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Division I College Athletes' Self-Perception: Investigating the Impact of Race and Discrimination

Sean Strehlow

Baylor University, sean_strehlow@baylor.edu

Sayvon JL Foster

Texas A&M University, foster.sayvonjl73@tamu.edu

Rhema Fuller

University of Memphis, rf Fuller2@memphis.edu

B. David Ridpath

Ohio University - Main Campus, ridpath@ohio.edu

Alison Fridley

University of Southern Mississippi, alison.fridley@northern.edu

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Sean Strehlow, Sayvon JL Foster, Rhema Fuller, B. David Ridpath, Alison Fridley, and Sarah Stokowski

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Sean Strehlow

Baylor University

Sayvon JL Foster

Texas A&M University

Rhema Fuller

University of Memphis

B. David Ridpath

Ohio University - Main Campus

Alison Fridley

University of Southern
Mississippi

Sarah Stokowski

Clemson University

Stokowski (stoko@clemsun.edu) is corresponding author.

Abstract

Self-perception is the level of competency at which individuals evaluate themselves in certain areas or domains (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). An individual's self-perceptions contribute to their global self-worth and even predict performance (Cuellar, 2014; Harter & Neemann, 2012). This study measures the self-perception scores and experiences with racial discrimination of 306 NCAA Division I college athletes using the Self-Perception Profile for College Students (Harter & Neemann, 2012). Scores are compared across race. Findings suggest that White college athletes have significantly higher self-perception scores than college athletes of color, with recent discrimination (within the last year) as a significant predictor of multiple areas of self-perception. The implications of this study suggest that faculty and other campus stakeholders should pursue positive relationships with the college athletes they encounter. Positive relationships between college athletes and faculty may help raise college athletes' self-perceptions, and in turn, performance in a variety of areas.

Keywords: *college athletes, discrimination, race, self-perception*

Discrimination and negative stereotypes are common experiences for National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) college athletes (Beamon, 2012; Comeaux, 2011; Price, 2017). Often, NCAA college athletes are negatively labeled as “dumb jocks” or “tramp athletes,” under the assumption that college athletes only care about athletic endeavors rather than their academic performance (e.g., Price, 2017; Weight & Zullo, 2015). As a result, faculty members, academic advisors, and other campus stakeholders often perceive college athletes as less intelligent than non-athletes; they also have expressed resentment toward special treatment in areas such as academic support (e.g., Comeaux, 2011; 2018; Stokowski et al., 2016). Such views have a direct negative impact on college athletes' self-perceptions (Fuller et al., 2017; Hawkins-Jones, 2017). Most athletes that participate in intercollegiate athletics have the desire to learn and perceive themselves as able to achieve academic suc-

cess (Beamon, 2012; Stokowski et al., 2017). Therefore, as college athletes enter and matriculate through more competitive college environments, these negative perceptions may exacerbate the self-perceptions of this population (Gatzke et al., 2015).

Self-perception refers to the level of competency at which individuals evaluate themselves in certain areas or domains (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). These evaluations combine to make up a person's self-esteem or self-worth, which are global terms used to describe an individual's overall feelings about the self (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). Research on self-perception started as early as 1890 with James' (1890) foundational work on the idea of the “self.” Self-perception, also commonly referred to as self-concept, has become an increasingly popular area of study among psychologists and sociologists; however, many gaps exist in the research (Harter & Neemann, 2012). One of the existing gaps in self-per-

ception is research focused on the college athlete population. Most research concerning college athletes is centered on the athlete experience (e.g., Beamon, 2012; 2014; Hawkins-Jones, 2017; Price, 2017). However, little is known about how college athletes think and feel about themselves within the structural/external environment by which they find themselves surrounded.

Studies on the intersection of race and self-perception have found the two constructs to be related (Fuller, 2017; Fuller et al., 2017; Thomson & Zand, 2010). For example, evidence suggests that how individuals effectively evaluate their racial groups and how individuals believe others evaluate their racial groups are positively correlated with self-perception (Fuller, 2017; Fuller et al., 2017). Further, discrimination is a recurring theme within the lives of many college athletes, often taking the form of stereotyping and prejudice (Beamon, 2012; 2014; Hyatt, 2003; Simons et al., 2007; Singer, 2005). Though all college athletes may be subject to discrimination and stigma (Simons et al., 2007), Black college athletes must deal with varying degrees of racism and discrimination that further deteriorate their experience and self-evaluation (Comeaux, 2011; Cooper & Hawkins, 2012; Fuller et al., 2017; Singer, 2005). This likely is due to the ratio of Black students and Black college athletes who attend institutions that derive the most media attention concerning sport – NCAA Division I institutions, and specifically Power Five institutions.

Although Black students constitute approximately 10% of the undergraduate student population at NCAA Division I institutions, they make up more than 20% of the college athlete populations at the same institutions (NCAA Research, 2021). The difference between athlete and non-athlete status for Black college students is more pronounced at so-called Power Five institutions, where Black students constitute 20% of the athlete population, yet only 5% of the

general student population (NCAA Research, 2021). Even still, Black profit-athletes¹ make 46% and 51% of football and men's basketball players, respectively, at Power Five institutions (NCAA Research, 2021).

Since Black college athletes are the most visible athletes at these institutions, which also happen to be Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), they likely are subject to more of the jock stereotypes, stigma, and discrimination held by students, faculty, staff, and administrators on these campuses than their counterparts from other racial groups. The effects of racism and discrimination can have devastating effects on self-perception and self-worth (Chao et al., 2014). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the impact of discrimination on the lower-level, domain-specific self-perceptions (i.e., intellectual ability, scholastic competence, athletic competence, social acceptance, global self-worth) and the higher-level, total self-perception of college athletes. Specifically, this study strives to answer the following research questions:

RQ1a: What significant racial differences exist in the domains of college athlete self-perception?

RQ1b: Are there differences in domain-specific self-perceptions for college athletes based on racial group identification?

RQ2a: Does ethnic or racial discrimination predict total self-perception in college athletes?

RQ2b: What is the effect of racial discrimination on the total self-perception of college athletes?

This study aimed to fill a gap in the literature by exploring how college athletes perceive themselves and how those self-perceptions may differ across racial groups within the athlete population. A better understanding of how college athletes perceive themselves can help this population as well as higher education professionals (e.g., faculty, staff, coaches,

¹ Profit-athletes are athletes whose estimated market value exceeds the value of NCAA-approved compensation (Kidd et al., 2018)

administrators) unite and build stronger relationships with others in the campus community. Melendez (2008) noted that increased racial representation among university and athletics leadership is critical to aid college athletes in developing positive perceptions of self. The compounding effects of being college athletes of color at PWIs further isolates this community and subjects them to intersecting prejudices and discrimination (Melendez, 2008). Developing a foundation of understanding between disparate groups is the basis upon which meaningful structural changes are built, leading to a decrease in racial discrimination. This study also can help college athletes develop an increased sense of self.

Review of Literature

History and Development of Self-Perception Thought

James (1890) and Cooley (1902) are responsible for the earliest and most foundational works in self-perception theory. James (1890) studied self-perception from a psychological standpoint, and his formula for self-esteem still influences modern models. Cooley (1902) approached self-perception through a sociological lens and coined the Looking-Glass Theory, which according to Bachman (2014) commonly is used by sociologists today. Historical models of self-perception were unidimensional and used a single-score approach that derived self-perception from a sum, or average, of self-perception scores (Harter & Neemann, 2012).

Shavelson et al. (1976) proposed a multidimensional model of self-perception, which articulates that self-perception is multifaceted, evaluative, and hierarchical. Drawing similarities to DuBois' theory of double-consciousness, the multifaceted element notes the multiple (and often conflicting) identities that individuals hold, which ultimately shape one's perception of self (Bruce, 1992). This denotes that self-perception has both an internal and external eval-

uative component; individuals not only self-evaluate their abilities and skills, but they also make evaluations based on experience and feedback with and from others (Shavelson et al., 1976). Finally, self-perception is a hierarchical construct such that, while individuals possess higher-level general self-perception, they also maintain lower-level, domain-specific self-perceptions (e.g., academic self-perceptions; Shavelson et al., 1976).

Building from the multidimensional model by Shavelson et al. (1976), Harter and Neeman's (2012) self-perception profiles made a sizable contribution to the evaluation of self-perception. Each profile contains subscales that evaluate self-perception in a variety of age-specific domains. In the past, studies assessed global self-worth as a sum-total of these domains; however, Harter and Neeman's (2012) scale evaluates global self-worth as its own separate domain. Thus, Harter and Neeman's (2012) measurement of self-perception was adopted for the current study.

Race, Discrimination, and Self-Perception

Saint-Phard et al. (1999) highlighted the role of self-perception in the overall self-esteem of elite collegiate female college athletes compared to non-athlete female students. Their findings revealed that female college athletes displayed positive self-perceptions of their athletic identity and higher levels of self-esteem in areas connected to athletics. Park et al. (2012) provided additional exploration into the role of self-perception within the career transitions of collegiate athletes; however, the focus on career transitions limited examination into the role of self-perception in the academic performance in conjunction with career transitions. While Saint-Phard et al. (1999) and Park et al. (2012) explored a range of self-perception components, much of the existing literature regarding the self-perceptions of college athletes is limited to examinations of athletic ability (e.g., performance and appearance), while lacking full

consideration of their academic role.

Evidence suggests that academic self-perception is correlated significantly with aggregate academic performance for Black college students (Cokley & Chapman, 2008) and Black male college athletes (Fuller et al., 2017). Academic self-perception refers to an individual's overall ability to achieve academic success (Harter & Neemann, 2012). Several studies have explored the link between academic self-perception and negative racial stereotypes and found that non-White participants reported lower academic self-perceptions than White participants (Eckberg, 2015; Evans et al., 2011). In addition to negative racial stereotypes, acknowledging the role of structural racism also is essential when investigating perceptions of self. As Rose (2013) argued, structural racism contributes to implicit and explicit forms of racial exclusion and isolation, which can be applied to the experiences and self-perceptions of college athletes.

Eckberg (2015) examined the academic self-perception (i.e., scholastic competence) of White and non-White students, and found that students of color had lower self-perception than their White classmates. Evans et al. (2011) examined academic self-perception in seventh- and eighth-grade Black boys and girls in five public middle schools in the southeastern region of the United States. The authors found that, on average, Black student participants rated White students as better than Black students in academic domains (Evans et al., 2011). Utilizing Harter and Neemann's (2012) Self-Perception Profile for College Students (SPPCS), Jackson et al. (2010) examined academic self-perception, social self-perception, physical self-perception, and athletic self-perception among 12-year-old Caucasian American (White) and African American (Black) technology users, but found no significant differences.

Quattrochi (2014) studied the effect of discrimination on self-perception in youth ages 8-14 and found that after controlling for age and race, global self-worth and academic self-perception decreased as experiences of discrimination increased. Other

studies (e.g., Fuller, 2017; Wilson, 2014) have examined the interaction of race, discrimination, and self-perception while noting that racial identification, or the significance and meaning that individuals place on being a member of their racial group, potentially can moderate the relationship between discrimination and self-perception. For example, Wilson (2014) examined the influence of discrimination and race on self-perception in Black high school students and found that individuals who identify positively with their racial group are less likely to be affected negatively by racial discrimination. Similarly, Fuller (2017) found that the negative impact of discrimination in the academic domain on academic self-perceptions was mitigated for participants who held positive attitudes toward their racial group.

The College Athlete Experience, Discrimination, and Stigma

According to the most recent NCAA (2021) demographic data, White college athletes make up 57.26% of the NCAA Division I Power Five population, followed by Black (18.34%), Nonresident Alien (6.26%), Unknown (5.83%), Two or More Races (5.42%), Hispanic/Latino (4.12%), Asian (1.75%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (.54%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (.43%) college athletes. Across predominantly White institutions (PWIs), Black college athletes disproportionately are overrepresented in athletics compared to the general student population (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012). Black students are grossly underrepresented – approximately seven percent – within the general student body population at NCAA Division I athletic institutions (Harper, 2018; Kelly & Dixon, 2014). Furthermore, Division I institutions encompass 18.34% of the college athlete population (NCAA, 2021). Given the proportion of Black students at these institutions, irrespective of athletic status, many still perceive these institutions as unwelcoming (Harper, 2020; Payne & Suddler, 2014). While PWIs may support the aca-

demographic pursuits of Black college athletes, resources to encourage and sustain cultural differences are scarce (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012). In addition, many PWIs have a history of legal exclusion and institutionalized racism of non-White students through Jim Crow laws and other embedded systems of exclusion. As a result, biases still exist within these institutions (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012).

In higher education, college athletes often are subject to a wide variety of negative attitudes, perceptions, and stereotypes. Black male college athletes are stigmatized more than any other college athlete group (Price, 2017; Stone et al., 1999). Negative attitudes toward Black college athletes consistently have been found among college faculty and the non-athlete student population (Comeaux, 2011; 2018; Cooper et al., 2017). Most negative perceptions surrounding Black college athletes are centered on the “dumb jock” stereotype (Price, 2017). Low academic expectations, combined with the pressure of high athletic expectations, often lead to anxiety and diminished self-perceptions among Black college athletes (Stone et al., 1999). Other negative assumptions assert that Black college athletes are more likely to be involved in illegal activity and less likely to honestly earn non-athletic achievements, such as better grades (Comeaux, 2011). Black college athletes also are more likely to be treated with the athlete-first mentality (Cooper et al., 2017).

For college athletes, the academic, social, and athletic domains are salient environments whereby college athletes, in part, derive self-perception (Fuller, 2017). Unfortunately, many college athletes report experiencing negative stigma within these domains, such as racism, sexism, stereotypes, and discrimination (Beamon, 2014; Comeaux, 2012; Cooper et al., 2017; Fuller, 2017; Henderson, 2013; Stokowski et al., 2016). Discrimination can be defined as differential treatment and/or effect based on identification with a specific group (e.g., race, athletes, etc.; Blank et al., 2004). Differential treatment is when an individual of one group is treated differently from another

group in a similar situation (Blank et al., 2004). The differential effect is when unfavorable treatment toward an individual or group of individuals results in an adverse consequence (Blank et al., 2004). Based on the operationalization of discrimination, a multitude of research has shown that discrimination is a large part of the intercollegiate athletic experience (e.g., Beamon, 2014; Comeaux, 2012; Cooper et al., 2017; Fuller, 2017).

Academic stereotypes exist when an individual is perceived negatively in an academic setting (e.g., being thought of as not intelligent), whereby academic discrimination occurs when there are perceived identifiable adverse outcomes in the academic environment (e.g., being graded with more scrutiny; Fuller, 2017). According to Fuller (2017), athletic discrimination occurs in the athletic setting specifically. In addition to Fuller (2017), Beamon (2014) found discrimination also occurs in social settings on college campuses for college athletes. Other studies (e.g., Comeaux, 2012; Cooper et al., 2017) have found evidence of negative experiences for college athletes. The history of institutionalized racism at PWIs largely contributes to the stereotyping and negative attitudes that plague Black college athletes today (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012; Hextrum, 2020; Vadeboncoeur & Bopp, 2020). The experience of Black college athletes at PWIs has been marked by severe alienation and racial tension (Henry & Closson, 2012; Hextrum, 2020; Vadeboncoeur & Bopp, 2020). Black college athletes in revenue-generating sports, like football, have reported varying degrees of racism and discrimination from faculty, students, and White teammates (Henry & Closson, 2012; Hextrum, 2020; Vadeboncoeur & Bopp, 2020).

Henry and Closson (2012) also explored the phenomenon of temporary majority status. Black college athletes at PWIs that compete on athletic teams that are majority Black may experience some of the benefits of being a part of the majority culture, as shown within team dynamics (Henry & Closson, 2012). Although racial discrimination may be sus-

pended for Black college athletes within the athletic sphere, as Fuller (2013) found, some Black college athletes still reported high levels of discrimination outside athletics (Henry & Closson, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Cooley's (1902) original theory presents only self-perceptions and the appraisals of others that influence self-perceptions. This model since has been adapted to differentiate between actual appraisals and reflected appraisals. Individuals may perceive others a certain way, but those perceptions are subject to interpretation by the ones being appraised (Harter & Neemann, 2012). Cooley's (1902) model has been found to be most accurate when comparing self-perception to the reflected appraisals instead of the actual appraisals (Harter & Neemann, 2012).

To add a contemporary take on Cooley's (1902) theory of the Looking-Glass Self, Jones and McEwen's (2000) Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) also notes the multiple identities that create the culminating self while also highlighting how the salience of each identity element is dependent upon the environment. The MMDI also notes how the salience and intersection of identities, in conjunction with the context of the environment, can impact one's perception of self. While Jones and McEwen's (2000) model does address identities within the self, the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (R-MMDI) provides insight into how external factors (social norms, stereotypes, socioeconomic status, and sociopolitical climates) impact identity salience and subsequent perceptions of self (Abes et al., 2007). This model includes the 'meaning-making filter' that determines which external contextual factors impact identity and self-perception. To understand the broader role of past experiences and social positioning, Gardner and Hatch (1989) present multiple intelligences, highlighting varying forms of learning, information retainment, and knowl-

edge communication. Each of these types of intelligence should be considered and further reviewed when assessing an individual's knowledge.

External forces, framed by the experiences and self-perceptions of college athletes, can be identified as the current social and political climates coupled with the modern culture and the university climate. The university and athletic departments can be conceptualized as the meaning-making filter due to their ability to amplify or minimize external factors and their influence on the identities of college athletes. The application of Cooley's (1902) Looking-Glass Self and both forms of the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes et al., 2007) allows for a deeper investigation into how multiple identities, namely athletic and racial identity, intersect and are impacted due to experiences of racism and discrimination. Both Bimper (2014) and Bimper and Harrison (2011) note the importance of considering the intersection of racial identity and athletic identity when working with and for college athletes. In addition to addressing the lack of scholarship surrounding the intersection of race and athletic identity, Bimper and Harrison (2011) unpack how understanding the impact of discrimination and racism holds a compounding effect on both identities.

Method

Participants and Design

This study aimed to examine NCAA Division I college athletes' self-perception in specific domains and observe changes in those perceptions across race. Utilizing convenience sampling, NCAA Division I college athletes at two Division I Power Five institutions were invited to complete an anonymous online survey. Given the athletic, financial, and social prominence of Power Five athletic departments (Jensen et al., 2020; Wanless et al., 2019), exploring this topic through this community can provide theoretical and

practical insights that impact the experiences and development of college athletes across conferences and divisions. Upon receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the survey was administered electronically to college athletes through their athletic academic advisor. Given their vital role in college athletes' educational and other non-sport experiences, using an academic advisor as gatekeeper to social access increases the likelihood for participation and trustworthy responses (Clark, 2011; Heath et al., 2007). The survey included a modified version of the *What Am I Like?* questionnaire from Harter and Neemann's (2012) SPPCS, and the Landrine et al. (2006) General Ethnic Discrimination Scale (GEDS).

Measures

Self-Perception Profile for College Students (SP-PCS)

The SPPCS (Harter & Neemann, 2012) identifies 12 domains of self-perception that are relevant to college students: creativity, intellectual ability, scholastic competence, job competence, athletic competence, physical appearance, romantic relationships, social acceptance, close friendships, parent relationships, humor, and morality. Each of the 12 domains contains four items. Global self-worth is assessed as an individual, thirteenth domain. The global self-worth subscale includes six items. To be mindful of participant time and reduce response fatigue, the current study selected five subscales – scholastic competence, social acceptance, intellectual ability, athletic competence, and global self-worth – that were deemed most relevant to the population under investigation.

The SPPCS has produced adequate reliability for all subscales in previous research: Creativity ($\alpha = .89$), intellectual ability ($\alpha = .86$), scholastic competence ($\alpha = .84$), job competence ($\alpha = .76$), athletic competence ($\alpha = .92$), physical appearance ($\alpha = .85$), romantic relationships ($\alpha = .88$), social acceptance ($\alpha = .80$), close friendships ($\alpha = .82$), parent relationships ($\alpha = .88$), humor ($\alpha = .80$), and morality ($\alpha = .86$; Harter & Neemann, 2012). The present study demonstrat-

ed adequate reliability: global self-worth ($\alpha = .86$), scholastic competence ($\alpha = .86$), intellectual ability ($\alpha = .75$), social acceptance ($\alpha = .67$), and athletic competence ($\alpha = .66$).

Experience of Discrimination

Since race and ethnic discrimination is a common theme for Black college athletes, the General Ethnic Discrimination Scale (GEDS; Landrine et al., 2006) was used in the present study. The GEDS consists of three subscales, each with seven identical questions that measure the frequency of discrimination in the past year, the frequency of discrimination over the subject's entire lifetime, and an evaluation of the event's stressfulness. For example, one question asked: "How often have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students, and colleagues because of your race/ethnic group" (Landrine et al., 2006, p. 89)? Each item assessed the frequency of discrimination in a specific area (e.g., school, work, or public places) using a six-point scale. The scale ranged from one (never) to six (almost all the time) for the recent and lifetime discrimination subscales. The appraised discrimination subscale ratings went from one (not at all stressful) to six (extremely stressful). Individual scores for each subscale were summed, resulting in a value between 18-108 for the recent and lifetime discrimination subscales and between 17-102 for appraised discrimination. Mean scores then were created and analyzed for each subscale. Both frequency subscales – lifetime and past year – were utilized in the present study. The stress subscale was not included nor analyzed in the current study, as it was outside the scope. The internal consistency reliability ratings for lifetime discrimination ($\alpha = .942$), recent discrimination ($\alpha = .936$), and appraised discrimination ($\alpha = .945$) indicated strong item reliability.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with SPSS statistical software. Before addressing the research questions, descriptive statistics were used to produce means and

frequencies to describe participants. In addition, a Pearson's correlation was utilized to examine the relationships of the eight subscales, and Cronbach's (1951) alpha was used to ensure internal consistency for each scale or subscale.

To address the first research question, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to evaluate college athletes' self-perception across each of the five domains. Race, the independent variable, was a categorical grouping variable with four levels: White, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Other. The dependent variable was self-perception, which was measured using five subscales: scholastic competence, social acceptance, intellectual ability, athletic competence, and global self-worth. Simple main effects were measured using Games-Howell post hoc analysis, which accommodates for unequal variances and sample sizes. This allowed researchers to evaluate the data from groups with large differences in sample sizes. Next, a linear multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore the second research question on perceived discrimination and race as predictors of total self-perception (see Figure 1). Perceived discrimination included "recent" discrimination (experienced in the past year) and "lifetime" discrimination (experienced over a respondent's entire life).

Figure 1

Data analysis model for multiple linear regression predicting self-perception

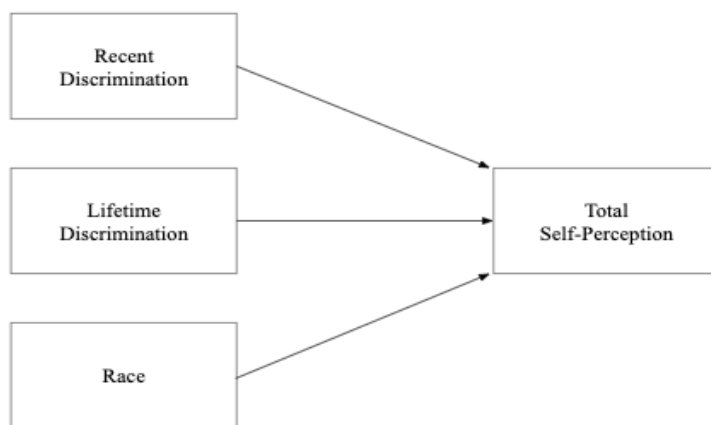


Figure 1. Data analysis model for multiple linear regression predicting self-perception.

Results

Demographics

Surveys were sent out to 1,032 NCAA college athletes at two Division I Power Five institutions. A total of 324 surveys were completed. Of those responses, 18 were deleted due to missing responses, and the remaining 306 responses were considered reliable. This yielded a response rate of 31.4%. One hundred thirty-nine (45.4%) respondents were White, 123 (40.2 %) were Black, 25 (8.2%) were Hispanic/Latino, 10 (3.3%) were Asian, six (2.0%) were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and one (.30%) was American Indian or Alaska Native. In the "other" category, two (.60%) of the respondents identified with a race other than those listed. The American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander were collapsed into the "other"

category to allow for sufficient data to analyze these participants. While the Hispanic/Latino and other samples are considerably smaller than White and Black, the race percentages in relation to the entire sample were reflective of the most current NCAA race proportions (NCAA, 2021). The results analyzed White (45.4%), Black (40.2%), Hispanic/Latino (8.2%), and other (6.2%) races and ethnicities. There were 151 (49.3%) male respondents and 155 (50.7%) female respondents. Regarding the classification of respondents, 158 (51.6%) were freshmen, 63 (20.6%) were sophomores, 46 (15.0%) were juniors, 33 (10.8%) were seniors, and six (2.0%) were graduate students.

Race and Self-Perception

Utilizing SPSS statistical software, an initial MANOVA examined participant's self-identified race as the independent variable, and scholastic competence, social acceptance, intellectual ability, athletic competence, and global self-worth as dependent variables. Results indicated significant main effects of race were found in global self-worth $F(3, 302) = 8.34, p < .001$, scholastic competence $F(3, 302) = 29.72, p < .001$, social acceptance $F(3, 302) = 3.33, p = .02$, and intellectual ability $F(3, 302) = 18.33, p < .001$. No significant main effect of race was found in the athletic competence domain ($p = .31$). See Table 1 for more information.

A Games-Howell post hoc analysis, which accommodates for unequal variances and sample sizes, was conducted to ensure that the Hispanic/Latino and "other" participants were accounted for properly. For the global self-worth domain, Black participants ($M = 3.04$) were found to have a significantly lower score than White participants ($M = 3.40, p < .001$). Black college athletes ($M = 3.04$) also were found to have lower global self-worth than those in the "other" category ($M = 3.47, p = .022$). In the domain of scholastic competence, White athletes ($M = 3.17$) reported significantly higher self-perception scores than Black ($M = 2.35, p < .001$) college athlete participants. Participants in the "other" category ($M = 3.36$) also reported significantly higher scores than Black ($M = 2.35, p < .001$) participants and Hispanic/Latino ($M = 2.71, p = .041$) participants. In the social acceptance domain, Hispanic/Latino athletes ($M = 3.46$) reported significantly higher scores than White ($M = 3.02, p = .001$) and Black ($M = 3.10, p = .005$) participants. In the intellectual ability domain, White athletes ($M = 3.23$) reported significantly higher scores than Black ($M = 2.65, p < .001$) athletes. Black ($M = 2.65, p = .001$) and Hispanic/Latino ($M = 2.77, p = .043$) participants also reported significantly lower intellectual ability scores than the athletes in the "other" category ($M = 3.36$). No significant race differences were found in the athletic competence domain.

Table 1*MANOVA for Self-Perception and Race*

	White <i>M (sd)</i>	Black <i>M (sd)</i>	Hispanic/ Latino <i>M (sd)</i>	Other <i>M (sd)</i>	Mean Square Between (Within)	<i>F</i>	η^2	Cronbach's α
Global Self-Worth	3.40 (.64) ^B	3.04 (.62) ^{AD}	3.35 (.64)	3.47 (.56) ^B	3.261 (.391)	8.34***	.077	.86
Scholastic Competence	3.17 (.70) ^B	2.35 (.78) ^{AD}	2.71 (.90) ^D	3.36 (.65) ^{BC}	16.475 (.554)	29.72***	.228	.67
Social Acceptance	3.02 (.70) ^C	3.10 (.60) ^C	3.46 (.43) ^{AB}	3.01 (.84)	1.419 (.426)	3.33*	.032	.75
Intellectual Ability	3.23 (.66) ^B	2.65 (.69) ^{AD}	2.77 (.81) ^D	3.36 (.61) ^{BC}	8.554 (.467)	18.33***	.154	.66
Athletic Competence	3.28 (.53)	3.36 (.59)	3.42 (.51)	3.18 (.57)	.371 (.309)	1.20	.012	.86

Notes. Several ethnicities with insufficient data were collapsed into an “other” category.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

^A Significant difference from White

^B Significant difference from Black

^C Significant difference from Hispanic/Latino

^D Significant difference from Other

Race, Discrimination, and Self-Perception

Internal consistency reliability scores were analyzed after all requirement checks were determined tenable for the total self-perception (Cronbach's $\alpha = .883$), perception of recent discrimination (Cronbach's $\alpha = .962$), and perception of lifetime discrimination (Cronbach's $\alpha = .962$); all estimates suggested adequate item interrelatedness. A multiple linear regression was conducted to predict total self-perception based on race, perception of recent discrimination, and perception of lifetime discrimination. Results indicated a significant regression equation ($F_{3,302} = 28.80, p < .001$), with race, perception of recent discrimination, and perception of lifetime discrimination accounting for 21.5% (Adjusted $R^2 = .215, p < .001$) of the explained variance in total self-perception scores.

Higher scores on the perception of recent discrimination contributed significantly to decreased total

self-perception scores ($b = -.011, p = .012$). For every one-unit increase in perception of recent discrimination, the predicted self-perception score decreases by .011 units. Perception of lifetime discrimination ($b = -.005, p = .246$) and race ($b = .042, p = .496$) failed to show significant contribution to total self-perception scores. Means and standard deviations of university athletic team identification and perception of college athletes are located in Table 2.

Table 2

Total Self-Perception, Perceived Recent Discrimination, and Perceived Lifetime Discrimination Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's Alpha

	Mean	(SD)	Number	Cronbach's α
Total Self-Perception	3.09	.48	306	.883
Recent Discrimination	29.37	15.51	305	.962
Lifetime Discrimination	31.41	16.97	306	.962

Discussion

This study aimed to assess differences in self-perception among NCAA Division I college athletes and examine racial discrimination as a possible predictor of self-perception. The importance of investigating self-perception within college athletes is paramount because it fills a major gap in the literature by helping stakeholders better understand who the athletes are as individuals, and how athletes' surroundings impact their self-perception. Significant race differences were found in four of the five observed self-perception domains. In terms of race, White college athletes reported higher scores than non-White college athletes in global self-worth, scholastic ability, and intellectual ability self-perception. In addition, Hispanic/Latino college athletes reported higher social acceptance scores than White students. This was the only instance of non-White college athletes having higher self-perception than White college athletes.

Results predicting the self-perception domains revealed that recent racial discrimination (past year), age, and race significantly predicted global self-worth, scholastic competence, intellectual ability, and athletic ability but did not significantly predict social acceptance scores. Recent racial discrimination was the strongest predictor of global self-worth, scholastic competence, and intellectual ability. Interestingly, past (lifetime) racial discrimination was not a significant predictor for any of the self-perception models. The findings echo the foundation of Cooley's (1902) Looking-Glass Self and the R-MMDI from Jones et al. (2007) by illuminating the role of internal and external factors – namely racism and discrimination – on athletes' perceptions of self.

Self-perception and race

The present study found that White college athletes had significantly higher self-perceptions than non-White college athletes in the areas of global self-worth, scholastic competence, and intellectual ability. The lower scholastic competence and intellectual ability scores reported by Black collegiate athletes are consistent with previous findings regarding race differences in academic self-perception (Eckberg, 2015; Evans et al., 2011; Wilson, 2014). These results suggest that the 'dumb jock' stereotype may play a significant role in how Black college athletes perceive their academic abilities (Price, 2017). Although White college athletes are not more

intelligent than their Black counterparts (e.g., Comeaux, 2018), it could be inferred that lower scores in the scholastic and intellectual domains are correlated with lower global self-worth scores for Black college athletes. As such, although Black athletes often are mislabeled as unintelligent by faculty (e.g., Comeaux, 2011; 2018) and academic advisors (e.g., Stokowski et al., 2016; Stokowski et al., 2020a), Black athletes want to learn and value their academic performance (Stokowski et al., 2020b). These findings also emphasize the role of racism and discrimination within the higher education realm, highlighting the role of the meaning-making filter within the R-MMDI (Abes et al., 2007). Specifically, extensively examining the interaction between identity dimensions (race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) might produce a more thorough understanding of how individuals perceive their own life experiences.

Racial identity has been found to be highly formative for Black individuals and their self-perceptions (Wilson, 2014). Persistent negative stereotypes have conditioned Black men and women to negatively associate their group membership with their perceived abilities, particularly in the academic setting (Wilson, 2014). Furthermore, Black athletes only may perform the minimal effort required to maintain athletic eligibility in order to avoid confronting campus stereotypes embedded within the racially hostile environments of PWIs (Briggs et al., 2021). Black youth are conditioned that intellectual and academic pursuits of excellence are White cultural values (Wilson, 2014). Even those who positively identify with their Black group membership face challenges when they arrive on the college campus. Academic efficacy and achievement can be offset by self-doubt, which is common in college students of color (Eckberg, 2015).

Racial disparities related to specific types of self-perceptions may be a result of the volatile racial climate at PWIs, which can intensify experiences of discrimination for a person within an underrepresented racial group (Cuellar, 2014). Notably, Black and Hispanic/Latino college students may enter campus

with lower levels of confidence than their White peers due to the racially hostile campus climate (Cuellar, 2014; Eckberg, 2015). Considering interactions with faculty are positively associated with academic self-perceptions (Cuellar, 2014), increases in said interactions could help increase both scholastic competence and intellectual ability scores for racially underrepresented athletes. However, as faculty at PWIs are less likely to go out of their way to tend to the concerns specific to students of color (Comeaux, 2011), faculty must intentionally pursue mentorship relationship and other opportunities designed to reduce the unique anxieties burdening traditionally marginalized students of color, especially Black and Hispanic/Latino students (Briggs et al., 2021; Ortega, 2021a).

It also is worth noting that Hispanic/Latino athletes reported significantly higher self-perception scores in the social acceptance domain. Thus, there could be some correlation between family socialization in Hispanic/Latino culture and general social skills (Ortega, 2021b; Turk et al., 2017). Social interactions have been shown to impact the academic success of Hispanic/Latino athletes (Ortega, 2021a; 2021b). While faculty and academic advisor interactions with Hispanic/Latino athletes have positively influenced the academic success of this population, interactions with their teammates produced a negative effect on academic success (Ortega, 2021a). As such, Hispanic/Latino athletes should be encouraged to increase interactions with individuals outside athletics.

Predictors of Self-Perception

In response to the second set of research questions, recent racial discrimination did prove to be a significant predictor of self-perception. Our finding of discrimination as a significant predictor is consistent with previous research (Quattrochi, 2014). However, lifetime discrimination was not a significant predictor of self-perception. This suggests that, although more recent experiences of discrimination can impact self-perception, college athletes may be more resilient

to the effects of discrimination over a longer period of time. The results from the regression analysis mirrors previous research, which finds that existing negative stereotypes about Black college athletes have a negative impact on academic self-perceptions as well as global self-worth (Benson, 2000; Galipeau & Trudel, 2004; MacNamara & Collins, 2010; Papanikolaou et al., 2003; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). In sum, the role of race and racism is paramount in the self-perception of athletes of color. Using the R-MMDI from Jones et al. (2007), the university and sporting space should be reconceptualized as the meaning-making filter. In this role, each space allows for external facets (racism, sexism, classism, etc.) to pass through and impact athletes' ability to develop positive senses of self.

Importance and Implications

Self-perceptions are imperative to study because often they are strong predictors of performance. For instance, self-perceptions in intellectual and scholastic competence translate to academic performance (Cuelar, 2014). This is important to understand for college athletes, as they must perform athletically and academically to meet eligibility requirements of both the university and the NCAA. Furthermore, global self-worth can help predict more serious mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. In essence, the understanding and monitoring of how college students feel about themselves give faculty, coaches, and athletic academic staff an increased awareness concerning the causes of poor performance.

The implications of this study particularly are relevant for faculty, as the most significant racial disparities exist in areas of scholastic competence and intellectual ability. Faculty could see an increase in academic confidence and performance in their athletes by intentionally pursuing positive interactions and relationships with their athletes of color (e.g., Black and Hispanic/Latino). Implications also are present within the administration of athlete support services by implementing a clear focus on creating a safe and inclusive environment that promotes positive self-per-

ceptions for college athletes. It is imperative to understand the intersected nature of social identities and the impact that external factors have on college athletes. Intercollegiate athletic administrators working within the academic, social, and professional development of college athletes hold the ideal position to create an inclusive culture while also bridging gaps between athletes and the larger campus community.

Understanding athlete experience is paramount in fostering an inclusive and supportive campus community for administrators within higher education. As Cunningham (2019) presented, all leadership and scholars within the field of sport should take an active stance in creating an inclusive and equitable environment. Following this perspective, coupled with the findings of this study, university leadership should explore culture and climate within their sporting realms. Specifically, negative attitudes from faculty, staff, students, and external community members (i.e., fans, donors, alumni) all hold notable roles in communicating racialized thought/views (Agyemang et al., 2020; Cunningham et al., 2019; Oshiro et al., 2020). These findings and supporting literature can serve as tools for university leaders to identify harmful elements of the university culture while also positing suggestions for moving forward.

Limitations and Future Research

The first major limitation of this study is that it did not explore self-perceptions regarding gender or gender discrimination and its possible effects on self-perception. Research has found that gender discrimination exists in the college environment and negatively impacts college athletes (Beamon, 2012; Comeaux, 2011, 2012; Cooper et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2011; Hawkins-Jones, 2017; Hively & El-Alayli, 2014). Future research should examine gender discrimination among college athletes along with a scale that measures gender discrimination. Future research also should take a deeper look into the differences in self-perception across race and gender intersections.

A second limitation of this study is that the

two participating institutions are PWIs, which could explain some of the differentiation in discrimination scores reported by White College athletes than their non-White peers. Expanding the study to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) significantly could impact the disparities in self-perception between White and Black College athletes. Additionally, the inclusion of other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) could provide much-needed contextual details into the experiences of college athletes. Ortega (2021b) emphasized that Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are valuable counter-spaces that center the experiences and development of Latino identities. Future research should make an effort to include these institutions for a more complete picture of NCAA College athlete self-perception. Also, although there were a sufficient number of responses, there were very few participating institutions from similar geographical areas. Expanding this study to more universities from different regions would ensure a sample size with more diverse experiences that could enhance the understanding of self-perception and its relationship with racial and gender discrimination.

A third limitation is that, although there were interesting data derived on athletes of color who are not Black (e.g., Latino), the sample size for those athletes of color is somewhat limited by the current sample size. Future research should expand the sample to include all athletes of color in a more representative way. This study primarily focuses on the self-perception of the Black college athlete, even though the population is broader if nationality and ethnic backgrounds are considered. The final notable limitation is that this study only used five of (Harter & Neemann, 2012) 13 subscales. While the subscales used in this study were selected because they seemed to be the most appropriate to college students, future research should consider exploring additional self-perception domains. For example, domains such as romantic relationships, close friendships, and parent relationships undoubtedly are important factors for college athletes and could play an essential role in the college athlete's global self-worth. Additionally, discrimination

could be a stronger predictor in some of the self-perception domains not studied here.

Conclusion

Self-perceptions are an important element in college athletes because often they can significantly predict performance and behaviors in different aspects of the athlete's college career. This study found multiple significant race differences in several self-perception domains. White college athletes often have higher self-perceptions than Black and Hispanic/Latino college athletes. Racial discrimination was a significant predictor in several areas of self-perception. Keeping Cooley's (1902) theory in mind, the Looking-Glass Theory of the Self seems to hold true, as racial discrimination was a significant predictor of self-perception. This reinforces the idea that people will evaluate themselves, at least in part, by how others evaluate them.

NCAA institutions that are interested in applying this research may best be served by starting (or continuing) a conversation about intercollegiate athletes' self-perceptions in an effort to educate stakeholders better. The more stakeholders know about how college athletes feel about themselves, the better they can serve the athlete population. It also is recommended that faculty discuss outreach initiatives that engage athletes struggling in their classes, focusing on college athletes from underrepresented groups. Faculty that intentionally seek to increase positive interaction with their struggling athletes may see an increase in academic self-perception and performance.

In addition to educating stakeholders in the experiences of college athletes, this study presents findings that can impact the day-to-day experiences of college athletes by informing those who work within college athletics administration. As sport organizations move to be more culturally and socially competent, administrators can use this study to assess the current climate of their respective institutions. While each may have varying cultures and climates, a clear understanding of attitudes within the campus

community better aids in the services provided within the scope of athlete support services. In addition to increasing awareness and overall competency within athletics staff, findings also can be used to address disconnects between athletics and the larger campus community.

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