports.

Three other participants spoke of their parents emphasizing the importance of academics over their sporting abilities. Parents like Dougy's father, a military man, pushed Dougy to understand the importance of academics. He was one of the main reasons Dougy chose to major in Information Science. In another instance, Gabby speaks of how her father emphasized the importance of academics over athletics when she states, "My dad always told me, like if you couldn't do both you have to pick one and you're not gonna, you're not gonna pick to not go to school." She always remembered this, which is likely why she was determined in her sophomore year to have a robust college experience outside of athletics. Even though each of

these participants' fathers emphasized the importance of academics, they were also actively involved in assisting the student-athletes in achieving their athletic dreams.

As they entered college, navigational capital became even more about supportive networks and having to maneuver environments where they may not feel supported. Five out of 10 participants discussed the dynamics between athletics and academics, and nine out of 10 spoke specifically about their athletic experiences. Embracing the role of leader was seen in college, with specifically the PWI student speaking of the pressure of being a role model, perfectionist, and campus leader through the stereotypes they experienced from faculty members, social media, their campus peers, and, in one case, their academic, athletic administrator.

Dougy's experience provides a positive example of how PWI participants utilized navigational capital through leadership. He stated, "Obviously, you are treated like you're above everybody else. But not like, in a way, like Oh, you can run people. We get held to a higher standard, the most because you're, you're expected to do so much more because everybody looks up to you, in that way." He continued, "And so being obviously that big star on campus everybody just looks up to you, and everybody holds you to a different standard... I guess I just got to take that role." Dougy's perception of leadership was closely tied to his identity as a prominent athlete, with the expectation that he would uphold a higher standard.

Jamar hesitated to embrace the label of a leader but understood the importance of leading by example. He took on the responsibility of ensuring academic success and personal development for his teammates, both on and off the court. Both of their experience demonstrates how many PWI Black student-athletes perceived leadership

as a very important part of their college experiences as they navigated their institutions. Four of the five participants who attended a PWI spoke of leadership and the pressure that came with the role as being a part of their experiences, describing leadership as making sure their teammates attend class, modeling the importance of good grades, and working hard on and off the court through work ethic in the classroom and on the court.

Unlike the PWI Black student-athlete, the HBCU student-athletes were able to leverage extracurricular opportunities to enhance their leadership, athletic, and academic experiences. Ellie spoke of this when she described her leadership experiences: “I’m always called on to talk to this person. I tell them how things should happen and what they’re not doing right, because since I’m the person who’s known my coach the longest now, like it just kind of happened and...the school like part of it, my advisor has pushed me to talk on panels, to be an ambassador for my major, so, like she’s pushed me...like more of a leadership, but like outside of the basketball.” In another instance, David speaks of how his time at an HBCU helped him become more vocal, transitioning from being an introvert in high school to participating in events and campus activities where he has to talk to people. He had multiple opportunities to get in front of different people and speak on different things, which he felt helped him grow as a person.

These examples demonstrate the ability of HBCU students to expand their leadership experience beyond sports. Whether by assignment or by decision, playing the role of a leader while navigating their educational and athletic dreams allowed

each participant to strategically develop skills, expand their networks, utilize the resources available to them, and shape their identities.

Search for One's Identity Outside of Sport

The Black student-athletes' journey towards self-discovery and identity beyond sports shows how their perceptions of self change over time. In searching for one's identity outside of sport, aspirational capital becomes important as the Black student-athlete works to maintain their hopes and dreams despite the barriers placed in their way.

Aspirational Capital

As they transitioned from high school to college and beyond, their aspirations evolved, with each individual demonstrating a desire for multidimensional identities that transcended their athletic achievements. For example, Luke's transformative college experience highlights the importance of personal growth and navigating the challenges of racial stereotypes while asserting his identity as both an athlete and a businessman. Similarly, Jenny's pursuit of law signifies a quest to discover her identity outside of gymnastics.

This shift in desire for multidimensional identities beyond being solely defined as athletes was evident in their responses on the Pie graphic organizer, with many acknowledging their identity as athletes but also expressing a desire for more. This journey towards self-discovery and maturity reflects aspirational cultural wealth as they seek to redefine themselves beyond the confines of their athletic achievements. Hailey's shift towards a more multidimensional identity was somewhat different than the other participants' experiences as she embraced her time at an

HBCU as the opportunity to discover herself outside of sport, especially her identity as a Black woman. She demonstrated this in her Pie and the blank spot which she highlights with an asterisk. “I guess finding...finding my identity, who I am without basketball, but I think this one I’m finding my identity of what my Blackness truly is and who I can be, and I feel like being at an HBCU is giving me the opportunity to really discover that, because what I’ve learned is that there’s many types of Black people ... comes from many different backgrounds.”

She expressed a desire to be recognized for her intelligence, as did Dougy and David. Hailey’s words speak to what her peers were also trying to convey. She said,

I would always get a lot of praise about how athletic you were, how strong, like that I never really got told like oh my gosh you’re so smart, you’re so intelligent. Those weren’t really the compliments you get as an athlete. And so, when things would get tough in the classroom and I would feel challenged, it would irritate me because I got tired of people looking at me as just a basketball player and...If I took away basketball, what would people really think of me as a person? And I would want them to say oh she’s very intelligent. She’s very intellectual, she’s very well-spoken and stuff like that.

Hailey’s sentiments (and those similarly expressed by five other participants) indicated a strong desire to figure out their individuality. Other comments included, “What’s my purpose in life?” (David), “I really don’t think I know what my purpose is, honestly” (Luke), and “I guess a finding I said previously, finding my identity, [is] who I am without basketball?” (Hailey). David extended similarly talked about his struggle with understanding his purpose in life and defining his identity. He reflected on how he had grown from a high school student who struggled with emotions to maturing and learning to work through those emotions.

Dougy and Jamar, in particular, resisted being solely identified as athletes, emphasizing the importance of being recognized for their academic achievements and

personal qualities. Jamar explicitly stated that he knows he is an athlete but does not want to be defined only as an athlete, stating, “Being an athlete is a piece of my identity, but I don’t want people to just remember me as an athlete.” Jamar’s words, along with the counternarratives about their experiences as athletes on a college campus, show the heaviness that comes with the word athlete and the impact of being an athlete being overemphasized in their daily lives and activities. In both instances, they aimed to challenge stereotypes associated with student-athletes, showcasing a determination to establish a multifaceted identity beyond sports.

In addition, as the interviews shifted to perceptions of the future self, I expected a shift in how they envisioned their future to be. All 10 participants expressed a desire for a more well-rounded identity outside of sport, with six directly stating they want to be perceived as more than just an athlete and seven seeking to define success through career versus sport. I saw a desire for growth from a career perspective with participants discussing their desires to obtain their master’s degrees in a major they wanted to focus on, a strong desire for entrepreneurship, as well as an interest in travel. One common point for all was a desire to find balance without athletics and finding themselves without their sport being at the forefront of their identity.

Some participants were like David, envisioning themselves transitioning into coaching, personal training, or entrepreneurship, reflecting their aspirations beyond their athletic careers. Ellie looked forward to pursuing success in her pharmaceutical career and personal development, excited about the newfound freedom to focus on herself without the constraints of athletics. However, Emma and Jenny faced

challenges by needing to redefine their identities as they prepared to transition out of their sports, which had been central to their lives since childhood. While they expressed mixed emotions of fear and excitement, they both saw this transition as an opportunity for new beginnings and self-discovery. Jenny looked forward to attending law school and potentially studying abroad and was eager to explore new opportunities for personal and professional growth. Emma and Jenny struggled the most with seeing themselves outside of their sport. Emma started at three and Jenny at age six, and yet when in college, both were faced with the reality that their sports career was coming to an end.

Even though two participants had the opportunity to play professionally (one currently plays in the NBA), they expressed the same feeling with a sense of excitement and fear in this new journey of life without sport. Three additional participants, in particular, expressed aspirations beyond athletic success, desiring to make a lasting impact in society and be recognized as leaders. These participants wanted to be influential in shaping others' lives.

Hailey reflected on her ability to leave a mark wherever she went and hoped to continue doing so in the future, potentially using her large social media following as a platform for impact. Luke saw himself as a pillar in the community, aiming to excel in football and potentially transition into leadership roles in the NFL or other impactful ventures. And, Ricky's shift in perception of leadership was driven by a desire to be a role model for his brother and guide the younger generation.

This shift in aspirations reflected their embrace of aspirational cultural capital, as they aimed to leverage their experiences and platforms to influence and shape the

lives of others beyond the realm of sports. Throughout their journeys, the student-athletes envisioned and pursued meaningful paths that aligned with their values and goals. This aspirational capital manifested in their aspirations for personal growth, self-discovery, and identity development beyond their athletic pursuits. They sought to transcend the limitations imposed by societal expectations and stereotypes, striving for holistic success and fulfillment in various aspects of their lives. Their stories serve as powerful examples of resilience, determination, and the transformative potential of aspirational capital in navigating life's challenges and pursuing one's dreams. Despite the adversities they faced, these Black student-athletes demonstrated the ability to achieve their aspirations to overcome obstacles and achieve success both educationally and athletically.

Summary

Four themes emerged from participants' narratives. The intersection of racial and athletic identities among Black student-athletes, combined with various external factors such as parental influence, societal pressures, and institutional dynamics, led me to develop a theory and understanding that HBCUs cultivate more social capital opportunities while PWI student-athletes require stronger navigational capital to maneuver through less supportive environments. The PWI student-athletes often struggle more with discovering their true identities due to societal pressures and an overemphasis on athletic performance. I will now answer the second part of research question two.

Level 5: Interrelating the Explanations

At level 5, the data is grounded through extensive triangulation. The themes are referred to as explanations to employ the power of the analysis used to develop a theory that explains how athletic, academic, and racial experiences of the Black student-athlete impact identity development. I examined contradictions across my view and the student-athlete's views. "HBCUs and PWIs as different mediators," "external pressure vs. personal commitment as dominant drivers," and "prove them wrong syndrome."

It appeared that resistance, social, familial, navigational, and aspirational capital significantly influenced the participants' self-perceptions by helping them navigate the complexities of their dual roles, overcome challenges, and envision a future where they could achieve their diverse goals while maintaining a strong sense of identity and purpose. Aspirational capital drives student-athletes to set high standards for themselves, both academically and athletically. Familial capital provides the foundational support and cultural grounding essential for perseverance and adaptation. Over time, as they encountered various challenges, their perception of their capabilities and goals shifted. Initially, these self-imposed expectations were rooted in their ambitions and dreams. As they progressed, they reassessed and adjusted these expectations based on their evolving experiences. Resistance capital enabled them to challenge and counteract stereotypes and systemic barriers, while social capital facilitated the development of relationships and networks that supported their growth. Navigational capital was important, specifically for the PWI student-athletes in helping them maneuver through their institution.

By mapping these themes, the analysis illuminated the dynamic process of identity formation among Black student-athletes, highlighting the interplay between external expectations and personal growth over time. The data highlighted all the racial experiences, pressure, expectations, and intrinsic motivation to do and be more than a Black athlete. The athletes' growth and development were illustrated by their goal to prove others wrong, become something more than the word "athlete," and find their purpose. The interrelation of these capitals showed that each experience—educational, athletic, and racial—interacted to create a desire to be seen as more than just an athlete.

Level 6: Theory: Influences

No single factor, such as realizing societal and social factors or searching for identity outside of sport, can fully explain how student-athletes perceptions of themselves change over time (past, present, and future) or how the type of institution (HBCU vs. PWI) impacts their present and future self-perceptions. Instead, this issue reflects a complex set of influences, including the "HBCUs and PWIs as different mediators," "external pressure vs. personal commitment as dominant drivers," and "prove them wrong" syndrome." PWI student-athletes had to focus so much on external pressure and to prove them wrong that their true selves became invisible.

From this, the theory is that "HBCUs cultivate more social capital opportunities, while PWI student-athletes require stronger navigational capital to maneuver through less supportive environments. Although both institutions provide access to familial, aspirational, and resistance capital, PWI student-athletes often struggle more with discovering their true identities due to societal pressures and an

overemphasis on athletic performance” was formed. This concept emerges as student-athletes face the challenge of selectively concealing or revealing aspects of their identity depending on the social context. This notion of selectively concealing or revealing aspects of their identity is akin to Goffman’s (1956) “front and backstage presentation,” which describes how individuals navigate and manipulate their identities to align with societal perceptions. Student-athletes subsequently face the challenge of selectively concealing or revealing aspects of their identity depending on the social context. The “prove them wrong” syndrome exemplifies this manipulation of aligning these identities with societal perceptions.

A CCW helps students understand how HBCUs and PWIs provide different opportunities and challenges for navigating the complexity of their identities. By considering cultural background, resources, and experiences, CCW helps explain how students choose to reveal or conceal aspects of their identity within these institutional settings. This understanding is crucial in comprehending the complexities of Black student-athletes’ experiences as they strive to achieve both educational and athletic goals. Level six will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

In examining the impact of external and internal factors on the academic, athletic, and racial identity perceptions of Black student-athletes, these findings highlight the importance of the type of institution overall, as well as delineate key differences and similarities. By applying grounded theory and Harry et al.’s (2005) model for developing a data analysis map, I was able to trace how the student-athletes self-perceptions evolved from their past experiences, through their present challenges,

to their future aspirations. Levels five and six of the data analysis map revealed that HBCUs and PWIs act as different mediators in influencing student-athletes' experiences and identity development. External pressures from social media, peers, faculty, and coaches, along with personal commitment to sports and academics, were dominant drivers in their campus experience and identity formation. These pressures often developed a "prove them wrong" mentality among PWI student-athletes, specifically in response to stereotypes.

At level 5, the interrelation of each cultural capital created a desire to be seen as more than just an athlete. At level 6, the concept of "frontstage and backstage" performance emerges as a key outcome. The theory developed from the data shows that although both institutions provide access to social, familial, navigational, aspirational, and resistance capital, PWI student-athletes often face greater challenges in identity development, often performing on the frontstage during their formative years.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

“I was pulled this way and that for longer than I can remember. And my problem was that I always tried to go in everyone’s way but my own. I have also been called one thing and then another while no one really wished to hear what I called myself. So, after years of trying to adopt the opinions of others, I finally rebelled. I am an invisible man.”

-Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952, p. 573)

The Black student-athletes in this study draw on CCW to navigate the complexities of being a Black student in academia and athletics. In their academic and athletic spaces, they leveraged their cultural resources, networks, and collective experiences to overcome obstacles by asserting their value, advocating for themselves, and building networks and communities to help them reach their goals and aspirations. This study examined how the experiences of Black student-athletes’ past, present, and future identities shape their perceptions of themselves academically, racially, and athletically, influencing their visions of their possible selves. The results presented how social, familial, navigational, resistant, and aspirational capital shapes their self-perceptions in these areas.

My study revealed that family, race, student-athlete identity, institutional context, and sports engagement play crucial roles in their academic experiences. The importance of CCW emerged, highlighting how familial, social, and navigational capital influence academic success. Familial capital, specifically parents, emerged as one of the most important forms of CCW, alongside social capital, which was evident through faculty, coaches, athletic administrators, and teammates.

Ultimately, this study demonstrated the importance of CCW and how Black student-athletes, whether performing in frontstage (navigational capital) or backstage (resistance and aspirational capital) identity, utilize cultural wealth to navigate their athletic and academic experiences. In examining their diverse experiences, I gained valuable insights into how Black student-athletes navigate the prevailing power dynamics within both higher education and athletic domains.

By integrating counter-storytelling and grounded theory, this study not only provided a platform for Black student-athletes to voice their experiences, shedding light on the impact of external and internal factors on their perceptions of self but also offered a comprehensive exploration of their lived experiences, further expanded by insights from their Pie graphic organizer. The study's findings indicate that the intricate relationship between racial, athletic, and academic identity significantly shapes the identity development and academic experiences of Black student-athletes. Bimper et al. (2011, 2013) research parallels the experiences of the 10 participants in this current study, showing the impact overemphasis on sport can have on overshadowing other aspects of their identity.

These individuals' perceptions of themselves as both students and Black college athletes are deeply influenced by societal expectations, self-imposed pressures, and their own self-perceptions of how society perceives them. This reflects a complex interplay between external and internal factors, highlighting the multifaceted nature of their identity formation. These findings echo previous research, indicating that societal definitions and negative stereotypes surrounding Black student-athletes tend to dominate their self-perception, suppressing other facets of

identity and impacting their system of beliefs about education (Bimper et al., 2013; Howe, 2023).

Realizing Societal and Self-Imposed Expectations: Resistance Capital

With my PWI student-athletes, significant experiences often revolved around the pressure to represent their race positively and to “prove them wrong” academically and athletically, as seen similarly in Jolly and Chepyator-Thomson (2022). They faced negative stereotypes from professors and peers, which influenced their academic choices and career aspirations (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Beamon, 2012; 2014; Bimper et al., 2013; Comeaux, 2010; Harrison et al., 2011; Oseguera, 2010). The stereotypes they experienced led to a “prove them wrong” syndrome. In some cases, they perceived themselves as being stereotyped, while in other cases, the stereotypes were actually imposed upon them. My participants demonstrated a determination to persist despite perceived negative academic and social perceptions from others. They shared instances of the “prove them wrong” syndrome, with professors and athletic administrators assuming they lacked academic potential or dedication, highlighting the burden of disproving stereotypes and detracting from opportunities to explore diverse roles and identities beyond the confines of being a college athlete. Conversely, my HBCU student-athletes drew inspiration from being in spaces with others who resembled them.

Resistance capital is seen in each of my participant’s experiences of persevering through real and, at times, perceived stereotypes and beliefs of who they are and what they can accomplish. One of the most significant themes that emerged in my study was realizing societal and self-imposed expectations, which limited their

perceptions of self due to the pressure of racial and athletic expectations imposed upon them. Athletically, the Black student-athletes in this study grappled with the pressure to positively represent their race, alongside challenges such as perfectionism and fear of making mistakes, which permeate their academic, athletic, and racial experiences. Each of these participants talked of showing others they were more than a Black athlete. They pushed to show they were intelligent and capable with their journey in high school and college, reflecting a desire to transcend the athlete's label and be recognized for their true identities.

Uncovering Differences in HBCU and PWI Climate: Social Capital

The experiences of the HBCU student-athletes in this study differ significantly from those of the PWI student-athletes, as evidenced by both the findings of this study and prior research (Cooper, 2013; Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Comeaux & Savage, 2023). Each participant had unique experiences shaped by their high school and college environments. Two HBCU student-athletes transferred from PWIs due to racial issues, while two others faced similar issues in high school, influencing their decision to attend an HBCU or fostering leadership skills and vocal advocacy.

Social capital intertwines strongly with navigational capital, as the Black student-athletes in this study rely on the support of various programs, activities, coaches, sport leaders, faculty, and peers to navigate the barriers of a higher education system that often overlooks their cultural capital (Yosso, 2005). There is a distinct sense of pride, with the phrase “Black excellence” being automatic among the HBCU participants in this study, similar to findings in other research on HBCU student-

athletes. While pride exists for the PWI Black student-athletes in this study, it is often tied to their sport and representing the Black community.

The positive experience spoken by the HBCU student-athletes highlights the contrast between attending an HBCU versus a PWI that was shown in the participants, emphasizing the importance of institutional support and values in shaping the collegiate experiences of Black student-athletes (Comeaux & Savage, 2023; Cooper et al., 2017). The HBCU student-athletes in this study found the campus climate to be a nurturing and empowering environment, creating a strong sense of belonging. Studies such as Cooper (2013) have found similar results to my study that HBCUs often provide a more supportive and nurturing educational environment for Black male student-athletes.

The findings in this study emphasize the importance of concerted institutional efforts that prioritize not only athletic success but also academic achievement and holistic development among student-athletes, contributing to positive college experiences, as discussed by Cooper and Cooper (2015). Student-athletes enhance their social capital and navigate institutional structures more effectively by building relationships with faculty, coaches, teammates, academic advisors, and mentors. At PWIs, Black student-athletes often face challenges related to academic identity and athletic overidentification, which can hinder academic success (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015).

Despite variations in pathways, both HBCU and PWI participants in my study experienced personal and social growth, with HBCUs providing a more culturally affirming space for identity exploration and leadership development within a

supportive community. Both the HBCU and PWI student-athletes discussed the role coaches and athletic staff had in providing crucial support for mental health, a sense of belonging, and holistic identity development, particularly for the HBCU student-athletes. These findings in my study align with those of Cooper and Cooper (2015), who found that HBCU participants experienced academic success due to supportive networks. Furthermore, Cooper's (2013) findings in comparing PWI to HBCUs showed that HBCUs under culturally empowering mission statements tailored to address the unique needs of African American students. They provide culturally relevant curricula, artifacts, and institutional practices to foster a sense of belonging and facilitate positive developmental outcomes for Black students (Cooper, 2013), which was seen in the counter-stories of all five of my HBCU participants.

Similar to Comeaux and Harrison's (2011) findings, participants at PWIs in my study dealt with internal conflict, having experiences where they felt faculty and peers questioned their academic capabilities. While participants in this study reported varied experiences with the campus community, they did not highlight a lack of social capital in terms of representation, unlike findings from Jolly and Chepyator-Thomson (2022). However, similar to Jolly and Chepyator-Thomson, my participants expressed a desire for holistic support.

The Black student-athletes in my study expressed pride in their identity as athletes, seeing it as an honor to represent themselves as prominent figures on their campuses. They felt pressure to excel and work harder than others to prove their abilities, yet they remained proud of being Black athletes. However, these feelings also highlight the contrast in experiences that impact athletic identity. Similar to

findings by Cooper and Dougherty (2015), HBCU Black student-athletes showed lower levels of athletic identity and higher levels of holistic growth. While all participants expressed Black pride and a desire to explore undiscovered parts of their identity, HBCU student-athletes had earlier opportunities to do so, starting during their current possible selves compared to waiting until their athletic careers ended.

My research found that the type of institution (HBCU vs. PWI) significantly affects Black student-athletes' college experiences and identity development. My HBCU participants benefited from strong social, personal, and institutional relationships, while at PWIs, these relationships tend to be less pronounced. Cooper and Dougherty (2015) and Steinfeldt et al. (2010) suggested that Black student-athletes at HBCUs may develop a lower athletic identity due to a more holistic approach, allowing them to grow beyond their sport. This was evident in the experiences of the HBCU student-athletes in this study, who highlighted the importance of a supportive network of individuals who shared their backgrounds and promoted social integration on campus. In contrast, the PWI Black student-athletes in my study often prioritized their athletic identity, feeling primarily influenced by their sport, which led to a lack of connection to their institution. PWI student-athletes expressed a desire to engage in social groups and organizations and find purpose beyond sport to foster personal growth. This desire was particularly emphasized by the gymnasts, more so than by any other PWI participant.

Overall, the counter-stories highlight the importance of social capital in shaping student-athletes' collegiate experiences. The experiences of both HBCU and PWI participants in this study highlight the importance of their racialized experiences

as athletes, influencing how they perceive themselves and pursue identities outside of sport. Social capital, cultivated in culturally affirming environments led by culturally competent facilitators, can provide a safe space for athletes to reinforce their cultural identity while acquiring academic knowledge and skills (Harrison et al., 2017).

Whether at PWIs or HBCUs, through community support, cultural affirmation, networks, or navigating institutional dynamics, social capital plays a significant role in fostering a supportive and empowering environment for student-athletes to thrive academically, athletically, and personally.

Determining How to Navigational and Athletic Dreams: Familial and Navigational Capital

In my study, family and community influences contributed significantly to students' reflections on past possible selves. While parental emphasis on academic success is evident, students also exhibited self-motivation in academic pursuits. In all 10 participant responses, there was someone who influenced or had an impact on their perception of self. Among these factors, family emerged as the most impactful, shaping work ethic, academic achievement perceptions, and racial identity (Cooper et al. (2017). These factors foster holistic development and success, demonstrating a shift in perceptions of themselves over time.

All 10 participants in my study cited parental influence as a significant factor in their lives, ranging from parents with doctoral degrees to those who attended HBCUs, coached high school teams, or emphasized academics over athletics. Each participant expressed respect for and, in some cases, extrinsic motivation from their parents' influence, influencing both their academic and athletic identity. Initially

influenced by past familial support and cultural heritage, the participants in this study grew to understand and leverage their present circumstances, and ultimately, they developed future aspirations rooted in a strong sense of identity and resilience.

Aligning with several research studies (Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Comeaux et al., 2017; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011), my study found that familial guidance provided students with clarity and direction, smoothing their transition. This was an important asset-based addition to my research as there is a narrative that suggests Black student-athletes come from families that undervalue education (Comeaux & Savage, 2023; Harper, 2009). In each instance in my study, all 10 participants' parents and fathers, specifically, in many cases, emphasized the importance of education and career possibilities outside of sport.

Through this support, fathers enrich familial capital by nurturing a culture of dedication, academic excellence, athletic excellence, perseverance, and achievement within the family, ultimately playing a strong role in shaping the athletic identity of each participant's perceptions of their past and present self. Similar to Ofoegbu et al. (2021), participants were heavily influenced by their parents and, in my study, more specifically, their fathers. Many of them followed in their footsteps by attending the same university or developing similar work ethics. The involvement and support of their parents empowered the participants in this study to pursue academic success while navigating the complexities of the sports world, thereby enhancing their overall well-being and shift in perspective from high school (past) to college (present).

In this study, navigational capital looked different based on institutional contexts, whether it is through seeking cultural affirmation, finding community

support, or confronting challenges with resilience; these narratives highlight the multifaceted ways in which navigational capital influences the identities and experiences of the participants. As seen in my findings, HBCUs often foster a sense of community and belonging among students of color, providing a culturally affirming environment that may be lacking at PWIs. The participants at HBCUs felt less pressure to conform to stereotypes or face racial biases from peers and faculty compared to their counterparts at PWIs (Bimper & Harrison, 2011; Comeaux, 2010; Cooper & Hawkins, 2012; 2014; Cooper et al., 2017). While all ten participants faced academic challenges, the HBCU participants typically discussed more tailored support services and mentorship programs specifically designed to address their needs.

The influence of parents on academics versus athletics, support from coaches and athletic staff, and resilience in navigating unsupportive environments were common themes across both HBCUs and PWIs. These findings align with the current research (Cooper et al., 2017; Ofoegbu et al., 2021), as my participants often spoke of work ethic and aspirations to be something more than athletes in PWI institutions as they worked to navigate their college experience.

This lends to previous research on Black student-athletes experiences within PWIs in comparison to HBCUs (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Hawkins, 2014; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Donnor, 2006; Harper, 2009; Meldenez, 2008; Sellers, 1992), revealing in my study significant challenges such as racial stereotypes, differential treatment, athletic performance pressure, and inadequate academic support. Similar to other research (Cooper, 2013; Cooper et al., 2019; Cooper & Hawkins, 2012, 2014;

Charlton, 2011), my study found that all of the PWI participants articulate the significance of navigational capital in their experiences dealing with navigating barriers, leveraging resources such as academic advisors, coaches, parents, and teammates.

Searching for One's Identity Outside of Sport: Aspirational Capital

Aspirational capital influenced participants' perceptions of present and future selves by showing how they maintained their goals despite the barriers. In contrast to existing literature indicating that Black athletes at PWIs often encounter barriers such as a negative culture and feel treated differently (Ofoegbu et al., 2011), the Black student-athletes in my study did not report feeling distinctly discriminated against. Instead, they spoke of perceived perceptions that they were viewed as academically inferior or less capable. Searching for one's identity outside of sport revolved around forging a personal identity outside of sports while navigating one's educational and athletic dreams.

Both HBCU and PWI participants in my study dealt with the intersection of athletics and academics in identity development through their athletic experiences, coaches, expectations, and their own pressure to represent their sport, athletic ability, and academic ability. Their stories highlight the complexities of balancing multiple roles and identities as a student and as an athlete. Completing the Pie graphic organizer served as a platform for participants in this study to reflect on their experiences, which were often shaped by exposure and the ability to navigate stressful social situations in high school and college, further highlights the multifaceted nature of leadership development within the context of CCW.

In each of the 10 participants, their college experiences shaped their perceptions of personal growth. While some directly identified as athletes, others defined themselves through leadership roles. Their experiences suggest a balance between academics and sports, each defined uniquely, reflecting their individual journeys. Similar to Oyserman and Fryberg's (2006) findings, Black student-athletes perceptions in my study of their identity in college (present) were focused on a strategic approach to achievement, including choosing specific majors, searching for support systems, and maintaining academic discipline. Their parents provided foundation support, helping them use their academic commitment to establish themselves as a leader within their team.

Each student-athlete in my study aimed to define themselves beyond their athletic identity, indicating aspirations beyond sports. However, experiences in high school and college limited exploration of other identities until reflection on their future selves. This desire for an identity shift emerged prominently, influencing personal development. Exploration of past, present, future, and racial identities in my study reflects how educational experiences shape multifaceted identity searches, as Hoch et al. 2003 found with their student-athletes in the possible selves program at Kansas. Despres et al. (2008) echoed this search for multifaceted identity in their findings, indicating that student-athletes struggle to explore interests beyond athletics due to coach dependency and structured schedules.

When they reflect on life after their sports career ends (future), with fear of uncertainty, they begin to shift their perspective of identity to redefining themselves. Like previous studies (Gayles & Baker, 2015; Ofoegbu, 2011), the Black student-

athletes in my study aspire beyond sports, showing interest in academics, graduate school, and careers. However, limited exploration before graduation is common. Identity foreclosure restricted the exploration of other identities and roles outside of sports for the participants in my study, as found in similar studies (Beamon, 2012; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Harrison et al., 2010; Murphy et al., 1996).

Comeaux (2010) found similar results in acknowledging that an overly strong athletic identity can distort one's perceptions of others and one's own. My study revealed that societal stereotypes and perceptions have imposed limitations on how Black athletes see themselves in their identity exploration. Unlike the HBCU student-athletes in my study, the PWI participants often experienced identity foreclosure, fearing the uncertainty of life after sports and struggling to define themselves beyond athletics. PWI student-athletes frequently mentioned the need to navigate stereotypes and societal expectations, working diligently to excel academically and athletically. This often led to a more business-focused college experience for my PWI student-athletes, with less emphasis on extracurricular involvement (Bimper et al., 2013; Comeaux & Savage, 2023).

Similar to the findings of Beamon (2012) and Ofoegbu et al. (2011), my findings showed that with Black student-athletes, athletic identity overemphasis intensifies due to the perception that sports is the sole path to success. Similar to my participants, Bimper's (2013) participants feared that the overshadowing label of athlete would "recast" what it means to be Black for them in a negative manner. The similarity in findings is particularly evident in my PWI student-athletes, who expressed feeling that their authentic identities were overshadowed or disregarded by

the athlete label. Both of my gymnasts discussed the need to conform to certain behavioral expectations and assume leadership, feeling obligated to positively represent their community and counteract stereotypes imposed on Black student-athletes. This discussion reinforces the intricate challenges faced by Black athletes in navigating societal expectations while preserving their true identities. Through their experiences, they strive to transcend stereotypes and shape their identities in ways that align with their values and aspirations.

Contrary to PWI experiences, HBCU participants in my study had the chance to explore their identity beyond athletics. They engaged in campus activities, had non-athlete roommates, and expanded their opportunities in the community, echoing findings in previous research (Cooper, 2013; Cooper & Dougherty, 2015) on the Black student-athlete experience at HBCUs. The HBCU student-athletes in my study shared experiences of personal growth and belonging in their racial and athletic identities at HBCUs. This was a common finding in research on the Black student-athlete experience at the HBCU (Hawkins, 2014; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Meldenez, 2008; Sellers, 1992). Their counter-stories illustrate a nuanced understanding of identity formation and aspirations for personal growth, highlighting the richness of CCW and resilience in navigating societal expectations.

One of the most common themes among my ten participants, as they transitioned out of college, is their quest for their future possible selves. This pivotal moment in their life of self-exploration, marked by fear, excitement, and anticipation for life beyond sports, is crucial for their holistic development. This exploration of self was observed in both HBCU and PWI participants. While their experiences with

accessing cultural capital within their institutions may differ, they both ultimately focused on pursuing an identity outside of sport. The HBCU student-athletes in my study had the opportunity to access more culturally relevant social capital, which assisted them with their navigational, aspirational, and resistant capital. In contrast, my PWI participants often faced societal expectations that restricted exploration primarily within athletic identities, limiting their perceptions of self.

With discussions of starting families and taking on responsibilities outside of athletics, there is a recognition of the broader impact they can have on the world and a desire to be influential in shaping the lives of those around them. These aspirations highlight their readiness to embark on new chapters in their lives and embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Their aspirations reflect aspirational capital as they demonstrate a forward-looking mindset and a desire for personal and professional growth beyond their current circumstances.

Frontstage and Backstage Identity

Using grounded theory as a research method allowed for systematic exploration and construction of a comprehensive understanding of how Black student-athletes develop and navigate their identities in different educational settings. As seen in Harry et al. (2005), data analysis map the theory: “HBCUs cultivate more social capital opportunities, while PWI student-athletes require stronger navigational capital to maneuver through less supportive environments. Although both institutions provide access to familial, aspirational, and resistance capital, PWI student-athletes often struggle more with discovering their true identities due to societal pressures and an overemphasis on athletic performance” was formed. Through each of these

student-athletes' counter-stories in my study, their voices echo the importance of prioritizing holistic identity development in their campus experiences, especially in recognizing the invisible identities – the roles and identities they could not fully explore due to the dominance of their sport.

In their quest to shape a public image, their true essence often gets overshadowed by their behaviors and perceptions of self-performing between frontstage and backstage throughout high school and college. For Black student-athletes, this means performing in ways that conform to the roles and behaviors expected by their coaches, peers, faculty, and broader society. This performance is often a strategic response to the stereotypes and biases they face, aiming to present an idealized version of themselves that counters negative assumptions. Due to this performance, the student-athletes backstage identity is hindered by the pressures of performance during crucial years of identity development.

Navigational, familial, and social capital all play a role in developing the frontstage identity of the Black student-athletes in my study, particularly in the context of PWIs. Each of these forms of capital was shown as an important resource for the participants as they navigated issues with coaches, faculty, athletic administration, and societal expectations of how they are perceived. By understanding and manipulating their social environment, they begin to develop an image that they believe meets the expectations of not just the institution but society and their peers. They work to provide what Goffman (1959) refers to as impression management, where they control the information they present to their peers and society. In my research, this is shown through their discussion in choice of major, their desire to

show others they are academically capable, or their belief that as a Black athlete, they have to appear “perfect” or not make mistakes.

They navigate these expectations and stereotypes of the Black athlete by creating these personas that challenge the biases that depict them as only focused on sport and instead ensure they are perceived in ways that align with their goals and aspirations, which drives them to “prove them wrong” syndrome. Not only does the frontstage identity play a role in how Black student-athletes in my study access navigational capital, but it also encompasses how they access resistance, familial, and aspirational capital. They learn from their family and community network the role they have to present in oppressive and systemic barriers placed in the way of their goals. By performing in ways to create “impression management,” the participants in my study were able to persist and succeed and create the image best suited to help fuel their aspirations.

Resistance, familial, and aspirational capital pushed Black student-athletes in my study toward their backstage identity. Resistance capital empowered them to challenge and counteract the stereotypes and systemic barriers they faced. By resisting negative societal expectations, they maintained their authenticity and preserved aspects of their identity that might otherwise be suppressed while performing on the frontstage. Aspirational capital helped participants in my study to hold onto their dreams and goals, fueling their determination to achieve excellence both academically and athletically. This is true for PWI student-athletes in my study, but HBCU student-athletes were able to explore their backstage identity sooner due to the strong social capital that came with the support of their faculty and campus

community outside of athletics. Familial capital also helped them navigate systemic barriers by influencing their value system and helping them maintain a grounded and authentic self when away from society. This combination of resistance, familial, and aspirational capital supports the development of a backstage identity where they can be true to themselves.

Impact of Institutional Contexts on Identity Development and Cultural Capital in Black Student-Athletes

By focusing on the interplay between CCW and academic, athletic, and racial identity, this research provides educational stakeholders with insights to better support Black student-athletes. The study's primary contribution lies in its application of CCW as a tool to analyze how Black student-athletes navigate their higher education experiences. This approach integrates CCW with possible selves and the concepts of frontstage and backstage identities, offering a fresh perspective on the complex relationship between cultural capital and identity performance.

While previous research has explored CCW in the contexts of PWIs and HBCUs separately, this study uniquely compares how Black student-athletes utilize their cultural capital in these settings. It examines how they manage their identities through impression management, particularly how their use of navigational and resistant capital influences their frontstage and backstage identities. Furthermore, this research addresses a significant gap in the literature by exploring the possible selves of Division I Black student-athletes, considering the impact of racial identity and systemic barriers on their self-concept and aspirations.

The integration of these theoretical frameworks provides a comprehensive understanding of how institutional support—or the lack thereof—affects Black

student-athletes' perceptions of their present and future selves. This approach offers new insights into how racial identity and institutional dynamics shape their college experiences and identity development, ultimately contributing a new dimension to the research on Black student-athletes.

Implications and Recommendations

These issues highlight the pressing need for educational stakeholders to raise awareness among faculty about the significance of CCW and to establish mentorship and support networks specifically tailored for Black athletes. Moreover, beyond its role as a connection to the academic journeys of Black student-athletes, familial capital also serves as a way to challenge societal stereotypes and nurture academic achievement (Cooper et al., 2017). This reliance on collective familial support is deeply rooted in cultural norms, particularly in response to the societal privileging of Whiteness and the ongoing oppression faced by Black students (Ofoegbu et al., 2021; Yosso, 2005). Within Black families, there is a pronounced emphasis on education, bolstered by aspirational capital, which functions as a form of resistance against pervasive stereotypes depicting Black individuals as intellectually deficient (Comeaux & Savage, 2023; Yosso, 2005).

In addition, there is an imperative to cultivate a more inclusive environment where administrators and coaches recognize the multifaceted nature of Black student-athletes identities and the nuanced experiences they encounter in navigating the intersection of their academic, athletic, and racial identities. Tailored support beyond athletics is essential to foster holistic identity development among Black student-athletes. HBCUs have demonstrated, both through the experiences of my participants

in this study and current literature (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Cooper et al., 2017; Hodge, 2015), that they provide a nurturing space for Black athletes to grow and develop their identities beyond sport.

Even though PWI participants had to navigate more systemic barriers than HBCU participants at their institutions, despite a few negative experiences, PWIs, similar to HBCUs, excel in providing support within the athletic department for leadership and academic growth. However, with the increasing commercialization of college athletics and the emphasis on financial gain through conference realignment, there is a risk of further overemphasizing athletic identity, hindering student-athletes ability to explore and find purpose in answering the question, “Who am I?” This delay in identity exploration can have significant consequences, especially when student-athletes are not given the opportunity to explore their identity until the later stages of their college experience, potentially delaying this critical journey until well into their mid- twenties.

My research shows the urgency of addressing leadership disparities in higher education and college athletics, where White individuals, particularly White men, dominate leadership roles (Lapchick, 2023). Despite the significant presence of Black student-athletes in college sports programs, their underrepresentation in leadership positions highlights the need for more inclusive leadership (Byrd, 2021; S. Harper, 2018; Rutledge, 2020). Equity-focused leadership is crucial to shaping the educational journeys of Black athletes within this multibillion-dollar sports industry, requiring the dismantling of structural barriers hindering their equitable experiences (Comeaux & Savage, 2023). Coaches also have a significant influence on guiding the

academic paths of Black student-athletes, emphasizing the importance of student-centered approaches that prioritize academic excellence and foster inclusive learning environments.

Researchers have suggested that coaches and sport leaders recognize the need for holistic support for student-athletes, but there is a divide in what that support might entail (Ishaq & Bass, 2019; Rubin et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2021). Some coaches may act as barriers to allowing student-athletes at PWIs opportunities to explore activities outside of sport. While sports administrators and coaches, particularly Black coaches, as seen in Singer and Armstrong (2001), understand their role in assisting Black student-athletes with barriers, there is still a need for alignment with the importance of academic success. PWIs and the NCAA must prioritize the development of programs that foster social capital among Black student-athletes to provide a culturally affirming experience similar to that of HBCU Black student-athletes who speak of it with pride.

The importance of social capital becomes evident in providing support and navigating systemic barriers faced by Black student-athletes. Despite efforts to leverage social, familial, aspirational, and resistance capital, Black student-athletes continue to face disparities and biased treatment, showing the ongoing need for equity-focused interventions and leadership (Cooper et al., 2017). Leaders like Dawn Staley, head women's basketball coach at the University of South Carolina, a PWI institution, played a pivotal role in challenging biased treatment faced by Black athletes and confronting harmful stereotypes perpetuated in sports coverage, such as discrepancies in how Black and White athletes are perceived and treated in sports.

Examples of biased language used to describe Black athletes such as calling Angel Reese “classless” and an “idiot” for a taunting gesture or Dawn Staley’s team being referred to as “bar fighters,” “thugs,” and “monkeys,” highlighting the real-time experiences of these participants, specifically the PWI student-athletes, when it comes to being a Black student-athlete. The need for navigational, social, familial, aspirational, and resistance capital is utilized by coaches and student-athletes like Angel Reese and Dawn Staley to fight back against these barriers presented by social media and news outlets (Asare, 2024; Hall, 2023; Harper, 2023; Martin, 2023; Shaw, 2024).

Overall, my research emphasizes the crucial role of social capital and equitable leadership in addressing systemic barriers and promoting inclusivity within college athletics and higher education. By amplifying the voices and experiences of Black student-athletes and fostering supportive environments, institutions can work towards creating a more equitable and representative landscape in college sports and, in turn, help the Black student-athletes feel comfortable performing their backstage identity.

This study not only fills the gap on the power behind CCW in navigating athletic, academic, and racial experiences in higher education institutions by shedding light on how CCW provides an asset-based approach to the racialized educational and athletic experiences of Black student-athletes, but it also compares how cultural capital is accessed differently amongst HBCU and PWI student-athletes.

Recommendations and Future Research

Research on racial and athletic identities among Black student-athletes sheds light on the experiences of marginalized individuals and informs efforts to address systemic inequalities within sports and society. It emphasizes the importance of increasing the representation of people of color in leadership roles within sports. Dawn Staley's advocacy for fair treatment and her efforts to confront biased narratives highlight the critical role of leaders in PWI institutions promoting equity and justice within the sports industry. For instance, a student-athlete who desired to play for Staley expressed how her leadership led them on a journey of self-discovery, showcasing the transformative impact of supportive and inclusive leadership (Thames, 2023).

Discussing the unfair treatment and scrutiny faced by Black athletes like Angel Reese highlights how diverse leadership can challenge systemic racism and promote equity in sports. The relevance of diverse leadership lies in ensuring that the perspectives and experiences of marginalized groups, such as Black athletes, are valued and addressed. Leaders of color bring unique perspectives and insights that can lead to more inclusive policies and practices within sports organizations. Their cultural competence allows them to create welcoming and supportive environments for athletes from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging and community among all athletes.

Colleges, universities and the NCAA can embrace these ideas by developing programs that foster both bonding and bridging social capital. Creating programming led by culturally competent facilitators provides a culturally safe environment for

Black student-athletes to reinforce and value their culture. Bridging social capital introduces Black student-athletes to heterogeneous groups, broadening their social networks and facilitating future career success (Harrison et al., 2017). Additionally, athletic programs should collaborate with the campus to provide academic support, engage athletes in the campus community, and ensure access to academic resources. Campus constituents should strive for cultural competence and avoid stereotyping based on race. Coaches play a crucial role in encouraging academic success and prioritizing the academic experiences of college athletes.

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) stressed the need for educational activities that foster personal and leadership development among students. Meanwhile, culturally relevant pedagogy, as elucidated by Cooper and Thompson (2020), offers a framework for meaningful interactions with Black student-athletes, aiming at long-term academic achievement and cultural competence. Cooper (2016) and Harper (2018) advocated for cultural competency workshops to enhance the schooling experiences of Black student-athletes at PWIs. PWI institutions such as the SEC and Big Ten have established alliance programs like Auburn's Black Student-Athlete Council and LSU's Black Student-Athlete Association to support holistic identity development. Similarly, universities like Rutgers and Washington offer credit-based identity development programs, emphasizing personal, professional, and leadership skills through intentional programming.

Singer and Armstrong's (2001) research highlights the importance of creating programming that provides cultural support and emphasizes the role of coaches in fostering navigational, aspirational, and social capital for Black student-athletes.

Their study reinforces the need to better educate coaches in CCW and enforce rules where coaches are required to facilitate holistic identity development through programming, mentorship, and support. Understanding the influence of cultural identity is crucial for addressing the holistic development of Black student-athletes and shows the importance of coaches and sports leaders creating a more holistic, supportive, and inclusive environment for them. External and internal factors significantly impact the experiences of Black student-athletes and their perceptions of self. Externally, systemic racism and societal stereotypes create barriers that can undermine the confidence and sense of belonging of Black student-athletes.

Additionally, societal stereotypes often perpetuate the notion of Black athletes as solely being athletically gifted but academically deficient, which can affect how Black student-athletes perceive their own abilities and potential for success beyond sports. Internally, Black student-athletes may face challenges related to identity development and navigating multiple social identities, such as being both Black and an athlete, within the college environment. They may struggle to reconcile their athletic identity with other aspects of their identity, such as academics, family expectations, and personal interests. Moreover, the pressure to conform to stereotypes or expectations imposed by coaches, teammates, or peers can contribute to feelings of isolation, “prove them wrong” syndrome, and a lack of authentic self-expression among Black student-athletes. These experiences, as shown in the findings, look different within the HBCU environment, and their experiences of support and sense of belonging helped develop a stronger holistic identity and a more positive cultural environment for Black student-athletes. By fostering a culture of inclusivity and

belonging within athletic programs, coaches and sports leaders can help mitigate the negative impacts of external and internal factors on Black student-athletes' experiences. This can be achieved through several measures:

Providing Mentorship and Support

Coaches can offer mentorship and support to Black student-athletes to help them navigate the challenges they may face both on and off the field. This support from coaches can include mentorship programs, academic and career guidance, and personal counseling to address the holistic needs of student-athletes.

Promoting Cultural Competence

Coaches and sports leaders should undergo cultural competence training to better understand and address the unique experiences and needs of Black student-athletes. This includes being aware of systemic racism, implicit biases, CCW, and microaggressions that may impact Black student-athletes within the sports environment.

Creating Inclusive Programming

Athletic programs should offer programming that celebrates diversity, fosters cultural awareness, and promotes holistic identity development among Black student-athletes. This may include cultural heritage events, identity workshops, and leadership development programs tailored to the needs of Black student-athletes. By prioritizing the holistic well-being and development of Black student-athletes, coaches and sports leaders can create an environment where all student-athletes feel valued, supported, and empowered to succeed both on and off the field. However, there remains a research gap regarding the needs of Black student-athletes and the

correlation between holistic development programming and academic success (Comeaux, 2007; S. Harper, 2018). Culturally responsive programming has been recommended to enhance academic achievement, with CCW serving as a vital component of identity programming, validating the experiences of Black student-athletes and empowering them to navigate institutional barriers (Cooper et al., 2017; Jolly & Chepyator-Thomson, 2022; Yosso, 2005). By teaching Black student-athletes about the various forms of cultural wealth within their communities, CCW enables them to develop a stronger sense of self and challenge stereotypes. Despite the existence of such programs, limited research on culturally responsive frameworks for Black student-athletes shows the need for more inclusive and tailored programming to address their unique challenges and experiences.

A promising future direction for continuing this research is comparative studies across racial and ethnic groups to further enhance understanding by examining if identity development is an issue with all athletes and is not specific to Black student-athletes. Alongside research across racial and ethnic groups, a focus on the Black student-athletes knowledge of CCW and how to use it as an asset in their academic and career goals would expand the asset-based research literature on the Black student-athlete.

There is also a lack of research on the coach's perspective on their role in the academic experiences and the role they play in identity development amongst Black student-athletes and understanding of the Black student-athlete's experiences in hegemonic power structures such as campus and athletic departments. Through these limited studies, there is a consensus understanding that the Black student-athlete has a

unique experience and sport and coach demands can sometimes act as a barrier to providing a holistic experience for the student- athlete. There is a great opportunity to expand on this limited research to examine what coaches deem important in the Black student-athlete experiences, especially in light of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) and the new rules with the NCAA transfer portal. Lastly, a longitudinal study examining the impact of conference realignment and NIL on Black student-athletes perceive their past, present and future selves will be important to examine within the next 10 years to ensure we best serve our student-athletes.

Limitations

Some limitations of the current study should be considered. One limitation is that participants were hand-selected by colleagues in the field, leading to a non-random selection and a lack of full representation of all NCAA sports. The findings highlight the unique experiences of Black student-athletes from Division I and Division II PWI and HBCUs, but they are not generalizable to all Black college athletes. My research also does not provide solutions for creating a stronger sense of belonging on the college campus but instead focuses specifically on how the athletic department can provide better support.

Another limitation was limiting the original 22 participants to the 10 highlighted in my research. It does not provide the voice of all 22 participants, but it does provide results through the 10 participants that can be generalized to the other 12 participants. Finally, the study's overall findings focused on observations, Pie graphic organizer, and interviews. Adding a survey on racial identity would give a better baseline of the Black student-athletes' perceptions of their racial identity.

Conclusion

In the course of this research, clear parallels emerged between the present study and Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, a nameless Black man undertaking a profound exploration of his identity and visibility as an HBCU college-educated Black male navigating life in a White-dominated society. He adopts a prescribed identity, limiting his understanding of his authentic self and how it should manifest behind the scenes. Encountering racism, he internalizes societal biases, shaping his self-perception according to preconceived expectations while longing to be acknowledged for his individuality. Ellison published this novel in 1952, and the themes and experiences of this young man resonate in the stories of the Black student-athletes interviewed in this study. The participants of this study find themselves conforming to racial stereotypes and performing on society's front stage. In each athlete's counter-story, they desired to be recognized by their individuality rather than stereotypes.

The themes and experiences depicted in *The Invisible Man* resonate deeply with the concepts later defined in CCW. His journey as a Black man navigating racial prejudice and systematic inequalities challenges deficit thinking and explores the power of cultural identity and social capital in shaping individuals' lives. Although *The Invisible Man* existed long before the formal development of CCW, it embodies the same principles. Similar to the 10 participants in this study, Ellison draws upon familial, social, and navigational capital to navigate the complex interplay of identity. Like the 10 participants, his connection to his cultural heritage (familial capital), the relationships and networks he formed (social capital), and his ability to navigate

through systemic inequities (navigational capital) and pursue his aspirations despite social barriers (aspirational and resistant capital) highlight the importance of leveraging cultural aspects within communities of color.

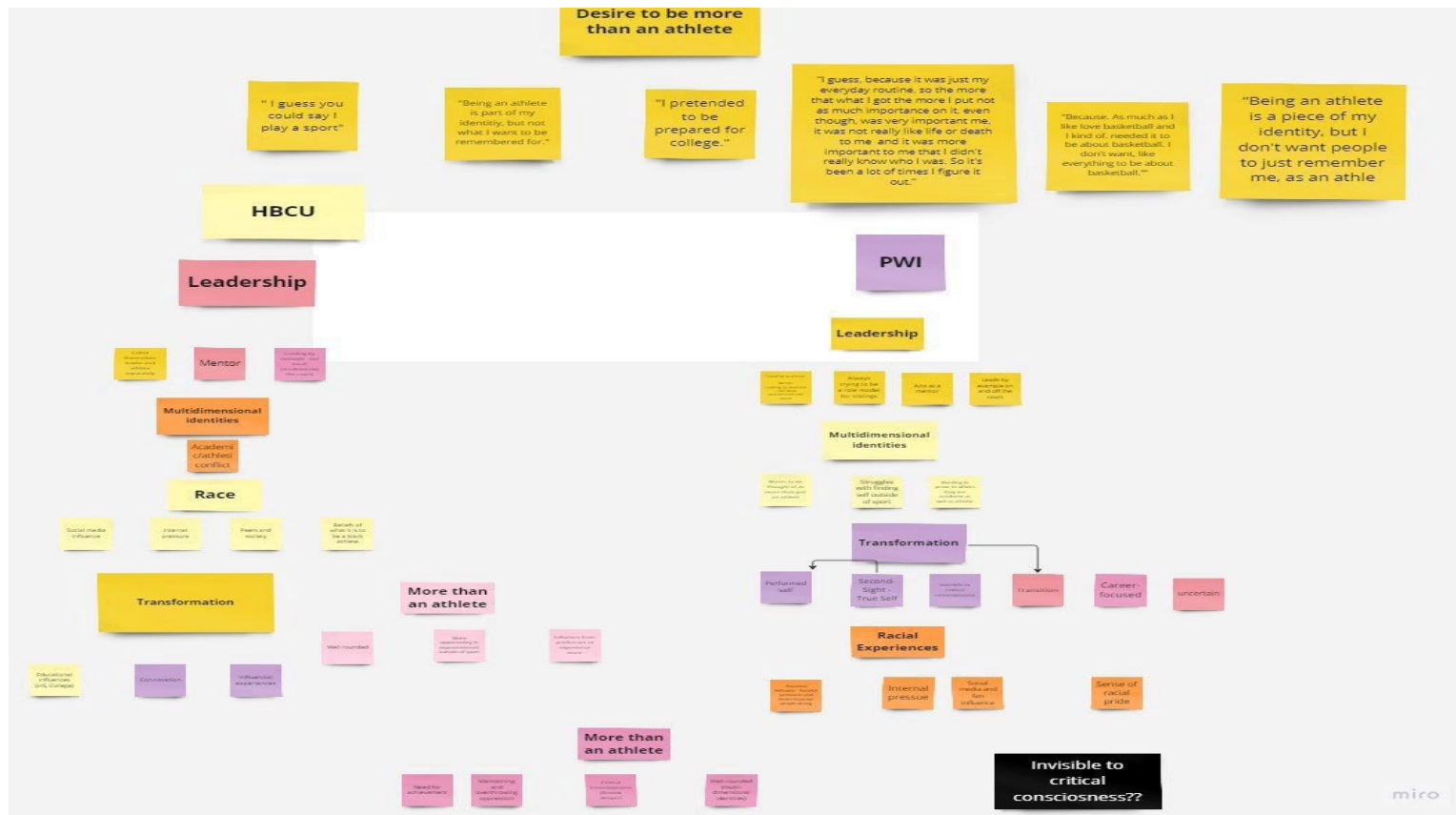
The participants in the study find themselves navigating a society that renders them invisible or marginalized, particularly within PWIs, where societal norms and expectations can often overshadow their identities. These expectations and the constraints brought onto them by the overemphasis of the athletic identity can limit one's perception of identity, causing the athlete to conform to predefined roles that may not authentically represent them (frontstage identity). As a result, racial prejudices often shape their perceptions and create limitations on the individual's ability to be their true selves (backstage identity). Just as the "invisible man" desired to break from the constraints of these stereotypes, the Black student-athlete wants to emerge from the stereotypes imposed by society. By breaking free of these perceived or real stereotypes and beliefs placed on them by society, they aim to compel others to acknowledge their existence and recognize their identity independent of the word "athlete" (Ellison, 1952).

While some question how CRT will provide solutions to institutional racism, it does provide valuable insights into understanding and addressing systemic issues. Hiring more coaches and leaders of color, fostering a supportive campus climate, prioritizing academics within athletic culture, and organizing culturally empowering social events are all areas that will contribute to the student-athlete's sense of belonging and academic success (Cooper & Cooper, 2015). By centering community engagement and focusing on institutional structures and relationships, CRT-inspired

approaches can facilitate broader systemic change, ultimately improving the educational experiences of Black student-athletes (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

APPENDIX A

Data Analysis Map



APPENDIX B

Pie Data Analysis

Participant	High School Experience	High School Identity	Pie Measure	College Experience	College Identity	Pie Measure	5 Years from Now Experiences	5 Year Identity	Pie Measure	Race Academic Experiences	Black athlete Identity	Racial Identity	Pie Measure				
Participant 13A (HBCU)	Athlete	Leader	Biggest space was - becoming more vocal	Academic	Leadership	Became more diverse	Wants a new start with career and move from home	Introverted	Biggest space was her religion	Proud (HBCU)	Labeled	Code switching	emphasis on "well-rounded/ being more than an athlete"				
	Seperation by race and sport	Involved	second biggest school	Athlete	Determined	Became more vocal	Become active in the community	Decisive	Second biggest was saying no	Dumb (private school)	Underfunded	Confident	Equal parts code switching and confident				
		Quest			Vocal	Identity became more equal	Success	Able to make time for myself		Confident (STEM in HBCU)	Looked over	Well-rounded					
		School			Dependable			Religious									
	Being a student	Decisive	equal parts for the rest	Balancing school and athletics	Religion			Career	Career was an important identity piece (wants to become less introverted because of career)			Blank space = learning the history of Black culture					
Participant 8A	Success (sport)	Leader (all-around)	Biggest piece - extrovert	Stressful	A=Goofy B=Student C=Friend D=Christian E=Teammate (athlete) F=Cadet	Biggest piece - religion	Successful	A=Leader B=Achiever C=Discipline D=Happy	Biggest piece-Being happy	Equal (????)	People assuming that's all they're good for	A=Being Proud	Biggest piece - Confident & loving herself				
	Supportive	Extremely extroverted	Biggest piece - finding herself	Time management,	B = student	Goofy, teammate, cadet- big equal parts	Financially stable		Equal parts for the rest	Challenging,	Being proud to go D1 and get her degree	Proving yourself	Equal parts for the rest				Grades/student
	Driven	C = goofy D = open minded	Equal parts for the rest	Staying focused	C = friend	Student and friend smaller and equal parts	Happy			Overwhelming		C= Having your own back					
		E = athlete			D = Christian E = Teammate (athlete)												
		F = finding myself			F = Cadet												
Participant 1A (Nigel)	Laid back	A = Laid back	Biggest piece (about 1/2 the pie)- laid back	Laid back	A= Laid back	Biggest piece-athlete (almost 1/2)	Professional Athlete	A = more extroverted	all relatively equal parts	More aware of racial situations	assumed privileges	A = try not to be the stereotype	Biggest piece = not trying to be the stereotype (1/2 of the pie)				
	Stressful	B = Athlete	Athlete and quiet were equal and significant portions	Quiet	B= Matured	Laid back and matured equal and smaller parts	Producer	B = professional athlete		Learning what others think (other people of color)	student athletes treated differently	B = athlete	Rest are equal parts				
	Fun	C = Quiet	Student-athlete was the smallest	Dramatic	C= More Vocal	More vocal a tid bit smaller than laid back and matured	More extroverted	C = successful career man		understanding the viewpoint of white people	more eyes on us (classroom)	C = assumptions based on race and height					
											Make sure we're on our P's and Q's						

Key:

Balancing sport, academics and extracurricular

Athlete

Leader

Wants to be able to start a new career

Grades/student

APPENDIX C

Example Memo

Codes	Memo
Expectations	They showed fear of pressure to represent race in a positive light. There is a fear of making a mistake. This was seen when creating their pie measures as well. Intrinsic motivation to represent race in a positive light. Pressure from opinions of peers and society.
More than an athlete	It seems that students were defined heavily with athletics, but did not want to be defined as an athlete. One student made the statement, "I guess you could say I play a sport" and another stated, "Being an athlete is part of my identity, but not what I want to be remembered for." Many felt it was fun in high school, but did not feel fully prepared for college.

APPENDIX D

Email to Recruit Participants

Dear _____,

I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a student-athlete. The purpose of this research project is to gain a better understanding of how high school and college experiences as a student-athlete influenced their identity and in turn their academic success.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview. The times of the individual interview will be determined through a doodle poll with all of the student participants who have signed consent forms. Once your individual interview time is confirmed, you will be sent an electronic Student-Athlete Motivation towards Sports Academic Questionnaire (SAMSAQ) through a Qualtrics link and it will take 20 minutes to complete. Predetermined questions will guide the individual interview. The individual interview will last for no more than sixty minutes and will take place at a time and location that is convenient for you. If you agree to participate in this study, your identity will remain confidential. I will assign all participants an unrecognizable pseudonym, and all study materials will be kept in secure locations.

There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study by helping us find where the deficits are with our student-athletes when it comes to academic achievement to provide the proper resources and support moving forward.

Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will not affect your grades, your academic standing as a student, your playing time, or your scholarship in any way. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me by replying to this email.

APPENDIX E

Consent Form - Possible Selves

Project Title: The Effects of Student-athletes secondary Experience on their Definition of achievement and Motivation Towards Academic Success

This research is being conducted by Tasha Harris at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are an undergraduate student- athlete. The purpose of this research project is to gain a better understanding of how high school and college experiences as a student-athlete influenced their identity and in turn their academic success

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a student-athlete. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in individual interviews. You will participate in one interview, which will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you and conducted over Zoom. The times of the individual interviews will be determined through a doodle poll with all of the student participants who have signed consent forms. Predetermined questions will guide the individual interviews. The individual interview will last for no more than sixty minutes and with your permission, I will audio record it to transcribe later. A sample question is as follows: “To what extent did you feel ready to go to college? Why did you feel this way? Who shaped this perspective?”

There are no known risks from participating in this research study. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer. If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study by helping us find where the deficits are with our student-athletes when it comes to academic achievement to provide the proper resources and support moving forward.

All interviews will be audio recorded on my password protected iPad. I will take field notes during and/or directly after the individual interviews, and they will be saved on a password protected computer. All copies of information regarding this study will be locked in a password protected laptop and only the investigator and advisor will have access to the data.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will not affect your grades, your academic standing as a student, your playing time, or your scholarship in any way.

If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: [Tasha Harris] [8500 Paint Branch Drive, College Park, MD 20742] [tharris9@umd.edu] [502-291-6282]

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research- related injury, please contact: University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678

For more information regarding participant rights, please visit: [https://research.umd.edu/irb-](https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants)

[research-participants](https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants) This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.

APPENDIX F

The Pie Measure

Name

First Name

Last Name

Instructions: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability

This section is about high school. When you think about experiences in high school, what 3 things come to mind?

Type here...

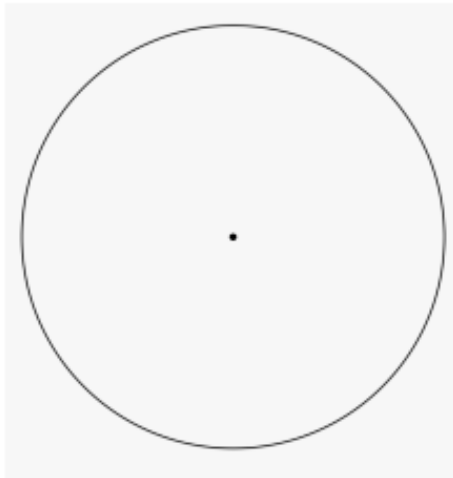
6

List the important roles, identities, and personal characteristics that describes you in high school

Type here...

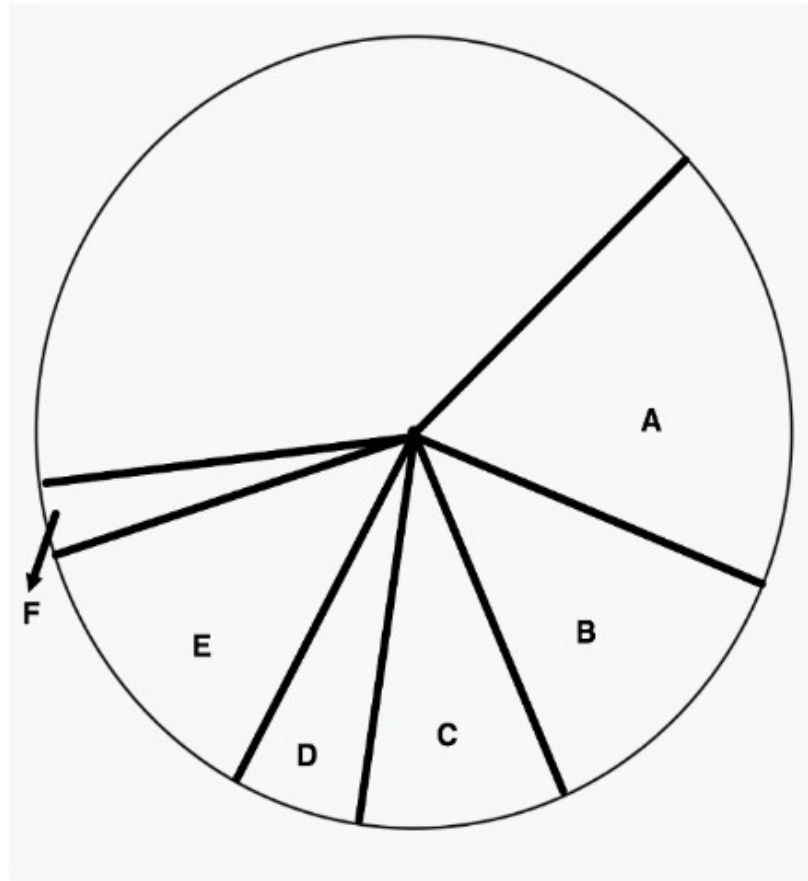
6

In this section, you will be shown an empty circle like the one below



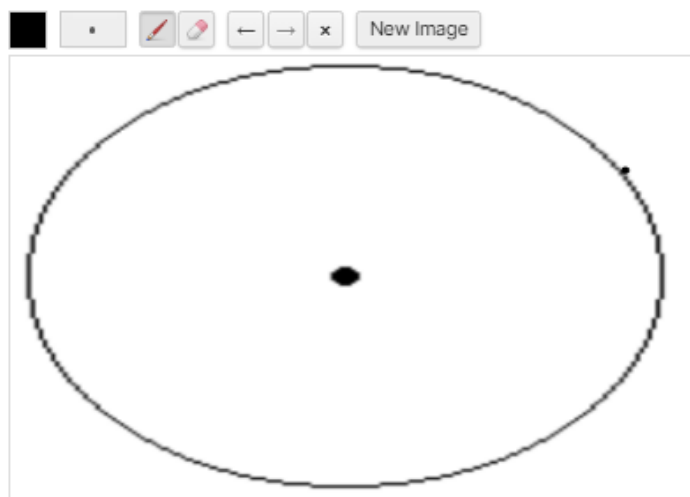
Imagine that the circle represents you when you were in high school. Draw slices in the circle to allow the different roles, identities, and personal characteristics that you had when you were in high school. You may use all, some, or even none of the roles you typed in the box above. The bigger the slice, the more important the role, identity and personal characteristic was to you. Leave a blank space in the circle to represent a part of your identity that you are still exploring, or do not understand, and/or have not named yet.

Here is an example of a completed circle that shows slices, labels, and a legend to explain the labels.



A = Friend
B = Religious
C = Athlete
D = Funny
E = Student

Now is your turn to divide your circle into slices and label them accordingly. In the display below, click on the icon with the black circle and choose the smallest circle and then click on the paint brush to draw the slices. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. You may use all, some, or even none of the roles you typed in the box above. The bigger the slice, the more important the role, identity and personal characteristic was to you. Leave a blank space in the circle to represent a part of your identity that you are still exploring, or do not understand, and/or have not named yet.



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

Type here...

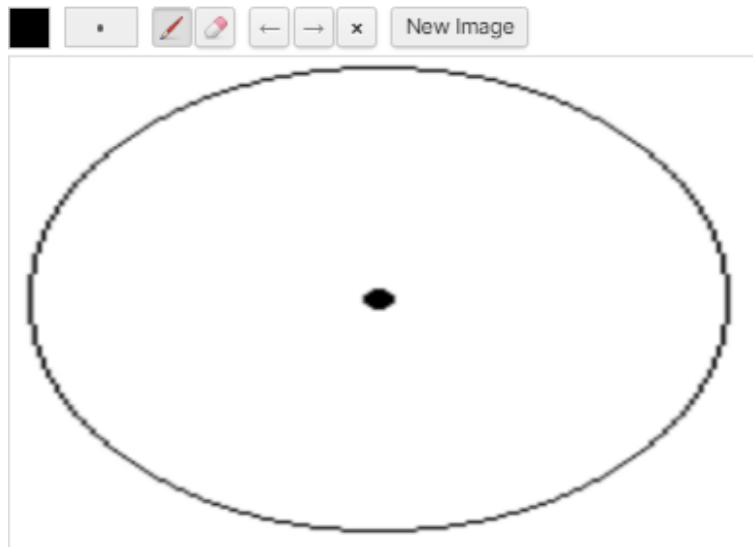
This section is about college. When you think about experiences in college, what 3 things come to mind?

Type here...

List the important roles, identities, and personal characteristics that describe you now.

Type here...

Imagine that the circle represents you now. Draw slices in the circle to show the different roles, identities, and personal characteristics that you have now. In the display below, click on the icon with the black circle and choose the smallest circle and then click on the paint brush to draw the slices. You may use all, some, or even none of the roles you typed in the box above. The bigger the slice, the more important the role, identity and personal characteristic was to you. Leave a blank space in the circle to represent a part of your identity that you are still exploring, or do not understand, and/or have not named yet.



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

Type here...

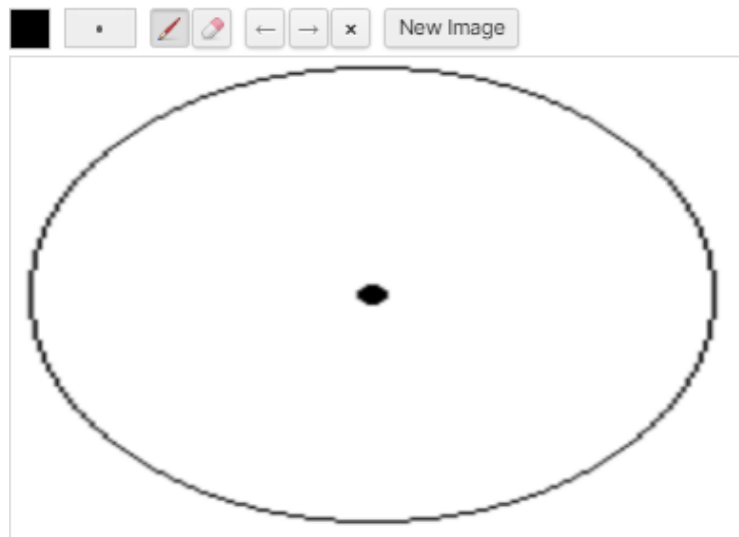
This section is about the possible future. When you think about your possible future 5 years from now, what 3 things come to mind?

Type here...

List the important roles, identities, and personal characteristics that would possibly describe you 5 years from now

Type here...

Imagine that the circle represents you in 5 years. Draw slices in the circle to show the different roles, identities, and personal characteristics that would possibly describe you 5 years from now. In the display below, click on the icon with the black circle and choose the smallest circle and then click on the paint brush to draw the slices. You may use all, some, or even none of the roles you typed in the box above. The bigger the slice, the more important the role, identity and personal characteristic was to you. Leave a blank space in the circle to represent a part of your identity that you are still exploring, or do not understand, and/or have not named yet.



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

Type here...

To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

Type here...

This section is about your racial identity. When you think about your experiences academically, what 3 things come to mind?

Type here...

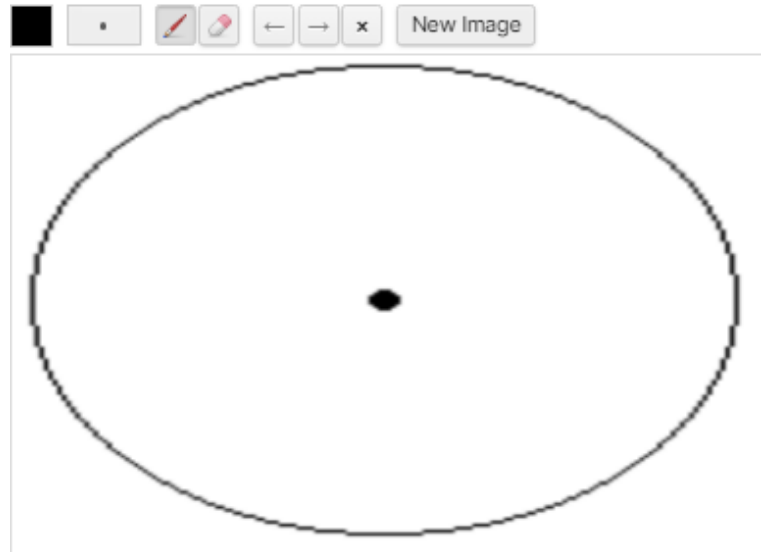
This section is about your racial identity. When you think about your experiences athletically, what comes to mind?

Type here...

List the important roles, identities, and personal characteristics that would possibly describe your racial and athletic identity

Type here...

Imagine that the circle represents how you perceive your racial identity in terms of academics and athletics. Draw slices in the circle to show the different roles, identities, and personal characteristics that would possibly describe you. In the display below, click on the icon with the black circle and choose the smallest circle and then click on the paint brush to draw the slices. You may use all, some, or even none of the roles you typed in the box above. The bigger the slice, the more important the role, identity and personal characteristic was to you. Leave a blank space in the circle to represent a part of your identity that you are still exploring, or do not understand, and/or have not named yet.



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

Type here...

Interview Questions

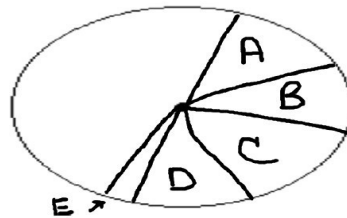
1. How important is race to your sense of who you are?
2. How important is your sport to your sense of who you are?
3. How important is your academics to your sense of who you are?
4. What social factors (i.e. family, peers, social media, and education) have had the most impact on the way you identify yourself?
5. When and how did you become aware of your racial identity?
6. How do you think others perceive you?
7. How did your racial identity impact your experiences at school? How does your racial identity continue to impact your life today?

APPENDIX G

Gabby (HBCU-Softball)

High School

Now is your turn to divide your circle into slices and label them accordingly. In the display below, click on the icon with the black circle and choose the smallest circle and then click on the paint brush to draw the slices. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. You may use all, some, or even none of the roles you typed in the box above. The bigger the slice, the more important the role, identity and personal characteristic was to you. Leave a blank space in the circle to represent a part of your identity that you are still exploring, or do not understand, and/or have not named yet.



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

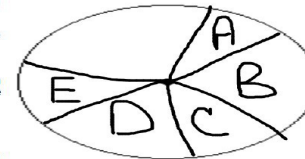
A= Teacher's Pet
B = Leader
C = Student Ambassador
D = Student-Athlete
E = Principal's List

College

List the important roles, identities, and personal characteristics that describe you now.

Student-Athlete
Role Model/mentor
Dean's / Presidents List
Work/ Life/ Social balance
Friend/Roommate

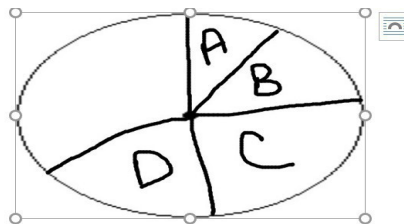
Imagine that the circle represents you now. Draw slices in the circle to show the different roles, identities, and personal characteristics that you have now. In the display below, click on the icon with the black circle and choose the smallest circle and then click on the paint brush to draw the slices. You may use all, some, or even none of the roles you typed in the box above. The bigger the slice, the more important the role, identity and personal characteristic was to you. Leave a blank space in the circle to represent a part of your identity that you are still exploring, or do not understand, and/or have not named yet.



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

A = Student-Athlete
B = Role Model/mentor
C = Dean's / Presidents List
D = Work/ Life/ Social balance
E = Friend/Roommate

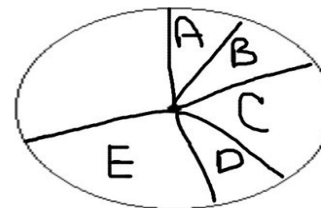
Future Self



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

A = HBCU Alumni
B = Member of various organizations
C = Career focused
D = Family oriented

Racial

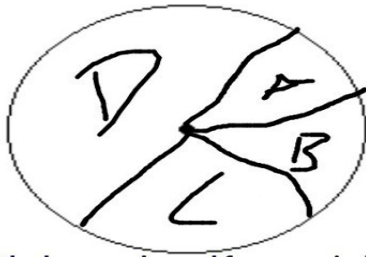


To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

A = Role model
B = the example
C = self awareness
D = "best of the best"
E = having balance

Jamar (PWI-MBB)

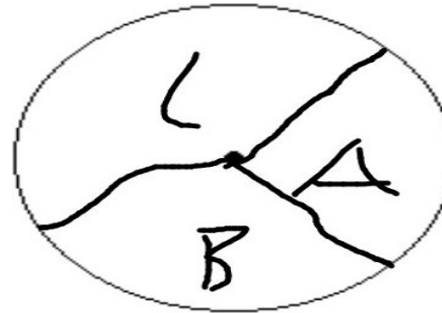
High School



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

A: Respectful
B: nice
C: student
D: athletic

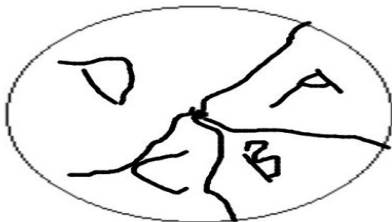
College



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

A: Laidback
B: leader
C: friend

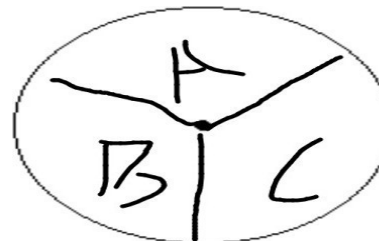
Future Self



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

A: Leader
B: wise
C: keeper
D: pro

Racial

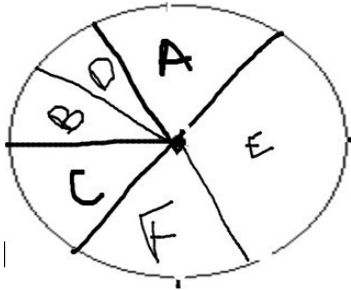


To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

A: A person
B: a hard worker
C: leader

Dougy (PWI-MBB)

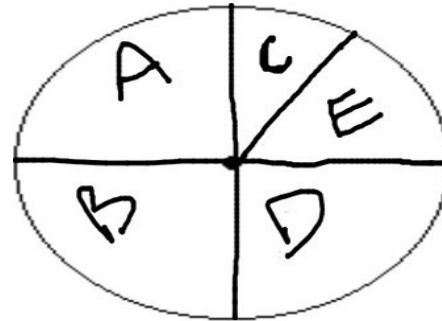
High School



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

A: Energetic
B: Open-minded
C: Social
D: Leader
E: Athlete
F: Religious

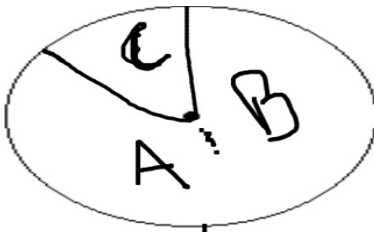
College



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

A: Experienced
B: Proactive
C: Studious
D: Friend
E: Role Model

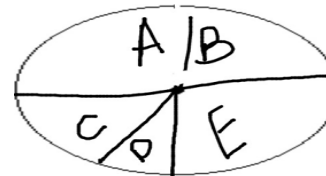
Future Self



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

A: Leader
B: Supportive
C: Complete

Racial

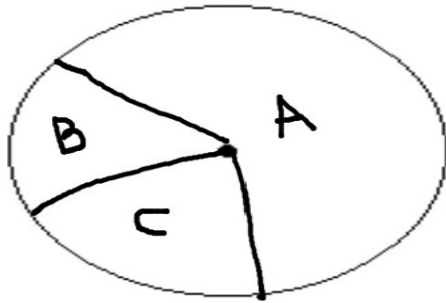


To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

A: Hard Worker
B: Fighter
C: Role Model
D: Motivator
E: Faithful

Emma (PWI-WGY)

High School



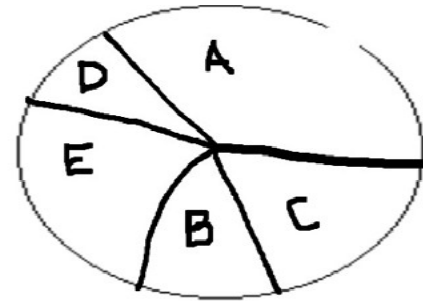
Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

A= gymnastics

B= student

C= quiet

College



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

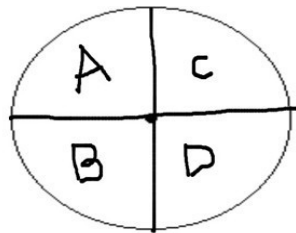
A=gymnast

B=leader

C=ambivert D=silly

E= trend setting

Future Self



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

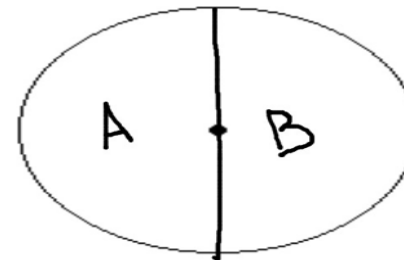
A=working woman

B= fashion involved

C= extroverted

D= enjoying what I'm doing

Racial



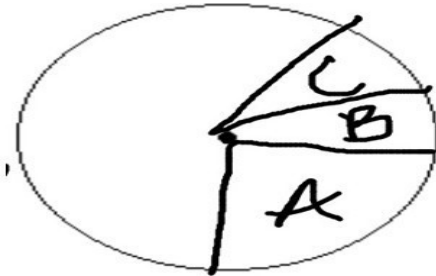
To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

A=emotionless

B=perfect

Jenny (PWI-WGY)

High School



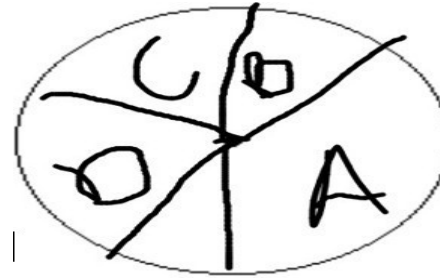
Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

A= student athlete

B=weird

C=obsessive

College



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

A=student athlete

B=self motivator

C=attention seeker

D=social feign

Future Self



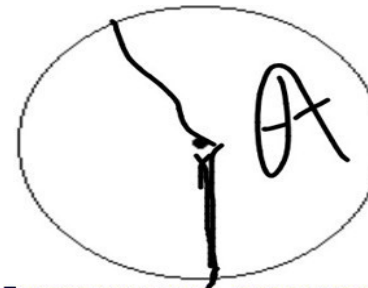
To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

A=independent

B=Leader C=travel

freak

Racial

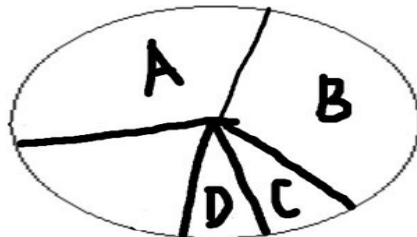


To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

A=leadership |

Luke (PWI-MFB)

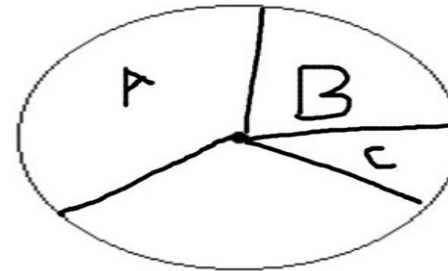
High School



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

- A. Athlete
- B. Friend
- C. School
- D. Family
- E. Purpose

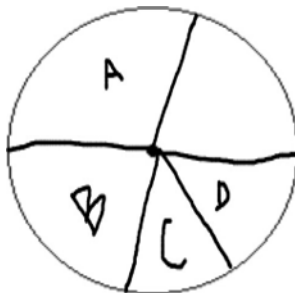
College



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

- A. Athlete
- B. Businessman
- C. People Person
- D. Purpose

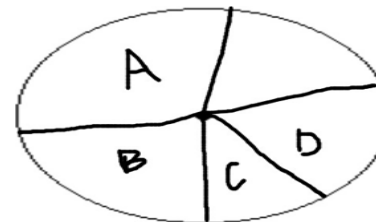
Future Self



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

- A. Pillar of Success

Racial

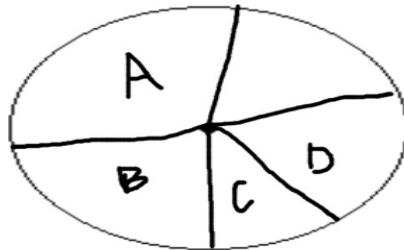


To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

- A. Be 2x Better
- B. Represent
- C. Can't mess up
- D. Perfection
- E. Purpose

Hailey (HBCU-WBB)

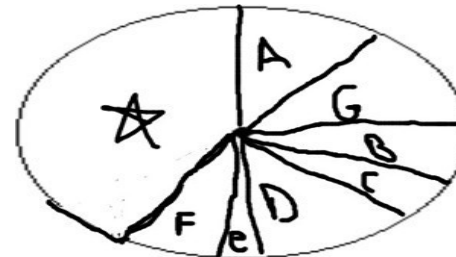
High School



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

- A. Be 2x Better
- B. Represent
- C. Can't mess up
- D. Perfection
- E. Purpose

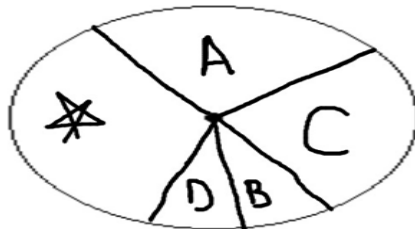
College



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

- A=Athletic
- B=Outspoken
- C= Intelligent
- D=Mature E=A leader
- F=Independent
- G="Sponge"

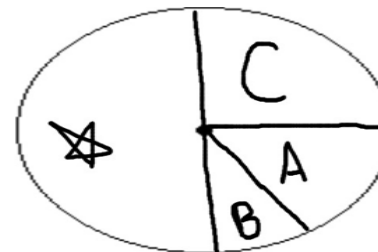
Future Self



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

- A=Educated
- B=Aesthetically pleasing
- C=Happy
- D=Contributor

Racial



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

- A=Maturity
- B=Respect
- C=Gratitude

Ricky (HBCU-MFB)

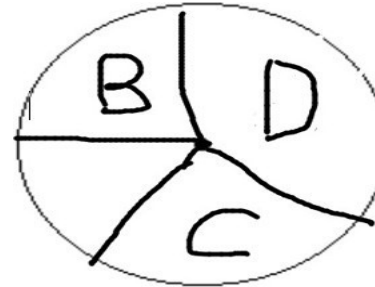
High School



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

- A. Leader/Captain
- B. Hard worker
- C. Balanced
- D. Discipline
- E. Timid
- F. Perfectionist

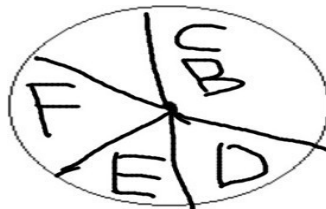
College



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

- A. Mature
- B. Discipline
- C. Role model
- D. Student-Athlete

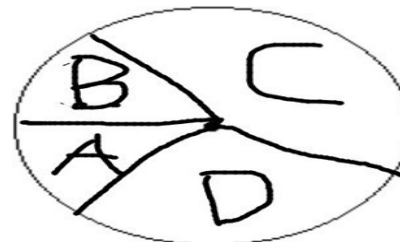
Future Self



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

- A. Public figure
- B. Mentor
- C. Big brother
- D. Discipline
- E. Hard working
- F. Passionate

Racial

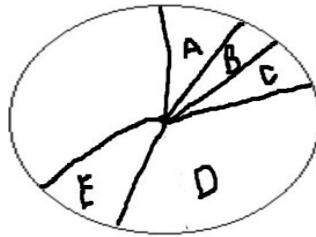


To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

- A. Elite
- B. Atypical
- C. Campus figure
- D. Popular

Ellie (HBCU-WBB)

High School

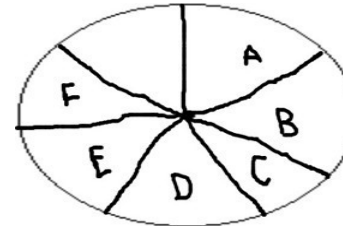


Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

A = Leader
B = Involved
C = Quiet
D = School
E = Decisive

Blank Space = I wish in high school I would have spoke up more

College

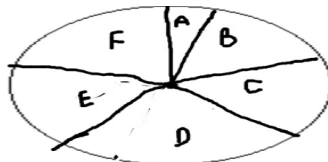


Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

A = Leadership
B = Determined
C = Vocal
D = Dependable
E = Religion
F = Introverted

Blank Space = I want to work on saying no

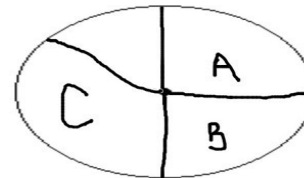
Future Self



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

A = Introverted
B = Decisive
C = Able to make time for myself
D = Religious
E = Career
F = Able to say no

Racial



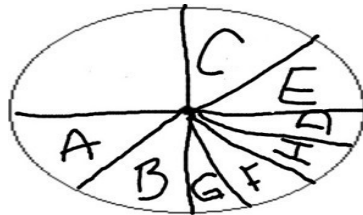
To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

A = Code switching
B = Confident
C = Well rounded

Blank Space = I want to work more on learning the history of black culture

David (HBCU-MBB)

High School



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

Legend:
A: Student
B: Athlete
C: Family Oriented
D: Introverted
E: Christian
F: Leader
G: Goofy/Silly Person
H: Reliable

College



Use the box as a legend for your circle to explain what the different letters represent. Remember, this is about now (e.g., A= Friend)

Legend:
A: Student
B: Athlete
C: Leader
D: Philanthropist
E: Brother
F: Sibling
G: Teammate
H: Son
I: Intro-extrovert
J: Open-Minded
K: Reliable
L: Determined
M: Silly/Goofy

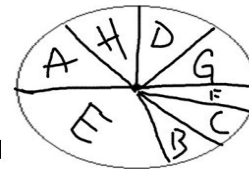
Future Self



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is about when you were in high school. (e.g., A= Friend)

Legend:
A: PT
B: Coach
C: Nutritionist
D: Entrepreneur
E: Pro Athlete
F: Mature
G: Goal-Oriented
H: Extrovert
I: Goofy Person

Racial



To label your slices, type in the relevant letter or symbol and meaning beside the letter. Use the example above as a model. Remember, this is based on racial and athletic identity. (e.g., A= Sport, B= Education)

Legend:
A: "Birds of a feather flock together" B: I have ultra_athleticism
C: Low GPA
D: Black Excellence
E: Underestimated
F: Leader
G: Role Model
H: High Character

References

- Adeyemo, A. O. (2019). Place, race, and sports: Examining the beliefs and aspirations of motivated Black male students who play high school sports. *Urban Education*, 57(1), 154–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085919850261>
- Adeyemo, A. O. (2023). Black on both sides: Toward an understanding of the athletic and career aspirations of Black males who play sports. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 47(2), 126-157. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01937235221144434>
- Anderman, E. M., Anderman, L. H., & Griesinger, T. (1999). The relation of present and possible academic selves during early adolescence to grade point average and academic motivation. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 19(1), 4-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431699019001001>
- Armstrong, K. L., & Jennings, M. A. (2018). Race, sport, and sociocognitive “place” in higher education: Black male student-athletes as critical theorists. *Journal of Black Studies*, 49(4), 349–369. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002193471876072>
- Asare, J. G. (2024). *Media misogynoir: Analyzing the treatment of Black women in modern media*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/janicegassam/2024/04/07/media-misogynoir-analyzing-the-treatment-of-Black-women-in-modern-media/?sh=612351907282>
- Bandura, A. (2000). Self-efficacy: The foundation of agency. In W. R. Miller & N. Heather (Eds.), *Treating addictive behaviors* (2nd ed., pp. 47-68). Springer.
- Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2001). *Making their own way: Narratives for transforming higher education to promote self-development*. Stylus Publishing.

- Beale, A. (2012). Black male student-athletes and identity: The impact of expectations for professional sports careers on academic and personal development. *Journal of African American Studies*, 16(2), 195-208.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-012-9211-8>
- Beamon, K. (2014). Racism and stereotyping on campus: Experiences of African American male student-athletes. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 83(2), 121–134. <https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.83.2.0121>
- Beamon, K. (2012). “I’m a baller”: Athletic identity foreclosure among African-American former student-athletes. *Journal of African American Studies*, 16.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-012-9211-8>
- Bell, D. A. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, 93(3), 518–533.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1340546>
- Benson, K. F. (2000). Constructing academic inadequacy: African-American athletes’ stories of schooling. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 71, 223-246.
- Bimper, A. Y. (2014). Lifting the veil: Exploring colorblind racism in Black student athlete experiences. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 39(3), 225–243.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723513520013>
- Bimper, A. Y. (2016). Capital matters: Social sustaining capital and the development of Black student-athletes. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 9(1), 106-128.
<https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.2015-0001>

- Bimper, A. Y., & Harrison, L. (2011). Meet me at the crossroads: African American athletic and racial identity. *Quest*, 63(3), 275–288.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2011.10483681>
- Bimper, A. Y., Harrison, L., & Clark, L. (2013). Diamonds in the rough: Examining a case of successful Black male student athletes in college sport. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 39, 107-130.
- Bjornsen, A. L., & Dinkel, D. M. (2017). Transition experiences of Division-1 college student- athletes. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 7(1), 80–104.
<https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.2013- 0033>
- Bonilla-Silva, E., & Ray, V. (2009). When whites love a black leader: Race matters in Obamerica. *Journal of African American Studies*, 13, 176-183.
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). The forms of capital. In I. Szeman & T. Kaposy (Eds.) *Cultural theory: An anthology* (pp. 81-93). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bruening, J. (2004). Coaching difference: A case study of four African American women campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. The Career Aspirations of Black Males who Play Sports. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 47(2), 126-157.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/01937235221144434>
- Byrd, W. C. (2021). *Behind the diversity numbers: Achieving racial equity on campus*. Harvard Education Press. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED614156>

- Cameron, J. E. (1999). Social identity and the pursuit of possible selves: Implications for the psychological well-being of university students. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3(3), 210-219. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2699.3.3.210>
- Carey, K. (2023). Possible selves and identity development: Exploring the impacts on student engagement. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35(1), 45-62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09613-8>
- Carter, A. R. (2008). *Negotiating identities: Examining African American female collegiate athlete experiences in predominantly White institutions* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia).
- Carter-Francique, A., Hart, A., & Cheeks, G. (2015). Examining the value of social capital and social support for Black student-athletes' academic success. *Journal of African American Studies*, 19, 157–177. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-015-9295-z>
- Carter-Francique, A., Hart, A., & Steward, A. (2013). Black college athletes' perceptions of Centers. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 34(4), 317–328. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2016-0138>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage Publications.
- Charlton, R. (2011). Sociocultural and mental health adjustment of Black student-athletes: Implications for culturally relevant support services. *Journal of African American Studies*, 15(2), 123-134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-011-9162-1>

- Coakley, J. (2009). *Sports in society: Issues and controversies* (10th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Coakley, J., Harrison, C. K., & Boyd, J. (2024). Name, image, and likeness (NIL) opportunities for Black college athletes: Strategically facilitating academic achievement and successful career transitions. *Journal of Higher Education Athletics & Innovation*, 2(2), 39-63. <https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2376-5267.2024.2.2.39-63>
- Cohen, K. E. (2024). *When It's Time to Take Your Eye Off the Ball: Preparation for Life After Collegiate Sport* (Doctoral dissertation, The Florida State University).
- Comeaux, E. (2010). Racial differences in faculty perceptions of collegiate student-athletes' academic and post-undergraduate achievements. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 27(4), 390–412.
- Comeaux, E., & Harrison, K. C. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.
- Comeaux, E. (2012). Unmasking athlete microaggressions: Division I student-athletes' engagement with members of the campus community. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 5(2), 189–198. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.5.2.189>
- Comeaux, E., & Savage, B. A. (2023). Beyond the scoreboard: Career preparation and transitions of Black college athletes. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000502>

- Cooley, W. W., Meier, E. J., & Medway, F. J. (1991). Differences in self-concept between Black and White adolescents. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83(4), 619-625.
- Cooper, J. N. (2019). *From exploitation back to empowerment: Black male holistic (under)development through sport and (mis)education*. Peter Lang.
- Cooper, J. N. (2023). A culture of collective uplift: The influence of a historically Black university/college on Black male student athletes' experiences. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 6(1), 1.
- Cooper, J. N., & Cooper, J. E. (2015). Success in the shadows: (Counter) narratives of achievement from Black scholar-athletes at a historically Black college/university. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 9(3), 145-171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19357397.2015.1123000>
- Cooper, J. N., & Dougherty, S. (2015). Does race still matter? A post bowl championship series (BCS) era examination of student athletes' experiences at a Division I historically Black college/university (HBCU) and predominantly White institution (PWI). *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 8.
- Cooper, J. N., & Hawkins, B. (2012). A place of opportunity: Black male student athletes' experiences at a historically Black university. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 5(2), 170-188. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.5.2.170>
- Cooper, J. N., & Hawkins, B. (2014). The transfer effect: A critical race theory examination of Black male transfer student athletes' experiences. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 7(1), 80-104. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.2013-0033>

- Cooper, J. N., Newton, A. C., Klein, M., & Jolly, S. (2020). A call for culturally responsive transformational leadership in college sport: An anti-ism approach for achieving equity and inclusion. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 5.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2020.00065>
- Cooper, J. N., Porter, C. J., & Davis, T. J. (2017). Success through community cultural wealth: Reflections from Black female college athletes at a historically Black college/university (HBCU) and a historically White institution (HWI). *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 10(2), 129–156.
<https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.2017-0006>
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). *Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics*. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 1241-1299.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano, V. (2009). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.

- Crisp, G., & Taggart, A. (2013). Community college student success programs: A synthesis, critique, and research agenda. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 37(2), 114-130.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10668920903381847>
- Delgado, R. (1990). When a story is just a story: Does voice really matter? *Virginia Law Review*, 76(1), 95-111. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1073031>
- Delgado, R. (1989). Storytelling for oppositionists and others: A plea for narrative. *Michigan Law Review*, 87(8), 2411-2441. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1289308>
- Despres, J., Brady, F., & McGowan, A. S. (2008). Understanding the culture of the student- athlete: Implications for college counselors. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*.
- Deshler, D. D., & Schumaker, J. B. (2006). Teaching adolescents with disabilities: Accessing the general education curriculum. *Corwin Press*
- Dixson, A. D., Rousseau, C. K., & Anderson, C. R. (Eds.). (2006). *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song*. Taylor & Francis.
- Donnor, J. K. (2005). Towards an interest-convergence in the education of African American football student athletes in major college sports. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8, 45-67.
- Donnor, J. K. (2006). Parent(s): The biggest influence in the education of African American football student-athletes. In *School of Education Book Chapters* (Vol. 17). <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/educationbookchapters/17>
- Donnor, J. K. (2016). Derrick Bell, Brown, and the continuing significance of the interest- convergence principle. In *School of Education Book Chapters* (p. 16).

- Donnor, J. K. (2020). Towards an interest-convergence in the education of African-American football student athletes in major college sports. In *Critical Race Theory in Education* (pp. 57–79). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003005995-5>
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1968). *The souls of Black folk: Essays and sketches*. (Original work published 1903). Johnson Reprint Corp.
- Edwards, H. (1984). The Black “dumb jock”: An American sports tragedy. *College Board Review*, 131, 8-13.
- Edwards, H. (2000). Crisis of Black athletes on the eve of the 21st century. *Society*, 37(3), 9-13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02686199>
- Ellison, R. (1952). *Invisible Man*. Random House.
- Elnaiem, M. (2021). *What is critical race theory?* JSTOR Daily. <https://daily.jstor.org/what-is-critical-race-theory/>
- Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2007). Psychological resilience: A review and critique of definitions, concepts, and theory. *European Psychologist*, 18(1), 12-23. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000124>
- Flowers, A. M. (2015). The family factor: The establishment of positive academic identity for Black males engineering majors. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 39(1), 64–74.
- Foster, Z., & De Bono, A. (2017). The influence of perception on student-athletes’ motivation and relationship with coaches. *Journal of Interpersonal Relations, Intergroup Relations and Identity*, 10, 53–58. <https://doi.org/10.33921/vfus8285>

- Foster, S. J. L., & Huml, M. R. (2017). The relationship between athletic identity and academic major chosen by student-athletes. *International Journal of Exercise Science*, 10(6), 915- 925. <https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/ijes/vol10/iss6/9>
- Frazier, L. D. (2012). Possible selves and self-regulation: The role of goal orientation in university students. *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*, 1(1-2), 59-67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2012.06.001>
- Fried, C. B., & Good, C. (2002). Reducing the effects of stereotype threat on African American college students by shaping theories of intelligence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38(2), 113-125. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.2001.1491>
- Fuller, R. D. (2017). Perception or reality: The relationship between stereotypes, discrimination, and the academic outcomes of African American male college athletes. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 41(5): 402–424.
- Fuller, R. D., Harrison, C. K., & Bukstein, S. J. (2017). A study of significance of racial and athletic identification on educational perceptions among African American male college athletes. *Race Ethnicity and Education* 20(5): 711–722.
- Fuller, R. D., Harrison, C. K., & Bukstein, S. J. (2020) That smart dude: A qualitative investigation of the African American male scholar-baller identity. *Urban Education* 55(5): 813–831.
- Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408-1416.

- Garrison, E. (2024 3). *Black student-athletes tired of being the odd one out at White schools*. Open Campus. <https://www.opencampusmedia.org/2024/04/03/Black-student-athletes-tired-of-being-the-odd-one-out-at-White-schools/>
- Gayles, J. G., Crandall, R., & Morin, S. (2018). Student-athletes' sense of belonging: Background characteristics, student involvement, and campus climate. *International Journal of Sport & Society*, 9(1), 23–38.
- Gayles, J. G., & Comeaux, E. (2018). Stereotypes, control, hyper-surveillance, and disposability of NCAA Division I Black male athletes: Stereotypes, control, hyper-surveillance, and disposability. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2018(163), 33–42. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20268>
- Gayles, J. G., Comeaux, E., Ofoegbu, E., & Grummert, S. (2018). Neoliberal capitalism and racism in college athletics: Critical approaches for supporting student-athletes. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2018(163), 11–21. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20266>
- Gayles, J. G., & Baker, A. R. (2015). Opportunities and challenges for first-year student-athletes transitioning from high school to college. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 2015(147), 43-51. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1253761>
- Giannone, Z. A., Haney, C. J., Kealy, D., & Ogrodniczuk, J. S. (2017). Athletic identity and psychiatric symptoms following retirement from varsity sports. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 63(7), 598-601. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764017724184>
- Giuffrida, D. (2003). African American student organizations as agents of social integration. *Journal of College Student Development*, 44(4), 540-557.

- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Doubleday.
- Guiffrida, D. (2005). To break away or strengthen ties to home: A complex question for African American students attending a predominantly White institution. *NASPA Journal*, 42(4), 693-708. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1531>
- Hall, C. (2023.). *Dawn Staley calls out national media, Lisa Bluder's "bar fight" comments after final four loss*. Yahoo! News. <https://news.yahoo.com/dawn-staley-calls-national-media-053215820.html>
- Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (Eds.). (2009). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. Routledge.
- Harper, S. R. (2009). Race, interest convergence, and transfer outcomes for Black male student- athletes. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2009(147), 29–37. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.375>
- Harper, S. R. (2016). *Black male student-athletes and racial inequities in NCAA Division I college sport*. Philadelphia: Center for the Study of Race & Equity in Education, University of Pennsylvania.
- Harper, S. (2018). *Black male student-athletes and racial inequities in college sports*. Press Room. <https://pressroom.usc.edu/Black-male-student-athletes-and-racial-inequities-in-college-sports/>

- Harper, S. (2023). *NCAA basketball champ Angel Reese is being called “classless” because she’s Black*. Forbes.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/shaunharper/2023/04/03/ncaa-basketball-champ-angel-reese-is-being-called-classless-because-shes-a-Black-woman/?sh=420d6deb3143>
- Hawkins, B. C. (2010). The new plantation: Black athletes, college sports, and predominantly White institutions. In Hodge, S. R. (2014). *Black males and intercollegiate athletics: An exploration of problems and solutions* (Diversity in Higher Education, Vol. 16, pp. 91- 119). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-364420140000016006>
- Hickey, C., & Roderick, M. (2017). The presentation of possible selves in everyday life: The management of identity among transitioning professional athletes. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 34(3), 270-280. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2017-0018>
- Hill, K. L., Burch-Ragan, K., & Yates, D. (2001). The athletic, academic, and social experiences of female athletes. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 72(1), 24-28.
- Hiraldo, P. (2010). The role of critical race theory in higher education. *The Vermont Connection*, 31(1), 7.
- Hock, M. F., Schumaker, J. B., & Deshler, D. D. (2003). *Possible selves: Nurturing student motivation*. Edge Enterprises, Inc.

- Hock, M. F., Deshler, D. D., & Schumaker, J. B. (2006). Enhancing student motivation through the pursuit of possible selves. In C. Dunkel & J. Kerpelman (Eds.), *Possible selves: Theory, research and applications* (pp. 205–221). Nova Science Publishers.
- Hodge, S. R., Harrison, L., Jr., Burden, J. W., Jr., & Dixson, A. D. (2008). Brown in Black and White—Then and now: A question of educating or sporting African American males in America. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51, 928-952.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764207312004>
- Hodge, S. R. (2015). Black male student-athletes' academic and athletic experiences at HBCUs. In *Black males and intercollegiate athletics: An exploration of problems and solutions* (Diversity in Higher Education, Vol. 16, pp. 91-119). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-364420140000016006>
- Howard-Hamilton, M. F., & Sina, J. A. (2001). How college affects student athletes. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2001(93), 35-45.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ627643>
- Howe, J. E. (2022). Black male college athlete identity: A scoping review. *International Journal of Sport and Society*.
- Howe, J. (2020). Manifestations of athletic identity in Black male collegiate student-athletes: Introduction of a framework. *Journal of Amateur Sport*, 6(2), 107-135. <https://doi.org/10.17161/jas.v6i2.13636>
- Hylton, K. (2010). Talk the talk, walk the walk: Defining critical race theory in research. *Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies (CERS)*.

- Jayakumar, U. M., & Comeaux, E. (2016). The role of cultural capital and campus climate in shaping the academic experiences of Black student-athletes. *Journal of Higher Education*, 87(5), 589-615.
- Jolly, S., & Chepyator-Thomson, J. (2022). “Do you really see us?”: Black college athlete perceptions of inclusion at DI historically White institutions. *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience*, 4(2).
<https://doi.org/10.25035/jade.04.02.02>
- Kao, G. (2000). Group images and possible selves among adolescents: Linking stereotypes to expectations by race and ethnicity. *Sociological Forum*, 15(3), 407-430. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007572209544>
- Ketcham, C. J., Zwara, B., Cross, M. E., Gormley, S. E., & Smith, L. L. (2022). Intercollegiate athletics experience as a high impact practice: Examination of quality indicators. *Journal of Higher Education Athletics & Innovation*, 4(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.12345/jhea.v4i1.123>
- Ketcham, C. J., Cross, M. E., & Allen, G. D. (2015). Intercollegiate athletics experience as a high impact practice: Examination of quality indicators. *Journal of Higher Education Athletics & Innovation*, 4(1), 1-15.
<https://doi.org/10.12345/jhea.v4i1.123>
- Kohli, R., M. Pizarro, and A. Nevárez. 2017. “The ‘New Racism’ of K–12 Schools: Centering Critical Research on Racism.” *Review of Research in Education* 41 (1): 182–202. doi:10.3102/0091732X16686949.

- Lapchick, R. (2023). *2023 NBA racial and gender report card*. The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES), University of Central Florida.
<https://www.ucf.edu/news/director-of-the-institute-for-diversity-and-ethics-in-sports-develops-new-study-for-major-league-baseball/>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is CRT and what's it doing in a nice field like education. *Foundations of CRT in Education*, 18-36.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47-68.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43818036>
- Ledesma, M. C., & Calderón, D. (2015). Critical race theory in education: A review of past literature and a look to the future. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(3), 206-222.
- Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (1990). Impression management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107(1), 34-47.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.107.1.34>
- Martin, C. (2023). *Iowa's Lisa Bluder shrugs off "bar fight" comment despite Dawn Staley's frustration*. Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/sports/iowas-lisa-bluder-shrugs-off-bar-fight-comment-despite-dawn-staleys-frustration>
- May, R. A. B. (2009). The good and bad of it all: Professional Black male basketball players as role models. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 78(3), 288-303.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25676025>
- McEwen, C. (2010). *A qualitative examination of sport transitions in first year collegiate female athletes*. [Thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University].
<https://scholars.wlu.ca/etd/1003/>

- Melendez, M. C. (2008). Black football players on a predominantly White college campus: Microaggressions in higher education. *Race, Gender & Class*, 15(1-2), 150-169. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43496984>
- Moore, J. L., Madison-Colmore, O., & Smith, D. M. (2003). The prove-them-wrong syndrome: Voices from unheard African-American males in engineering disciplines. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 12(1), 61-73. <https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.1201.61>
- Morales, E. M. (2014). Intersectional impact: Black students and race, gender, and class in higher education. *Urban Education*, 57(1), 154–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085919850261>
- Murray, J. (2024). *LSU's Angel Reese praises Dawn Staley, South Carolina after NCAA title win vs. Iowa*. Bleacher Report. <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/10115945-lsus-angel-reese-praises-dawn-staley-south-carolina-after-ncaa-title-win-vs-iowa>
- Musico, M. (2020). *College athletics: What's the difference between Division I, II, and III competition?* CollegeData. <https://www.collegedata.com/resources/the-road-to-college/college-athletics-whats-the-difference-between-division-i-ii-and-iii-competition>
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2014). *Life skills*. NCAA.org. <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2014/10/20/life-skills.aspx>

- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2023a). *DI Board of directors increases benefits for college athletes*. NCAA.org.
<https://www.ncaa.org/news/2023/4/26/media-center-di-board-of-directors-increases-benefits-for-college-athletes.aspx>
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2023b). *NCAA demographics database*.
<https://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/ncaa-demographics-database>
- Ofoegbu, E., Gaston-Gayles, J., & Weight, E. (2021). “More than an athlete”: How Black student-athletes use navigational capital to transition to life after sport. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19357397.2021.1924561>
- Oseguera, L. (2010). Success despite the image: How African American male scholar-athletes endure their academic journey amidst negative characterizations. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 4(3), 297–324. <https://doi.org/10.1179/ssa.2010.4.3.297>
- Oyserman, D. (2008). Possible selves: Identity-based motivation and school success. In H. Marsh, R. Craven, & D. McInerney (Eds.), *Self-processes, learning and enabling human potential* (pp. 269-288). Information Age Publishing.
- Oyserman, D. (2011). Culture as situated cognition: Cultural mindsets, cultural fluency, and meaning making. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 22(1), 164-214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463283.2011.627187>

- Oyserman, D., Bybee, D., & Terry, K. (2006). Possible selves and academic outcomes: How and when possible selves in the future of academics improve academic outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(2), 261-274.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.98.2.261>
- Oyserman, D., Gant, L., & Ager, J. (1995). A socially contextualized model of African American identity: Possible selves and school persistence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(6), 1216-1232.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.6.1216>
- Oyserman, D., & Fryberg, S. A. (2006). The possible selves of diverse adolescents: Content and function across gender, race, and national origin. In C. Dunkel & J. Kerpelman (Eds.), *Possible selves: Theory, research, and applications* (pp. 17-39). Nova Science Publishers.
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533-544.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Parham, T. A. (1993). The Intercollegiate Athlete: A 1990s Profile. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 21(3), 411-429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000093213006>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

- Pender, K. N., Hope, E. C., & Sondel, B. (2022). Reclaiming “my identity”: Counter storytelling to challenge injustice for racially and economically marginalized emerging adults. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 33(2), 300–312. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2662>
- Person, D. R., & LeNoir, K. M. (1997). Retention issues and models for African American male athletes. *New Directions for Student Services*, 1997(80), 79-91. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.8006>
- Pizzolato, J. E. (2003). Developing self-authorship: Exploring the experiences of high-risk \ college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 44(6), 797-812.
- Ramalho, R., Adams, P., Huggard, P., & Hoare, K. (2015). Literature review and constructivist grounded theory methodology. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 16(3), Art. 19. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1503199>
- Ramsey, J. L., & Brown, T. N. (2017). The effects of school climate on student outcomes. *Journal of School Psychology*, 55(3), 109-122.
- Rosenblatt, K. (2023). *Criticisms of LSU’s Angel Reese called racist on social media after NCAA Championship win*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/criticisms-lsus-angel-reese-called-racist-social-media-ncaa-championsh-rcna77917>
- Rubin, L. M., & Moses, R. A. (2017). Athletic subculture within student-athlete academic centers. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 34(4), 317–328. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2016- 0138>

- Rubin, L. M., Fuller, R. D., & Stokowski, S. (2022). "I might as well get my education": The experiences of Black male Division III college athletes. *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience*, 4(1), Article 3.
- Rutledge II, M. E. (2020). Understanding holistic development in Black American male student- athletes through educational models. *Negro Educational Review*, 71(1-4), 131-163.
- Saffici, C., & Pellegrino, J. (2012). Tracking the academic success of collegiate student-athletes. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 13(3), 345-365.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2015). *The Sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. A., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2(1), 18-39.
- Shaw, S. M. (2024). *Sexism and racism intersect in casting LSU players as "villains."* Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanmshaw/2024/04/03/sexism-and-racism-intersect-in-casting-lsu-players-as-villains/?sh=63ca6c946703>
- Shih, D. (2017). *A theory to better understand diversity, and who really benefits*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/19/523563345/a-theory-to-better-understand-diversity-and-who-really-benefits>
- Simiyu, W. W. N. (2012). Challenges of being a Black student athlete on U.S. college campuses. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 5, 40-63.

- Singer, J. N., & Armstrong, K. L. (2001). Black coaches' roles in the holistic development of student-athletes. *Academic Athletic Journal*, 15(Winter/2).
- Singer, J. N. (2016). African American male college athletes' narratives on education and racism. *Journal of Urban Education*, 51(9), 1065–1095.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916669749>
- Solórzano, D. G., & Villalpando, O. (1998). Critical race theory, marginality, and the experience of students of color in higher education. *Sociology of Education: Emerging Perspectives*, 21, 211-224.
- Solórzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2), 60–73.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/269626>
- Stahl, N. A., & King, J. R. (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 44(1):26–8.
- Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52, 613-629.
- Steinfeldt, J. A., Reed, C., & Clint Steinfeldt, M. (2010). Racial and athletic identity of African American football players at historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly white institutions. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 36(1), 3-24.

- Stone, J., Harrison, C. K., & Mottley, J. (2012) ‘Don’t call me a student-athlete’: The effect of identity priming on stereotype threat for academically engaged African American college athletes. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 34(2): 99–106.
- Stanford, H. A. (2023). *Investigating holistic support services for Black male student-athletes at private midwest predominantly White institutions* (Doctoral dissertation, Ashland University).
- Strauss, R., & Goldberg, W. A. (1999). Self and possible selves during the transition to fatherhood. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 13(2), 244–259.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.13.2.244>
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2008). Fittin’ in: Do diverse interactions with peers affect sense of belonging for Black men at predominantly White institutions? *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 45(4), 953–979.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2012). *College students’ sense of belonging*. Routledge.
- Thames, A. (2023). *Black female athletes: Having Black female coach is crucial*. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/ncaa-womens-sports-Black-representation-march-madness-74a714035861c5aa56974a860aefb9f1>
- Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Tinto, V. (2006). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 8(1), 1–19.
<https://doi.org/10.2190/4ynu-4tmb-22dj-an4w>

- Tinto, V. (2012). Enhancing student success: Taking the classroom success seriously. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 3(1).
<https://doi.org/10.5204/intjfyhe.v3i1.119>
- Tinto, V. (2017). Through the eyes of students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 19(3), 254–269.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025115621917>
- Tyson, K., Darity, W., & Castellino, D. R. (2005). It's Not “a Black Thing”: Understanding the Burden of Acting White and Other Dilemmas of High Achievement. *American Sociological Review*, 70(4), 582–605.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240507000403>
- Vollstedt, M. (2015). To see the wood for the trees: The development of theory from empirical interview data using grounded theory. In: Bikner-Ahsbahr A., Knipping C., Presmeg N. (eds) *Approaches to qualitative research in mathematics education. Advances in mathematics education*. Springer, Dordrecht.
- Vollstedt, M., & Rezat, S. (2019). An introduction to grounded theory with a special focus on axial coding and the coding paradigm. In: Kaiser, G., Presmeg, N. (eds) *Compendium for early career researchers in mathematics education*. ICME-13 Monographs. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15636-7_4
- Walker, S., & Harrison, C. K. (2019). Navigating identity: The experiences of Black male student-athletes in predominantly White institutions. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 12(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.2018-0034>

- Weight, E. A., Cooper, C., & Popp, N. K. (2015). The coach-educator: NCAA Division I coach perspectives about an integrated university organizational structure. *Journal of Sport Management*, 29(5), 510–522. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1123/jsm.2014-0006>
- Williams, P. J. (1995). *The rooster's egg*. Harvard University Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8, 69-91.