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Constructing an Understanding of Black Student Athletes' Achievement Concerns at a Private Hispanic Serving Institution

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Many research studies have reported on scholastic inconsistencies in graduation rates and academic achievement in higher education among Black male student athletes. Studies focusing on the lived experiences of these student athletes are limited. This qualitative exploration focused on the perceived effects of institutional practices among Black male student athletes within a private Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and sought to answer the following research questions: "How can institutional policy address the academic inadequacy concerns that Black male student athletes face in a small Hispanic Serving Institution?" and "How can Black male student athletes be provided with the academic and social support necessary to be successful?" Critical Race Theory was used as an analytical framework to query, examine, and challenge university practices that affect educational attainment of minority groups. A focus group consisting of eight Black male student athletes, and a phone interview with a campus administrator yielded four themes: Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Foundations, Building Affiliations, Mentoring, and Academic Success. Policy implications for institutional members and recommendations for campus officials are discussed.

For Black males, athletics has been a vehicle and conduit for economic and social mobility. Big-time college sports, such as football and basketball, dominate the airwaves and social media throughout the year and promote a one-dimensional objective for Black males to someday play professional sports (Edwards, 2000). Many Black males have these aspirations and oftentimes families play a role in sustaining the dream by encouraging their offspring towards a career in athletics (Simiyu, 2009). However, the majority of Black males fall short of this goal, while institutions of higher education benefit from the exposure given for winning games and sustaining spirit within the community.

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Campus officials and faculty at colleges and universities across the country are working to increase African American retention and graduation rates (Hyatt, 2003). Predominantly White institutions (PWIs) of higher education were not originally designed to support academic and social growth of students of color. This fact has resulted in skepticism by one researcher, who offered the following contention:

> Ever since African Americans were invited to participate in college sports at PWIs several years ago, they have been exploited for their athletic prowess, to the detriment of other areas of their development (i.e., academic/ intellectual, career/ vocational, social, etc.) (Singer, 2005, p. 369).

Greater athletic expectations are made of student athletes of color than of their white counterparts, by peers, coaches, and teachers (Simiyu, 2009). For all students, regardless of race, who choose to participate in intercollegiate athletics, it can be challenging to concentrate in a balanced way on both the curricular and extra-curricular aspects of the college experience, for example, academics and athletics.

In his work on role theory, Goode (1960) wrote that the individual faces "a wide, distracting, and sometimes conflicting array of role obligations. If he conforms fully or adequately in one direction, fulfillment will be difficult in another" (p. 485). High academic expectations of student athletes may not exist in the minds of faculty, which makes it easier for students to make the choice to focus on athletics rather than academics (Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000). Stereotypes are also projected through the media, where athletics are depicted as an available route to Black social and economic mobility (Simiyu, 2009).

Hobneck, Mudge, and Turchi (2003) identified factors related to high rates of attrition among student athletes: "academic preparation prior to college, perception by others and by the student athletes, inadequate advisement, time demands, physical demands, academic demands, isolation, inadequate support services, and athletic department expectations" (p. 26). In a literature review, these researchers found that "educational development plans, progress reports, life skills courses, orientation, study groups, specific academic advisement, tutoring, career planning, and mentoring are all critical in meeting the needs of student athletes" (p. 27).

Both cognitive and non-cognitive factors play a role in the area of academic persistence of minority student athletes. Traditionally used cognitive measures for evaluating college success include standardized tests (e.g. SAT) and grade point averages (GPA) (Hyatt, 2003). However, non-cognitive variables such as "personal or social beliefs, motivations and attitudes of the individual student or members of the campus community," are especially relevant in the persistence of minority students, particularly Black male student athletes (Hyatt, 2003, p. 263).

Simons and Van Rheenen explored four non-cognitive variables in relation to the academic performance of 200 Division I student athletes: athletic-academic commitment, feelings of being exploited, academic self-worth, and self-handicapping excuses. All four were found to be significant and independent predictors of academic performance. "Athletic-academic commitment and achievement motivation" were found to be strongly related to academic performance (Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000, p. 177).

Many studies have analyzed and discussed the academic disparities among ethnic groups, with Blacks scoring the lowest in graduation rates, scholastic achievement, and retention rates in all institutions of higher education (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). Studies about Black male student athletes have gained much consideration in the literature, but although the spotlight has

primarily been on Division I College sports in predominantly White institutions (Harper, Williams, & Blackman, 2013; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Martin & Harris, 2006; Hyatt, 2003), there is also a need to understand the experiences of Black male student athletes in other institutional settings.

Hispanic Serving Institutions

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are institutions of higher education which serve large numbers of Hispanic or Latino students (Laden, 2004). HSIs are defined under Title V of the 1998 reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act (HEA)* as "accredited, degree-granting, public or private, nonprofit colleges and universities with 25% or more total undergraduate full-time equivalent (FTE) Hispanic student enrollment" (Laden, 2004, p. 186). The majority of HSIs are located around the boundaries of the nation. California has the greatest number of HSIs with 109 campuses and growing, which reflects "Latinos' deep historical roots in that region of the U.S." (Laden, 2004, p. 191).

In comparison to other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) (i.e., historically Black colleges and universities and Tribal colleges and universities), HSIs serve the most diverse student populations (Benítez & DeAro, 2004). Efforts to strengthen academic achievement among minorities enrolled at HSIs should not be exclusive to Latinos/as (Benítez & DeAro, 2004). However, the institutional missions of many HSIs do not declare an explicit intention to serve the specific needs of all underrepresented groups (Hubbard & Stage, 2009).

De los Santos and Cuamea (2010) interviewed presidents and chancellors of HSIs and asked them to identify the most salient issues facings their institutions. The top five challenges facing HSIs in the 21st century they reported were insufficient funding, poor academic preparedness of students, student retention/success, faculty hiring, and affordability.

While a number of studies have addressed the problem of low African American male retention and success and provide great suggestions for lowering the achievement gap, few studies focus on the lived experience of the subjects themselves. Studies are needed to help understand why some Black male student athletes thrive academically but others ultimately drop out.

When examining Black males, one must take a multidimensional approach to fully understand factors that promote or hinder academic success. For example, psychological, behavioral, structural, and economic factors may come into play in the success or failure of Black males in college. Because of the unalterable history of racial discrimination, a helpful theoretical framework with which to examine the experiences of Black male student athletes is Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an "intellectual and methodological perspective grounded in the particulars of social reality based on an individual's lived experiences and his or her racial group's collective historical experiences within the United States" (Donner, 2005, p. 51). It resists the prevailing conversations about race and racism by scrutinizing how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Five tenets or themes form the basic perspective, research, methodology, and pedagogy of CRT (Stovall, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001):

1. The recognition that racism has played a dominant role in the structuring of schools and its practices. Racism also intersects with other forms of subordination, i.e., sexism and classism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). "A CRT lens unveils the various forms in which racism continually manifests itself, despite espoused institutional values regarding equity and social justice" (Harper et al., 2009, p. 390).

2. The challenge to dominant ideology; an examination of "dominant social and cultural assumptions regarding culture and intelligence, language and capability, through research, pedagogy, and praxis" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The notion of a colorblind society is rejected. "Colorblindness leads to misconceptions concerning racial fairness in institutions; tends to address only the most blatant forms of inequality and disadvantage; and hides the commonplace and more covert forms of racism" (Harper et al., 2009, p. 390-391).

3. The commitment to social justice; a promotion of empowered or transformative responses to racial, gender, and class oppression (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

4. The importance of experiential knowledge (i.e., personal narratives, storytelling, chronicles, etc.) of disenfranchised groups, which is "legitimate appropriate, and critical to understanding ... racial subordination" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). CRT gives voice to the unique perspectives and lived experiences of people of color. . . . CRT uses counter narratives as a way to highlight discrimination, offer racially different interpretations of policy, and challenge the universality of assumptions made about people of color (Harper et al., 2009, p. 391).

5. The use of an interdisciplinary perspective. "CRT challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most traditional analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism by placing them in both an historical and contemporary context" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 2). "Revisionist history reexamines America's historical record, replacing comforting majoritarian interpretations of events with ones that square more accurately with minorities' experiences" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001, as cited in Harper et al., 2009, p. 391).

Taken as an analytical framework, CRT provides a lens from which to inquire, examine, and challenge the ways in which university policies and practices have been shaped by past social constructs of racist dogma, and the detrimental effects these practices have on Black male student athlete achievement (Harper et al., 2009). In essence, CRT becomes a rational exercise of cultural collective assembly and is "an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9). The next section will explain the purpose of the present study.

Purpose of the Study

According to the CRT perspective, knowledge construction should be "generated through the narratives or counter-narratives that emerge from and with people of color" (Milner, 2007, p. 391). Understanding achievement concerns from the perspective of students' experiential knowledge would decrease the achievement gap for Black student athletes; however, "little of that approach has been applied in the research and discussions of the issue of the academic achievement of some African American athletes" (Benson, 2000, p. 226). The importance of this type of assessment lies in "naming one's own reality, and on the multiple and varied voices and vantage points of people of color" (Milner, 2007, p. 391). This qualitative investigation was

designed to understand the educational gap in student success outcomes among Black male student athletes within an MSI.

In an effort to understand the experiences of Black male student athletes who attend HSIs, this study sought to answer the following research questions: "How can institutional policy address the academic inadequacy concerns that Black males face in a small Hispanic-serving institution?" and "How can Black male student athletes be provided with the academic and social support necessary to become successful?" The next section will describe the research design and methodological approach for the study.

Research Design/Methodology

The investigator utilized a qualitative research design in exploring participant perceptions of achievement concerns at a small HSI. This approach integrated multiple data gathering techniques, including a focus group interview with currently enrolled Black male student athletes, a phone interview with a key campus administrator, and field notes. With the focus group interview, the goals were to analyze how these Black male student athletes experienced their academic and social environment and to identify implications for the institution. The administrator was interviewed regarding perceptions of achievement disparities among student athletes in order to ensure credibility and to triangulate data sources, as recommended by Lather (1991, as cited in Singer, 2005, p. 373). The next section will discuss the study site and participants for the investigation.

Site and Participant Selection

The study took place at a small four-year, independent, liberal arts college in southern California, classified as HSI. Forty-five percent of the 1367 students enrolled were American minorities, including 30% Latino/a. Seventy-six (6%) of the 1,367 undergraduates were identified as being Black, and of these, 45% were female and 55% male. Twenty-five (33%) of the 76 undergraduates students identified as Black were new first-time freshmen. Of these, half were placed on partial academic probation. Eleven of these 12 students were male. This phenomenon is not unique to the study site, as Black males generally have higher rates of academic probation and attrition.

Purposeful sampling was used to identify eight Black male student athletes and a campus administrator who deals primarily with first-year academic achievement and assessment. Purposeful sampling is a method of choosing "particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 73).

Gaining entry to pilot research with student athletes about achievement concerns can be a "challenging process" (Singer, 2005). Fortunately, a colleague of the researcher was employed at the research site and provided access to key staff and administrators. After the Institutional Review Board cleared a research proposal, the researcher entered the field and collected data during the spring of 2010. The participants in this study were Black student athletes who were identified by a Black Student Union (BSU) staff representative, and a campus administrator responsible for academic achievement, first-year programs, and assessment, was identified by the researcher's colleague. The following section will describe the data collection procedures and tools used.

Data Collection Procedures

Empirical data was collected in a focus group, lasting approximately 2.5 hours, and a phone interview, which lasted for one hour. Table 1 describes the demographic characteristics of the focus group. Out of eight male student athletes in the focus group, five participated in football, one in basketball, one in soccer, and one in rugby. It is interesting to note that the majority of the participants were either freshmen or juniors. This may be due in part to poor retention of Black student athletes; freshmen and junior status are entry point grade levels (i.e., first-time freshmen, first-time transfers). This profile suggests there may be a revolving door for Black male student athletes at the campus. Also, the majority of the participants were not first-generation college students.

Table 1
Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

Characteristic	Student athletes (N = 8)	
	n	%
Ethnic background		
Black	6	75.0
Multi-racial	1	12.5
Jamaican	1	12.5
Class rank		
Freshman	3	37.5
Sophomore	1	12.5
Junior	3	37.5
Senior	1	12.5
First-generation college student		
Yes	2	25.0
No	6	75.0

The focus group and phone interview were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants and transcribed. The researcher personally transcribed the individual interview with the campus administrator, while the focus group was transcribed by the researcher's assistant. These transcriptions were employed to explore and identify emerging themes. Upon transcription, the data was coded and analyzed. In addition to the tape-recorded interviews, the researcher took extensive reflective field notes to produce a more personal account of the course of inquiry. This process allowed the researcher to attain a rigorous and thick description of the participants' being in the world. Although the questions were determined in advance, the interview flowed in the form of a dialogue.

Although the focus group interview was unstructured, an interview protocol was developed to solicit participants' descriptions of their self-perception, choice, aspirations, and perceptions, as well as answers to situational questions. These questions facilitated free dialogue flow between the researcher and the participants. Other open-ended questions were asked during the focus group, based on the emergent data. Additionally, a semi-structured phone interview was conducted with an administrator, to better understand the achievement gap at the site. In the next section, the data analysis procedures are provided, and quality assurance and trustworthiness issues are addressed.

Data Analysis Procedures

The focus group and interview were transcribed verbatim in a Microsoft Word document for data analysis. The data analysis process involved open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding involved the initial identification of key words and sentences. Axial coding was then used to organize significant words and sentences that were commonly stated by the participants into categories. Finally, selective coding was employed to group the categories into themes relating to non-cognitive factors that tend to promote academic success and retention. Throughout the process of analysis, the researcher attempted to achieve an empathetic understanding of the lived experience from the participants' perspectives (Harper et al., 2009; Milner, 2007; Singer, 2005).

The researcher analyzed the data and developed a description of the thematic structure of the participants' lived experiences. The descriptions were then taken back to the participants to ensure that they captured the participants' true voices and experiences as lived by each participant**.** Checking findings against participants' perspectives is helpful in ensuring descriptive and interpretive validity (Patton, 1990), and encourages reciprocity in qualitative fieldwork (Lather, 1991).

Quality Assurance and Trustworthiness

Bracketing. Also called a reduction of phenomenology, the term *bracketing* means "holding in check any preconceived notions that might contaminate one's immediate experience" (Richardson, 1999, p. 70). We must suspend our predispositions and accept the phenomenon for what it is. This process was particularly important for the researcher since he shared some of the attributes of the participants. The researcher is a Black male, a former college student athlete, and had previously attended a small college.

Validity and truthfulness. In this study, the researcher bracketed himself consciously in order to understand the perspectives of the participants interviewed. The audio recordings made of each interview –the researcher again bracketing himself during the transcription of the interview– further contributed to truth. The participants received a copy of the text to validate that it reflected their perspectives regarding the phenomenon that was studied. A synopsis of the findings is presented next.

Findings and Discussion

Four themes emerged from the focus group and interview: Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Foundations, Building Affiliations, Mentoring, and Academic Success (Figure 1). The following sections will highlight these areas by providing authentic testimony from these Black male student athletes and from a college official.

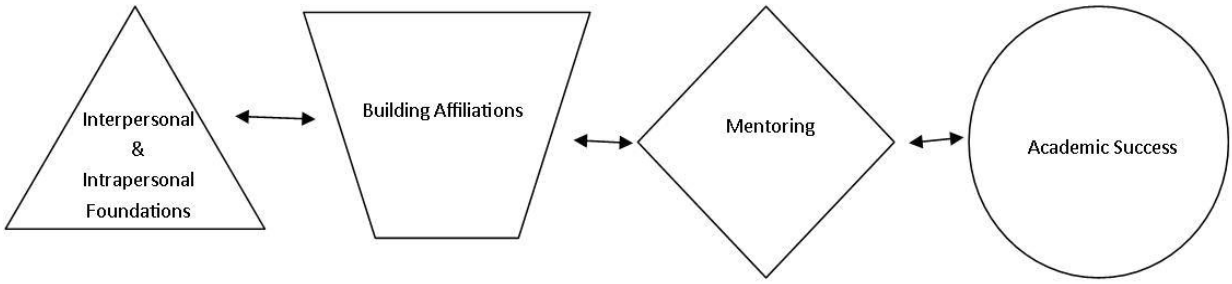

Figure 1. Model for Black male student athlete academic achievement.

Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Foundations

There seemed to be an air of resilience in each participant's pursuit of being a successful student athlete. As reported, the participants' self-determination came from their wanting to be successful for their parents' sake or their own. One football player commented, "There is no way that I'm paying all this money without earning a degree. . . . Watch my parent beat my butt for wasting their money" (Focus-Football player: 4).

Another football player eloquently described reasons why college is so important:

> *My parents are banking on me making it. . . . My older brother got into trouble and now he is in jail. So now I have to make them proud because I am the youngest boy of two sons and one sister. . . . And I am first generation.* (Focus-Football player: 5)

Black faculty support can be important because the subjects can make an immediate bond due to seeing similar racial/ethnic images at the institution. One football player described:

> *At my other school before I got here, I had professors who were Black and I can talk to on a personal level. He like understood my struggles and I could trust him. I wish there were more black professors here.* (Focus-Football player: 2)

Identifying with faculty seems to be critical to this population in increasing retention and student success. "The college experiences of Black student athletes at predominantly White institutions are often times hindered as a result of feelings of social isolation, racial discrimination, limited support and lack of integration" (Comeaux & Harrison, 2007, p. 208). This can occur at HSIs as well.

Building Affiliations

When asked, "What do you feel are the factors that promote you to stay in school?" all of the participants had comments that centered on having a connection with someone on campus, in terms of attending activities, events, and becoming active in campus life. As one football player explained, "Having people around you who want to do the same things as you promotes me to stay in school" (Focus-Football player: 1). Another student athlete commented:

> *Being here . . . I mean being the only Black person in class is tough. . . . It's like a culture shock. I want to interact with other students and even my teachers, but sometimes I don't say anything because I feel the pressure when we talk about issues dealing with race and stuff.* (Focus-Basketball player: 1)

It is important for college officials who have an understanding of the discriminatory nature of the collegiate experience for Blacks to help other campus administrators, staff, and faculty who interact with student athletes within their respective service departments to amend practices perceived to be racially micro-aggressive. Racial micro-aggressions are "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously" (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 60).

Mentoring

Establishing rapport with faculty, staff, and their coaches was important for the participants' sense of belonging and comfort level with attending school and playing sports. That sense of belonging especially included interaction with the coach as measured through reputation and status. One football player explained it this way:

> *Coach told me to come to this school. He said I would get help with financial aid and that he knew NFL scouts.* (Focus-Football Player: 3)

Researchers have argued that faculty and administrators must become more equity-minded (Bensimon, 2007) and learn to take student athletes' varying academic levels, skills, and abilities into account (Harrison, Comeaux, & Plecha, 2006). By attempting to work more closely with student athletes, faculty, advisors, and administrators may assist students in "identifying factors that may impede or facilitate their academic talent development and/or self-identity" (Harrison, Comeaux, & Plecha, 2006, p. 282).

"Coaches are perhaps the most important cultural agent in the institution for a student athlete. By having an understanding of the educational, individual, and athletic goals of student athletes, coaches can work in concert with other campus officials, such as faculty and staff, to increase student athlete cultural capital" (Hackett, 2011, p.92).

Academic Success

According to the administrator interviewed:

> *Student success should be defined on multiple levels and not on traditional measures, such as graduation, although it is important. Instead, success should be defined as having a well-rounded experience with the institution whereby students accomplish academic milestones that change their ways of thinking in order to be more sophisticated and open to new ideas.* (Inter: Admin 1)

The majority of the participants talked about the importance of receiving academic support services to be oriented to the university and plan their courses, as well as receiving academic tutoring. The soccer player illustrated this point:

> *It is difficult to be successful here because tutoring is not available because we practice at the same time. . . . It is hard to access resources because we practice at night and everything is closed [at other times]. We don't even have an athletic counselor or an athletic orientation like the Division I schools. . . . There's no study hall. We are left to do everything ourselves.* (Focus-Soccer player: 1)

The rugby player said it this way:

> *It's different from where I transferred from at the junior college. . . . You get here and you are on your own.* (Focus-Rugby player: 1)

The lack of academic success for Black male student athletes was attributed by one football player to poor advising and poor teaching:

> *In my case, I am a psychology major, and my professor is the advisor and he is the department chair of the department. But he's the same person that could not help me with my classes. Like when I went to him and told him I can't register for my class because it's all full, "Can you assist me on what I need to do?" He would just say, "Oh maybe you should just try to get your electives done. . . . the classes are just too full." I also have a problem with him as my professor because he can't explain the lecture in simple terms. Don't get me wrong he has his PhD and everything; he's very smart, but he's not making it simple for students to understand it. Which I have no choice but to go to someone else for help. . . . because he can't help me at all. And my thing is I look into myself to see if it's my fault, and I've asked other students about it and they say the same thing that they don't understand what he is talking about in lecture.* (Focus-Football player: 4)

The administrator approached the idea of academic success this way:

> *I was thinking if we had more money we could be doing more things! But for me, if I had all the money in the world to make any changes at all to an institution . . . especially ours . . . I would add more faculty; I think that's the key. So I mean it's nice to have certain facilities and offer certain programs; but I . . . you know I really think the key is having small class sizes and having faculty that have time to advise students and to work with them on undergraduate research outside of the classroom . . . you know I think that that is probably the most important.* (Inter: Admin 1)

One football player talked about the importance of increasing staff:

> *Increasing staff. . . and you know, being that forty percent of students at this school are athletes, so having someone that can be here to help athletes and having a mediator, instead of having to find out things on your own.* (Focus-Football player: 2)

These illustrations provide insight into perceptions, attitudes, and reactions regarding academic challenges experienced by the participants. Future research should continue to look at the effects of institutional policy and practices on minority populations.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This study investigated Black student athletes' achievement concerns and their perceptions of institutional support from a lens of CRT. "Policies, programs, and practices must be *aligned* with student academic preparation and needs as well as with institutional resources and personnel in ways that complement the institution's mission, values, and the culture" (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005, p. 297). The themes described (e.g., Building Affiliations, Mentoring, Academic Success, and Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Foundations) characterized the collective perceptions of Black student athletes and an administrator within a small minority-serving private college (i.e., HSI). CRT informed the researcher's data collecting methods and was a highly desired tool for inquiry, interpretation, and discovery.

Since CRT acknowledges that racism is pervasive in society and in the structuring of educational institutions, the participants were able to give the researcher a counter-narrative of the truth that they experience within the environment. The use of this experiential knowledge provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of their circumstances. It also provided a forum to engage in dialogue about structural changes that could promote greater academic success for this group.

According to the focus group and interview with the Associate Dean of First Year Programs, three key domains that affect post-secondary higher education are access, finance, and preparation. Three goals have been proposed to improve the academic outcomes of Blacks within this HSI, and in particular, male student athletes: improvement of operational processes, academic support programs, and increased cultural capital, both individual and institutional.

Improvement of Operational Processes

Three areas of difficulty within the operational processes at the research site were identified as lying in the registrar's office, financial aid, and course scheduling. A "late deposit" (i.e., a student who enrolls late is at risk of being thrown into a subject he may not be interested in or qualified for. This may trigger a domino effect resulting in low morale or little student engagement. The student athletes in the study have all had to register late due to financial debt from previous semesters. One student athlete revealed:

> *I had to beg teachers to get into their classes because my financial aid did not come in or whatever. . . . I did not have enough to fund last semester, so I had a bill, because I couldn't work off my work study. . . . I am so busy with school, and practice, and weight lifting . . . . The registrar's office put a hold on my account. . . so I just collected permission numbers until my money situation got better.* (Focus-Football player: 3)

Another issue is the scheduling of important courses during times of athletic obligations. "If faculty and administrators use principles of good practice to arrange curriculum and other aspects of college experience, students would ostensibly put forth more effort" (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 9).

Athletic Academic Support Program

The interviews with the administrator and the focus group both indicated insufficient academic support for student athletes. The administrator stated:

> *When we look at our quintiles for admissions . . . they are on the lower quintiles and they are participating in some of the sports that really take large numbers of hours to practice. And so, when I look at . . . let's say I look at a group of African American students that are playing football . . . I think well . . . they've deposited late so they haven't had the same preparation before they get here. . . . So they've arrived so . . . they're in practice for football until 9:30 or ten o'clock at night. . . . These kids are, you know, missing meals . . . . They will have to, you know, make special arrangements for that. They can't utilize the tutoring services because the tutoring service is closed . . . or they're having a lot of practice and they are looking for dinner and they are tired.* (Inter: Admin 1)

Participants in the focus group indicated that their practice schedules conflict with key support services, namely tutoring. Effective academic support includes priority registration, orientation, structured study hall, and compatibly scheduled tutoring services.

Increase Individual and Institutional Cultural Capital

Bensimon (2007) framed "student success as a learning problem of practitioners and institutions" and suggested "the dilemma is one of institutional capacity to effectively address racial patterns of inequality discernible in the educational outcomes of African Americans and Latinas/os in all institutions of higher education, from the most to the least selective" (p. 446). Institutional cultural capital affects educational outcomes. "Because educators at PWIs [Predominantly White Institutions] have historically relied upon a body of knowledge that supports and reinforces Euro-American values, they often prove unsuccessful in responding to the educational and cultural needs of African-American students" (McEwen, Roper, Bryant, and Langa, 1996, p. 430).

McEwen, et al., argue that in order to avoid "participating in the dehumanization of African American students," psychosocial theories of college student development must be expanded to include following nine developmental tasks: "developing ethnic and racial identity, interacting with the dominant culture, developing cultural aesthetics and awareness, developing identity, developing interdependence, fulfilling affiliation needs, surviving intellectually, developing spiritually, and developing social responsibility" (p. 430).

According to Bensimon (2007), culturally sensitive agents within institutions of higher education can assist college personnel (i.e., faculty, staff, and administrators) who lack the practitioner knowledge for promoting equitable outcomes. "Equity-minded individuals attribute unequal outcomes among Black and Latina/o students to institution-based dysfunctions" rather than student characteristics such as a lack of student motivation (Bensimon, 2007, p. 446).

Since the HSI under investigation was undergoing a Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation in 2010, it was recognized that a methodology must be created to assess the needs and learning outcomes of their subpopulations. This is step in the right direction, according to the administrator interviewed, would be to hire the consultant used in the

past to assess diversity on campus utilizing a Diversity or Equity Scorecard, developed by Bensimon in 2004 for colleges and universities to assess and improve their retention efforts for minority populations.

The Equity Scorecard is "a tool and an established process to develop evidenced-based awareness of race-based inequities among practitioners and to instill a sense of responsibility for addressing these gaps" (Harris & Bensimon, 2007, p. 79). This coordinated activity enables major stakeholders of institutions (e.g., faculty, student affairs practitioners, and administrators) to assess educational records and conduct investigations on patterns of racial injustice. The Equity Scorecard also gives college educators a way to revise deep-rooted assumptions about minority student success through accountability measures. Additionally, it provides analytical tools and practices for inquiry. One of the main goals for the scorecard is to build cultural capacity in faculty and professional staff to become aware of institutional disparities that affect educational outcomes of students of color (Harris & Bensimon, 2007).

Recommendations for Future Data Collection

This study adds to the body of emerging literature on the experiences of Black male student athletes and how they perceive the college environment. Other methodologies and data collection efforts will enhance what we can learn about the experiences of minority groups with risk factors such as first generation attendance, underpreparedness, and low social economic status. Individual interviews with more students may elicit themes with implications for promoting academic success in this population. While qualitative data is vital in collecting rich experiences unique to students, quantitative data collection also has its benefits. Disaggregating the data by certain subgroups will allow us to look more closely at factors that may promote or hinder minority academic success.

Although retention rates have improved for Blacks at the research site, they still lag significantly behind other ethnic groups. Faculty and coaches will particularly gain from hearing representative viewpoints of Black male student athletes through counter-narrative approaches of Critical Race Theory.

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