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The Achievement Gap Between African American Athletes and Their White Counterparts in Higher Education

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The Achievement Gap Between African American Athletes and Their White
Counterparts in Higher Education

A Synthesis of the Research Literature

A Synthesis Project

Presented to the

Department of Kinesiology, Sport Studies, and Physical Education

The College at Brockport

State University of New York

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

(Physical Education)

By

Hamed Shamseldin

Date

8/9/19

THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

BROCKPORT, NEW YORK

Department of Kinesiology, Sport Studies, and Physical Education

Title of Synthesis Project: Why is There an Achievement Gap Between

African American athletes and Their White Counterparts in Higher Education? A

Synthesis of the Research Literature.

Read and Approved by: _____*Melanie Perreault*_____
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Date: _____8/18/19_____

Accepted by the Department of Kinesiology, Sport Studies, and Physical Education, The College at Brockport, State University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Science in Education (Physical Education).

Cathy Houston-Wilson   8/20/19

Dr. Cathy Houston-Wilson
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Abstract

The achievement gap between African American athletes and their white counterparts is plaguing the United States. There are many reasons for the achievement gap. This synthesis will highlight the reasons while also discussing the solutions. To examine this matter to the fullest extent, there were 14 peer-reviewed articles chosen that talk about the reasons for the achievement gap. Several topics included in the articles were lack of role models and social supports, racial stereotypes, obsessive pursuit of sport goals, and the background of African American athletes. This synthesis will also discuss solutions to the achievement gap in collegiate athletics. These topics included funding, peer-to-peer mentoring, and credit-bearing courses.

Keywords: *Achievement Gap, African American, Collegiate athletics, Higher Education*

Introduction

There is an extremely alarming issue that is taking place in the United States, and that issue is the achievement gap. It is evident that there is an achievement gap in higher education between African American students athletes and their White counterparts, and there are statistics to support it. The U.S. Department of Education's (2012) statistics show a disparity in GPA based on race. The data shows that 75% of all white college students held a GPA of 3.0 or above, while 55.3 percent of African American students held a GPA of 3.0 or higher. The racial gap for students graduating with a 3.5 GPA is even wider. The statistics show that White students are more than twice as likely as African American students to graduate with a 3.5 GPA (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). When it comes to persistence and retention, African American students had a persistence rate of 67%, which was the lowest out of every other racial group and a retention rate of 52.5%, which is also the lowest out of every other racial group.

The racial gap is consistent for graduation rates as well. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2018) released a six-year outcome report that represents graduation rates of students at a two-year or four-year institution. The percentage of African American students who completed their degree at their starting institution is 28.7% while the percentage of their white counterpart is 47.5. The percentage of African American students who completed their degree at a different institution is 9.3%, while the percentage of their white counterpart is 14.5%. The percentage of African American students who are still enrolled is 17.4% while the percentage of their white counterpart is 11.2% (National Student Clearing House Research Center, 2018).

The Achievement gap translates to collegiate athletics as well. African American collegiate athletes have higher GPA, retention, persistence, and graduation rates than their non-athletic African American counterparts, but there is still a gap between African American athletes and White athletes. African American athletes in division I have a graduation rate of 59% while their white counterparts have a graduation rate of 73%. Africa American male athletes have a graduation rate of 55% while their white counterparts have a graduation rate of 66%. African American females have a graduation rate of 67 % while their white counterparts have a graduation rate of 78% (Hosick & Durham, 2017).

It is important to find out the reasons behind the achievement gap because it is a huge problem that needs to be solved. The reasons must be closely looked at in order to formulate solutions. The solutions for the achievement gap must be based off of the needs of the African American athletes in order for them to be successful.

Statement of the Problem

There are numerous statistics proving that there is an achievement gap in higher education as a whole and in collegiate athletics as well. The purpose of this synthesis is to find out why there is an achievement gap between African American collegiate athletes and their White counterparts, while discussing the solutions.

Operational Definitions

Achievement Gap: In the context of the synthesis, this refers to GPA rates, Retention rates, and graduation rates.

Racial Group: In the context of the synthesis, this refers to populations of people based on their genealogy, skin color and physical traits.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were used in the synthesis:

1. The populations used are African American students and white students

2. The synthesis also is confined to student athletes

Methods

Data Collection

The purpose of this chapter is to review the methods and procedures used to synthesize the literature on the achievement gap between African American athletes and their white counterparts in higher education. The studies that were collected for the synthesis were found using two methods. The first method used was searching the EBSCO database from the College of Brockport Drake Library. The specific databases used within the EBSCO database were SPORTDiscus, Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest. The second method that was used is the ancestry method. During this method citations from relevant studies were used to find sources for the critical mass. The journals that the sources come from are the, Journal of Intercollegiate Sport, Sociology of Sport Journal, Journal of Sport and Social issues, and the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education.

Keywords and terms were used in order to find sources that are relevant to this synthesis. The terms used were "African American + athletics," "Minority + athletics," "African American + athletics + higher education," and "achievement gap + college + athletics," and "racism + athletics + college." The terms "African American + athletics" received 1600 hits. The terms "African American + athletics" received 905 hits. The terms "African American + athletics + higher education" received 214 hits. The terms "achievement gap + college + athletics" received 407 hits. The terms "racism + athletics + college" received 97 hits. The dates of the critical mass sources range from 2000 to 2018. A few sources were published over 15 years ago but they still have information that is relevant to this synthesis.

Inclusion Criteria

It was extremely important to examine all the articles to make sure they were relevant to the topic of this synthesis. In order for an article to be added to the critical mass, it had to meet a certain criteria. First, the articles had to about the African American population. Second, the articles had to be about collegiate athletes. Third, the articles had to either give reasons for the achievement gap or solutions to the achievement gap. 13 articles were included to the critical mass after applying the inclusion criteria to all the articles found in the search.

Data Analysis

An article grid was used to extract relevant information from the articles. This grid is located in appendix A. Relevant information was extracted form each article and entered into the grid. After analyzing the articles, different themes were found to explain why the achievement gap between African American Athletes and their white counterparts exist in higher education. The statement of the problem will be addressed by explaining the themes in depth. All the findings will be compared and contrasted after thoroughly examining the articles and the analyses of the themes will be used to lead to the conclusion.

Results Section

This section will cover lack of role models and social support, racial stereotypes, obsessive pursuit of sport goals, and background. All these factors have a part in the achievement gap. Many articles have been reviewed for this section during the exhausted literature search. Thirteen relevant articles have been included in the critical mass.

Lack of Role Models and Social Supports

African American athletes are faced with the stress of isolation based on their race and athletic status, which in turn has negative effects on their academic success (Francique et al., 2013). A major reason they feel this way is because there is a huge lack of African American role models in collegiate athletics. Edwards (2000) said that there is a lack of prestigious African American role models outside of the sports arena (Edwards, 2000). This is because there is an under-representation of African American head coaches and other leadership positions in collegiate athletics. African Americans do not have the same opportunities as white individuals to acquire leadership positions. Russin (2015) talked about how institutions do a very poor job when it comes to hiring people of color in positions of leadership like athletic director and head football coach. This demonstrates that although opportunities have increased for African Americans to participate as athletes at PWIs [predominantly White institutions}, many African Americans continue to be locked out of positions of leadership throughout big time college sports. Russin (2015) also noted that these experiences could potentially discourage current African American student-athletes from pursuing these leadership positions because these athletes do not see any African American head coaches and administrators in these positions (Russin, 2015).

African American athletes do not persist at the level of their white counterparts because they do not see leaders and role models that they can relate and be comfortable with. Martin (2010) conducted a qualitative study with high achieving African American student athletes who were interviewed about their experiences. African American students said that they had a strong liking and comfort level with the African American staff members. They also said that having African American academic advisors and administrators was critical to all their successes. Martin (2010) talked about how important the recruitment and retention of African American administrators, coaches, and academic staff is. He made it clear that it is crucial to improving the experiences of African American student athletes within their respective campuses. The participants in this study consistently concluded that in order for them to persist and be academically successful they must have African American administrators and academic advisors (Martin et al., 2010). This means that African American athletes do not feel the same comfort with white individuals that are in positions of leadership. According to the qualitative study conducted by Akilah Carter – Francique (2013), African American athletes avoid interacting with white individuals in positions of leadership. This is extremely problematic because 89% of the faculty at PWI is composed of white individuals (Francique et al., 2013.)

Having a lack of African American role models adds to the bigger picture of having a lack of social supports for African American student athletes. This is important because in order for African American athletes to be successful they need social supports. Social support contributes to the academic success, sociocultural challenges, and psychosocial challenges of African American college athletes. Francique (2013) noted

that social supports are explained as the presence or accessibility of individuals whom you can rely on. A social support can also be described as a way to aid student athletes' ability to cope with their transition into a new environment. The majority of African American athletes do not feel comfortable within the college environment because of the lack of these social supports (Francique et al., 2013). Person (1997) said that African American students are more likely to stay and perform at a higher level when they feel comfortable within the community (Person & LeNoir, 1997).

Racial Stereotypes

African American athletes experience stereotypes that could affect their academic performance in many ways. These stereotypes are predominantly negative, false, and socially shared (Martin et al., 2010). These stereotypes play a huge role in the lives of African American athletes, while white athletes have the pleasure of not having this problem (Lawrence, 2005). Several scholars said that African American Student athletes are often stereotyped as dumb jocks (Sailes, 1993). These types of attitudes have a serious effect on African American student athletes. Harrison (2009) said that negative stereotypes in a performance context could decrease their ability to achieve. Negative stereotypes held by others are one obvious limitation that could affect performance for members of social groups (Martin et al., 2010). In Martin's et al. (2010) study on high achieving African American athletes, they talked about these negative stereotypes. This study allowed the researchers to document the affect of these negative stereotypes. The participants constantly relayed the message that they had to prove that they were worthy. They also said that they know people hold the stereotype that they are a perceived threat to society. They have the challenge of having to prove they intellectually belong and then

they are faced with the challenge of being a threat once they prove that they belong (Martin et al., 2010). Racial stereotypes are clearly an emotional burden that African American athletes must deal with. Coping with racism has clearly been seen as a major risk factor of achievement for African Americans who attend (PWI).

African American student athletes experience numerous forms of academic neglect, social isolation, and racial discrimination (Cooper, 2012). Sailes' (1993) data proved that white students held the stereotype that African American student athletes were not as smart as they were. They also believed that African American athletes were not academically prepared for college and they also received lower grades (Brown, 2004; Sailes, 1993). These negative beliefs will affect any social group, but they have an even bigger effect on a population that is already underrepresented (Francique et al., 2013). One of the impacts of the stereotyping of African American athletes as academically/intellectually inferior to White males has been that college faculty members and others who hold decision making positions have low expectations of African American athletes. This negative perception can lead to a self-fulfilling attitude among affected athletes.

Obsessive Pursuit of Sport Goals

The African American society harbors the dream of achieving excellence in sports. This can be extremely helpful in the success of African Americans, or it can be detrimental. Although there is much to gain from both the challenges of sport competition and its experiences, the success rate of playing professional sports is low. Edwards (2000) said that critics of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and its member institutions have argued the overemphasis on athletic performance has resulted

in the academic and personal underdevelopment of Black male student athletes. This obsessive pursuit of athletic superiority without any realization of its potential of being a dead end will only hurt the student athletes.

Singer (2008) said that some argue that athletics provides an education and career opportunities for these athletes. In most instances it appears that African American athletes would not have had the opportunity to attend college for numerous social and economic reasons. Others argue that college sports exploit these African American athletes and ignore their academic and social development (Siegel, 1994; Singer, 2008). Singer (2008) also said that he advises African American student athletes and their families to resist the urge of choosing a college just because it appears to be their best chance of playing professionally. These athletes are sent to top schools regardless if they did not show the ability to achieve academic success at that level. The only thing that is important is if they can be successful in their respective sport. They do not take academics as serious as athletics because their goal is to play professionally.

Background

If African American athletes come from a low socioeconomic background and are first generation college students as well, they are at an even greater disadvantage. They already have a lack of role models, social supports, and negative stereotypes held about them. If a student athlete is a first generation student while also coming from a lower socioeconomic level, they are more likely to have less academic preparation coming into college (Cooper, 2012; Singer, 2005). This adds to the achievement gap because African American athletes start at a disadvantage. In some instances African American athletes come to college unprepared because the importance of academics was not instilled in

them (Singer, 2005). African American athletes are considered "at risk" students, which means they are highly likely to quit school. Additionally "at risk" students are usually raised in single parent households, live in lower socio economic conditions, and come from predominantly minority races (Rusin, 2015). The social determinants listed here have a great impact on African American athletes' potential for academic success.

Summary

There are many factors that contribute to the achievement gap of African American Athletes. Clearly, these athletes have a much different experience than their White counterparts, and this contributes greatly to the lower achievement levels of African American athletes. The lack of role models and social support, the prevalence of negative racial stereotypes, the obsessive pursuit of sport goals, low socioeconomic background, and lack of sufficient institutional support are the key reasons for the achievement gap. Many suggest that the biggest part to improving academic achievement is a concerted effort to help African American athletes feel a sense of comfort upon entering college. Welcoming, accepting, and making this population of students feel like they belong is key. The African American student athletes' interaction with their institution's environment directly affects their success.

Discussion

The purpose of this section is to explain why the findings in this study are relevant while also discussing the recommendations for solving the achievement gap. The solutions will be separated into 3 pillars. Those pillars are funding, peer-to-peer mentoring, and academic enrichment credit-bearing courses. In addition, this section will present recommendations for future research in relation to the achievement gap within athletics.

The findings in this study were critical in order to find the best solutions to the achievement gap between African American athletes and their white counterparts. These findings are relevant because closing the achievement gap will increase our nation's competiveness in the global economy. African American achievement rates are persistently lower than their white counterparts, so they must be a high priority.

Funding

Financial support from academic institutions is needed to create programs that are developed for increasing the academic success of African American student athletes. These programs should be comprehensive including academic development, financial literacy, self-esteem promotion, and access to role models for academic and athletic purposes (Pearson & Lenoir, 1997). Increasing investment in pre-college preparation programs will be extremely helpful as supporting at-risk African American student athletes in academics will better prepare them for college. Institutions creating outreach and preparation initiatives that effectively serve African American students will only help close the achievement gap (Harper, 2012).

Increasing financial aid for African American students who are from lower socioeconomic background will be extremely beneficial as well. Only a select few of athletes receive full scholarships. Most college athletes receive a partial scholarship or no scholarship at all. Only about 2% of high school athletes are awarded with full scholarships to participate in a college sport (NCAA). Many students drop out of college because it is simply too expensive for them, or they have to work while maintaining a full course load (Harper, 2012). It is even more difficult to be academically successful when the hours of playing a collegiate sport are added. Policy makers must increase financial aid in order for the students who are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds can focus more on academics.

Peer-to-Peer-Mentoring

Several campuses use peer-to-peer-mentoring that are tailored to support African American students. The mentors act as role models, advisors, and friends to the mentees. This initiative is currently in use at universities such as Queens College, Hunter College, Philander Smith College, and The University of Maryland College Park (Harper, 2012).

Providing mentors for incoming freshman gives them a personalized educational experience. Mentorships help guide students through the challenges of college life while building self-confidence and self-esteem (Best, 2018). African American upperclassmen that have already been through the challenges of being new to college can provide invaluable insight and guidance (Harper, 2018). Peer mentors understand the road to success has many obstacles as they have experienced the ups and downs while managing to other life priorities and obligations (Best, 2018). African American incoming freshman who interact with successful African Americans mentors may receive a boost in self-

confidence because they see others like them that are achieving success. As mentioned in the Results Section, there is a severe lack of role models for African American athletes, so having an African American mentor could be a huge factor in increasing persistence. In general, peer mentorship will provide social support that will create a more welcoming atmosphere for African American students (Harper, 2012).

Best (2018) stated that in order for the mentors to be successful they must have mentorship themselves. Mentors are taught to look at situations with an adaptive perspective. Meaning that they will take in all factors before speaking. Mentors need to be able to switch between academic and personal advice in order to instill a feeling of support into their mentees. Best (2018) also said that it is essential that mentors meet at least once a week with their mentees and keep in frequent through calls and texts.

Credit-Bearing Courses

Developing academic programming that targets African American students who are in need will help dramatically. Creating credit-bearing courses is a way to add enrichment and life skills while gaining college credits. These credit-bearing courses that are targeted to helping African American students is another practice that is used to close the achievement gap. For example, UCLA, Wake Forest, University of Southern California, and the University of Pennsylvania offer classes that provide information, skills, and interactive learning (Harper 2012). These courses can also include learning styles/study skills, library and information literacy, out of class experiences, diversity, guest lectures, and academic advisement. The main goals of these classes are to guarantee the successful transition, academic success, persistence, and engagement of African American students (Best, 2018; Harper, 2012). Best (2018) said that these

courses also aim for students to become more educated about the resources that are on and off campus to support learning. These types of classes are crucial to African American student athletes who historically are under prepared for college life and its challenges.

Limitations

There was a lack of articles having to do with the solutions of the achievement gap within athletics. The majority of the studies also took place within the context of PWIs.

Recommendations for future research

More research is needed to determine how the solutions listed above could affect African American student athletes. The research should be focused on how these interventions may affect African American student athletes socially, academically and in athletic performance. Having the extra support might help these students academically, but it also can distance them from other students. Their peers may become resentful of the extra support African American student athletes receive. Will participation in enrichment initiatives have the desired outcome of increasing academic achievement, and will it adversely affect athletic performance. Determining specifically how African American student athletes experience college while participating in these initiatives would pin point areas that may need closer attention, additional funding and further development.

Conclusion

The focus of this synthesis was to determine the reasons for the achievement gap between African American athletes and their white counterparts while also discussing the

solutions. The achievement gap is huge issue, but there are ways to close it. African American student athletes are not to blame for the achievement gap. When looking into to the gap, the lack of role models, lack of social supports, negative racial stereotypes, obsessive pursuit of sport goals in the African American community, and the fact that many of these athletes come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds must be taken into affect. The solutions in this synthesis are based off the reasons for the achievement gap, because in order for the African American athletes to be successful their needs must be the priority.

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APPENDIX A:

ARTICLE GRID

Author	Title	Source	Purpose	Methods & Procedures	Analysis	Findings
Brown (2004)	Perceptions and Performance of African American Male Student Athletes at Historically Black University and a Predominantly White University	Dissertation	The current study examined the self-perceptions of African American male student-athletes in regards to academic abilities, athletic role, and ethnicity. More specifically, this investigation explored how academic self-concept, athletic identity, and racial identity are related to the academic performance of 101 African American male	Examine the self-perceptions of African American male student-athletes in regards to academic abilities, athletic role, and ethnicity. The participants in this study consisted of 101 African American male student-athlete.	Pearson Product Moment correlations were calculated to examine the relationship among academic self-concept, athletic identity, racial identity dimensions, and academic performance.	There will be positive relationships among academic self-concept, cumulative grade point average, and racial centrality.

				student-athletes.		
Cooper, Hawkins (2012)	A Place of Opportunity: Black Male Student Athletes' Experiences at a Historically Black University	Journal of Intercollegiate Sport, 5, 170-188	To identify key factors associated with the academic achievement and positive college experiences among Black male student athletes at a Historically Black University (HBU)	We used quantitative and qualitative means for collecting data. For the former, we used a questionnaire to assess the student athletes' classification/year in school; racial demographic of high school; family background; estimated high school grade point average (GPA); estimated family socioeconomic status; estimated college cumulative GPA; current/prospective major; primary major choice; and primary college choice.	We computed descriptive statistics related to the participants' background and demographic information. We then used these findings to complement the qualitative analyses and findings.	Five emergent themes were identified from the focus group interview: (a) "You Got a Chance," (b) "An Opportunity, (c) "Not Just a Number," (d) "It's Hard, But It's Not Impossible," and (e) "As An Athlete It Makes Your Social Life a Little Easier."
Franciq ue,	Black College	Journal of Intercolleg	To understan	The participants in	Nine qualitativ	Two themes

Hart, & Steward (2013)	Athletes' Perceptions of Academic Success[SEP] and the Role of Social Support	iate Sport, Volume 6, p. 231-246	d Black college athletes' perceptions of academic success and how social support contributes to their academic success at predominantly white institutions.	this research examination were 7 Black women and 2 Black men participating in intercollegiate athletics. Snowball sampling was used to select the participants	e interviews were transcribed. Participants were able to member check the interview. Inductive analysis was used to determine themes.	emerged from the interviews. They are Defining academic success and how support networks provide social support for their academic successes.
Harrison, Stone, Shapiro, Yee, Boyd, & Rillan (2009)	The Role of Gender Identities and Stereotype Salience With the Academic Performance of Male and Female College Athletes	Journal of Sport & Social Issues Volume 33, p. 78-96	To examine factors that moderate the experience of academic identity threat among college athletes who represent a stigmatized group on most college campuses	Participants were 88 college athletes (45 male and 43 female) enrolled at two large state universities in the southwestern United States. Of the sample, 66% identified themselves as majority group members whereas 34% identified themselves as minority group members. Test sessions were run in	The 40-item test of verbal analogies was constructed from 32 SAT and 8 GRE verbal analogy items taken from practice manuals. The GRE analogies appeared as items 1, 9, 13, 16, 18, 24, 27, and 31 on the test.	Athletes who represent stigmatized groups are threatened by the idea of them confirming the "dumb jock" stereotype. Female college athletes performed more poorly when their athletic and academic identities were linked.

				classrooms in the psychology building on each campus. To stimulate the typical classroom environment.		
Lawrence (2005)	African American Athletes' Experiences of Race in Sport	International Review For The Sociology of Sport, Volume 40, p. 99–110	To explore male and female African American athletes experiences of race discrimination during their athletic careers	Four female and four male African American athletes who participated in 8 different sports. The researcher conducted two bracketing interviews with each athlete. One initial and one was a follow up.	Themes were found using an interpretive research group.	Five major themes emerged. Those themes are being hurt, outrage and shock, team togetherness, and differences.
Martin, Harrison, Stone, & Malia-Lawrence (2010)	Athletic Voices and Academic Victories: African American Male Student–Athlete Experiences in the Pac-Ten	Journal of Sport and Social Issues Volume 34, p. 131–153	To explore participants' academic experiences and confidence about their academic achievement	Participants consisted of high achieving African American male student athletes. The required criteria for participant selection were conveyed to athletic administrators and athletic academic counselors at	First the Primary researcher critically examined himself to remove or at least become aware of biases. The researcher then coded and	Four major themes were found. Those themes were "I Had to Prove I'm Worthy," "I'm a Perceived Threat to Society," "It's About Time

				the universities. 40 African American male student–athletes were recruited for this study. Phenomenological interviews were used to collect data.	analyzed the data into themes.	Management," and "It's About Pride and Hard Work."
Person, LeNoir (1997)	Retention Issues and Models for African American Male Athletes	NEW DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENT SERVICES	To find out the best way to retain African American athletes.	Thirty-one African American male student athletes from eleven institutions participated in this study.	The participants were tracked as part of the random selection of students surveyed over time.	In general, these student athletes are more likely to be retained in their degree program if they are involved in a summer program and work in study groups.
Rusin (2015)	Sports Participation and GPA for African-American Male Students	Dissertation	This study examines the relationship between athletics and academics	A correlational prediction research design was used to conduct this study to collect and analyze data to identify patterns or the association	The student-athletes' time spent participating in sports and their earned average GPAs was	A major theme that was consistent amongst all of the correlations run was that the African-American males who had GPAs

				between the variables (hours of sports participation = IV, while earned GPA = the DV being measured	calculated and recorded in excel spreadshe ets and assigned codes	of 1.0 to 1.9 before the sport season, raised and/or maintaine d their GPAs to a 2.0 to become eligible to play their sport.
Sailes (1993)	An Investigati on of Campus Stereotype s: The Myth of Black Athlete Superiorit y and the Dumb Jock Stereotype	Sociology of Sport Journal, 10, 88-97	This study examined the beliefs of college student's stereotype s regarding African American student athletes.	869 undergraduate and graduate students who were randomly selected.	Given a questionn aire	45% on college students believed that African American student athletes were not as smart as average students.
Siegel (1994)	Higher education and the plight of the Black male athlete	Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 18, 207-223	This study examined the effect of athletic participati on on the graduation rate of Black male scholarshi p athletes.	Graduation rates from 25 division I universities were looked at.	Data reported by the American Institute for Research	Evidently, a conclusion that can be drawn from these data is that if improvem ent in graduation rates is a goal, everything else being equal,

					institutions should increase admissions criteria.
Singer (2005)	Understanding racism through the eyes of African American male Student athletes	Race, Ethnicity, and Education 8(4): 365–86	The purpose of this study is to understand African American student athletes' perceptions of racism and the potential impact racism might have on their educational experience and development.	Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this study. The final sample was comprised of four African American males who were on an athletic football scholarship at a large university in the Midwest with a tradition rich and nationally ranked Division 1A football program.	Focus groups were conducted.	Two basic themes emerged from the focus group and the individual interviews: (1) lack of opportunities to be in major decision-making roles within sport, and (2) being treated differently.
Singer (2008)	Benefits and detriments	International Review for the	The purpose of this study	Four African American male athletes	Focus group interview	Findings reveal that although

	of African American male athletes' participation in a big-time college football program	Sociology of Sport, 43(4), 399–408	was to assess the nature and status of four African American male athletes' educational experiences as participants in a big-time college football program at a predominantly white institution of higher education (PWIHE) in the United States of America.	who were participants in a big-time college football program at a major university in the Midwestern portion of the United States during the 2001–02 academic year.	s	these African American males felt that they derived certain benefits from being sport participants in intercollegiate athletics, these athletes, viewed the term, 'student-athlete', as an inappropriate label and inaccurate description of whom they are.