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Impact of Progress Toward Degree on Major Selection for Division I Historically Black College and University Student-Athletes

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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April A. Chestnut

M.S., Walden University 2020

M.S., Kaplan University, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I student-athletes select or may change their majors to maintain participation eligibility in sports rather than focus on their specific academic interests. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the impact of progress towards degree (PTD) on the degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree received by student-athletes attending HBCUs. The study used Sabatier's and Jenkins-Smith's advocacy coalition framework. The research questions focused on the perceptions and lived experiences of student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators on the impact of PTD on major selection. A researcher-developed interview guide was used to collect data from 8 current and graduated student-athletes and 5 athletic advisor and athletic administrator participants. The study used random, purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling. Data was transcribed, coded, categorized to develop themes. Data analysis included the fundamentals of first and second cycle coding. Key findings of the study identified a need for a better balance among a student athlete meeting their scholarship requirements, education goals, and commitment to the HBCU's athletic program. In addition, HBCU athletic administrator's challenges in balancing NCAA, DOE, PTD input could provide insight into the challenges of meeting the current 40-60-80 percentage requirements while supporting student academic interest. Potential positive social change will be consideration by Division I HBCU to focus on program objectives for the betterment of student-athletes' academic experience and career afterwards that are conducive to meeting benchmarks set by PTD and DOE.

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Dedication

First, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength to endure and finish my dissertation. I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my supportive family and my children who rejuvenated me to complete my doctorate. Thank you to my mother and father, who set the foundation for reaching this milestone in my life. To my sisters, who have encouraged me and my nephews who have given me a peace of mind and a sense of joy, thank you. Also, I would like to thank the participants of this study who shared their lived experiences. Lastly, I would like to thank my husband for his support and patience throughout this process. He has cheered me through the most challenging process of my dissertation and kept me balanced. This dissertation is for all NCAA member institutions and Division I HBCU student-athletes who have graduated or are currently enrolled.

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I would like to thank Dr. Shepeard for being an awesome chair. She was straight forward and held me accountable throughout the process. I would like to thank Dr. Bryan, who has been my committee member since my process started. She has always provided great support, advice, and feedback.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) implemented academic reform at Division I universities to provide an academic environment in which student-athletes can succeed. NCAA Division I universities and colleges must abide by the NCAA policy called progress towards degree (PTD) or they will be ineligible for competition. Many power conferences have research on academic reforms' impact on student-athletes. However, there is a lack of research in the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) community. I conducted this study to focus on the impact of PTD on major selection for Division I HBCU student-athletes. This study's social implications are the enlightenment of the lived experiences of HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators and the impact PTD has on NCAA and U.S. Department of Education (DOE) metrics and policies. In addition, this study will assist student-athletes to think more deeply about their major change and selection. Chapter 1 includes the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. The chapter ends with a summary and transition to Chapter 2.

Background

Chandler (2014) emphasized the importance of collegiate athletics because of the financial support such programs provide universities. The largest intercollegiate athletic body in the United States of America is the NCAA (Cooper, 2016). The significance of the impact of the NCAA academic reform is an increased understanding of academic

achievement amongst student-athletes. Cooper (2016) discussed the impact of academic reform in the NCAA and the challenges those reforms bring for Black male student-athletes. Further research was needed to fill the gap related to the impact of academic reforms on the African American community. My study assisted in closing the gap by focusing on the impact of PTD on Division I HBCU student-athletes.

The literature included in this section focused on the NCAA academic reform, PTD, and the student-athletes' educational experience. Kulics, Kornspan, and Kretovics (2015) researched student-athletes in the NCAA Mid-Western Athletic Conference. The findings suggested that academic reform may influence student-athletes to choose majors based on eligibility first and academics second (Kulics et al., 2015). Parsons (2013) stated that professors' perception of athletes are negative due to student-athletes' lack of interest in academic engagement. Parsons asserted that professors believe student-athletes care more about athletics than their education, prompting them to enter easier majors and change majors because of eligibility requirements (Parsons, 2013).

In some cases, less rigorous majors increase academic performance, but decrease quality education. Levine, Etchison, and Oppenheimer (2014) mentioned that pressure from peers and academic reform pushes student-athletes to make decisions that are best for their athletic career versus their education. Levine et al. found that student-athletes stated they valued their education, but public perception indicated student-athletes focused more on athletics. Many stakeholders feel the U.S. athletic system should be improved due to the stated mission of the NCAA (Levine et al., 2014). The NCAA tracks student-athletes' progress towards graduation to monitor whether student-athletes have a

measurable level of success. If students do not reach NCAA academic standards, they are deemed ineligible for participation (Chandler, 2014).

Student-athletes have experienced academic scandals that call the university and athletic departments in which they participate into question (Chandler, 2014). Gragg and Flowers (2014) emphasized the importance of student support programs and the impact coaches and athletic administration staff have on student-athlete decision making. Academic reform measures hold member institutions accountable for student-athletes' academic progress; when student-athletes are not academically successful, athletic programs may lose money, scholarships, or eligibility to compete in playoff competitions (Avery, Cadman, & Cassar, 2016; Chandler, 2014; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018).

Parsons (2013) conducted a study of White student-athletes at a NCAA Division II member institution. Parsons found that 31% of student-athletes in his study indicated they were informed to choose easier majors or courses that were athletic friendly. Student-athletes' choice to pursue easier majors may be related to a lack of academic interest, but the reasons for this choice are unknown. Cooper, Davis, and Dougherty (2017) stated the educational mission of the NCAA member institutions is in question. Academic performance gaps within divisions and conferences raise concerns among educators (Cooper et al., 2017).

This study addressed the impact of PTD on Division I HBCU student-athletes and the conferences in which they participate. There is a lack of research in the HBCU community on NCAA academic reform related to the impact of PTD on students' academic achievement. This study was needed to provide lived experiences of NCAA

Division I HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators to address a gap in the knowledge about NCAA academic reform. The results of this study provided information on the impact of PTD on Division I HBCU student-athletes and the alignment between PTD and the DOE, which can enhance overall NCAA academic reforms.

Problem Statement

NCAA Division I student-athletes may select or change their majors to maintain participation eligibility in sports rather than focus on their respective academic interests (Kulics et al., 2015). In a 2013 study by Parsons, 31% of student-athletes indicated they were advised to avoid harder classes or take athletic friendly courses to maintain their eligibility. Student-athletes expressed that job opportunities and careers were essential factors considered in the selection of a major (Parsons, 2013). Kulics et al. (2015) found that student-athletes felt like they were advised and encouraged to choose specific majors even if the majors did not align with their career goals.

PTD legislation, better known as the 40-60-80 rule, impacts student-athletes' future and creates the notion that athletics take precedence over students' potential careers, professional interests, and ambitions (Kulics et al., 2015). The NCAA is the largest intercollegiate athletic association in the United States; its link to the DOE ensures that the NCAA academic standards are high (Cooper, 2016). The NCAA established multiple priorities in its quest to facilitate an environment that is conducive to the success of student-athletes. The NCAA PTD policy instituted for first time freshmen in 2003 established specific reform measures to ensure student-athletes make satisfactory

academic progress and to hold member institutions accountable to NCAA's mission (NCAA, 2018). However, the trend during the last 15 years since PTD's implementation indicates that athletic administrators and student-athletes intentionally search for easier majors to remain in compliance with the policy (Levine et al., 2014). The literature reviewed for this study indicate that scholars investigated this problem by looking at student-athletes' primary reason for selection of their major at predominantly White member institutions. Researchers also examined whether student-athletes were advised by athletic advisors or coaches to select a major to meet eligibility requirements (Kulics et al., 2015). The impact of NCAA academic reform and PTD policy has been studied at the conference and division level, and by ethnic group (Bimper, 2014; Wolverton, 2014). However, none of the literature examined these same issues in HBCUs. This study contributes to the research by building upon the works of Bimper (2014) and Wolverton (2014) and providing federal policymakers with the perspective of HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators on the impact of PTD on student-athletes' academic preparedness. These insights will assist agents when assessing the effectiveness of, or need to change, the PTD policy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to gain a better understanding of the impact of PTD on the degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree received by student-athletes attending HBCUs. Past research explored the impact of PTD among student-athletes in well-known NCAA conferences using quantitative designs. This qualitative phenomenological study consisted of interviews of

current and previous HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators in the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) and Mideastern Athletic Conference (MEAC), which are the only HBCU NCAA Division I conferences.

Research Questions

For current or past HBCU student-athletes who selected or decided to change their major, I used the following research question:

RQ1: How has/did PTD affect your major selection?

For athletic advisors or administrators working at HBCUs, I used the following research question:

RQ2: How has the alignment of PTD requirements to the DOE standards affected retention of student-athletes in their initial majors?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), which was first developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weible, Sabatier, & Smith 2014). The ACF grounded this study by providing technical information about the problem and the impact of the problem (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2014). Through policy learning, ACF transforms beliefs and values within a coalition and can influence a major policy change amongst interest or research groups (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2014). The ACF is a unique theory that can facilitate a more in-depth look at the policies affecting the coalition between the DOE, NCAA, and member HBCUs. In this study, policy learning provided insight on the impact of PTD on HBCU student-athletes through substantial information gathered from a semistructured interview

process. I used ACF to guide the analysis of concerns voiced by NCAA Division I HBCU member institutions, student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators related to the initial implementation of PTD as well as current beliefs about its continued importance for student-athlete academic success. Previous researchers studied the impact of PTD in various NCAA conferences and among varied ethnic groups. This study adds to the existing knowledge by providing insights from the HBCU community. Findings encourage the reexamination of PTD in light of its revealed impact on student-athletes' academic decision making and success. A large part of ACF involves learning about policies and advancing new information that can create social change. The tenets of ACF are further discussed in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This study employed a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design. The purpose of this research design was to facilitate the gathering of opinions and lived experiences of HBCU student-athletes who selected or changed their major to analyze the impact of PTD. Furthermore, the lived experiences and perceptions of athletic advisors and athletic administrators balanced the discussion of the importance of PTD on major declaration and the alignment it has to the DOE. A phenomenological design is appropriate when the researcher wants to study a group of participants who have first-hand knowledge of a situation or circumstance (Creswell, 2013).

The population for this study included student athletes associated with two NCAA Division I HBCU member institutions. The number of HBCU student-athletes in the MEAC and SWAC is approximately 10,000 (MEAC, 2018; SWAC, 2018). The number

of athletic advisors and administrators is estimated to be 230 (MEAC, 2018; SWAC, 2018). I selected a random sample in Microsoft Excel of the top five Division I HBCUs in these conferences. Random sampling helped narrow down large populations and allowed for a systematic selection of universities and colleges for participation in the study sample. Once the top five universities were selected, I selected a convenience sample of those universities whose response time was prompt and only required Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval with possible additional documentation by the university for site permission. I employed a purposeful sampling method to select one HBCU because I was acquainted with individuals who worked in that university's athletic department, but by the time I conducted the study the individuals no longer worked at the university. I recruited scholarship student-athletes who were enrolled in an HBCU and or graduated from an HBCU from 2003-present using snowball and purposeful sampling. I recruited athletic advisors and athletic administrators who were employed at an HBCU during 2003-present and had the responsibility of advising/counseling student athletes through communication sent to e-mail addresses retrieved from the university's athletic websites.

The described sampling techniques were the most appropriate for this study design because purposeful and snowball sampling ensured that the participant characteristics defined by the study are retained through targeting a special population (Bernard, 2012). Snowball sampling was focused on a special population in athletics and provided a sample of individuals who brought their lived experiences to the study. The demographic focus was sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the SWAC and MEAC who

had declared their major. The reason for the focus on specific classifications was because according to the NCAA (2018), student athletes must declare their major by the end of their sophomore year. The participants included in the study were eight current and graduated student-athletes and five athletic advisor and athletic administrators. This study was conducted through the combination of sampling techniques and the use of an interview guide (see Bernard, 2012; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

I conducted each individual interview using a researcher developed interview guide. All selected participants understood the meaning of PTD. I used the NoNotes Application to record participants' phone calls. I transcribed each interview and immediately transferred transcripts to a password protected Microsoft Excel sheet that assisted in analyzing data using the first and second coding cycles of the fundamental coding process. Similar to Kniess's (2013) study, I offered incentives. Current and former student-athletes who completed a phone interview received a $10 Amazon eGift card; athletic advisors/administrators received a $15 Amazon eGift card to thank them for their time.

Definitions

Academic progress rate (APR): The APR is a policy that measures NCAA teams' academic progress annually and measures the number of student-athletes who are on scholarships who stay in school and remain eligible each year (Chandler, 2014).

Athletic academic advisors: Athletic academic advisors are focused on ensuring student-athletes stay on track for graduation, PTD, and adequate academic progress (Castle, Ammon, & Myers, 2014).

Conference: The term conference refers to the subdivisions within the NCAA Divisions I, II, and III (NCAA, 2018).

Division I: NCAA Division I provides the most athletic scholarships of all divisions and has a larger number of student-athletes who are a part of the well-known conferences (Cooper, 2016).

Division II: NCAA Division II is the second highest division in the NCAA; it offers limited athletic scholarships and fewer financial resources than Division I (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2017).

Division III: NCAA Division III is the third division in the NCAA; Division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2017).

Eligibility: Eligibility is a process that tracks student-athletes from high school throughout college and audits student-athletes through clearinghouse, academic, and athletic NCAA policies. Student-athletes who meet NCAA policy requirements are allowed to compete in NCAA sports (NCAA, 2018).

Federal graduation rate (FGR): The FGR is a tool used to measure academic success and the graduation rate of students; FGR is reported to the DOE (Huml et al., 2014).

Graduation success rate (GSR): The GSR is a tool used to measure graduating student-athletes on scholarships at NCAA Division I member institutions (Chrabaszcz, 2014).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): HBCUs were implemented to educate African American students who did not have the ability to enroll in predominantly white institutions (PWI; Arroyo & Gasman, 2014).

Member institution: A member institution is a university or college that is a member of the NCAA and abides by NCAA policies (Kane, 2015; NCAA, 2018).

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA): The NCAA is an athletic association that implements rules for member institutions and invests in the lives of many student-athletes (NCAA, 2018).

Power conferences: Power conferences refers to NCAA colleges and universities that produce the most revenue. Power conferences include the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big 10 Conference, Big 12 Conference, Pac-12 Conference, and Southeastern Conference (C. Miller, 2014).

Progress towards degree (PTD): The PTD was implemented to make sure student-athletes complete 40%, 60%, and 80% of their degree after their second, third, and fourth years so they can graduate on track. PTD assists NCAA member institutions' focus on graduation rates (Carter-Francique, Hart, & Cheeks, 2015; Matthew, 2011; Tellez, 2017).

U.S. Department of Education (DOE): The DOE is responsible for ensuring colleges and universities promote excellence in higher education (Huml, Hancock, & Bergman, 2014).

Assumptions

This study was based on several assumptions. The first assumption was that all participants were honest when completing the screening guide, sharing their lived experience, and providing feedback from open-ended questions. Secondly, I assumed that academic advisors/administrators would provide a challenge because their responses may be contrary to the meaning of PTD; PTD is a job policy, which may have influenced administrators to be reluctant to share their contrary views. These assumptions were necessary to adequately assess the impact PTD has on student-athletes' decision making pertaining to degree choice.

Scope and Delimitation

A wide range of research relates to Division I power conferences. There is a lack of research with the Division I HBCU community on the impact of PTD. Division II academic requirements are slightly different than Division I requirements; therefore, no Division II schools were included in this study. Likewise, Division III was not included in the study because member schools do not provide scholarships to athletes. The SWAC and the MEAC are the only Division I HBCU conferences in the NCAA. Division I HBCUs served as the population in this study; I applied delimitations for participants. The sample consisted of athletic advisors and or athletic administrators who are currently or were previously employed at an HBCU from 2003 to present. Furthermore, the sample included male and female former and current scholarship student-athletes who attended or are enrolled at a NCAA Division I HBCU in the academic year of 2003 to present. All participants were 18 years or older. The current student-athlete was a senior, junior, or

sophomore who had already declared a major, or a student-athlete who graduated between 2003-present. All other potential participants were excluded from the study. The delimitations of the participants chosen in this study provided deeper insight of the impact of PTD on student-athletes' decisions to declare or change a major.

Limitations

Limitations are factors in the study outside of the researcher's control. This was a phenomenological study where participants expressed their lived experiences; participants had the option to choose what they wanted to express and did not want to express with this phenomenon. A potential limitations was that current student athletes, athletic advisors, or athletic administrators could be concerned about their privacy and may not have shared their lived experiences. However, I made sure participants felt comfortable and understood their information was confidential. Another limitation in this study was that a few graduate student-athletes had a difficult time recalling information from their college academic experience.

I was a student-athlete at a Division I HBCU over 10 years ago. Later, I worked at an HBCU as a retention specialist in the athletic department. I assisted students by creating study plans, providing tutorials, and ensuring student-athletes were attending class. I excluded my alma mater from the random sample in this study to protect the privacy of the university; however, participants from this university emerged as a result of snowball sampling. I did not allow professional and personal relationships in the HBCU community to impact the results of the study, and I remained on topic by understanding all participants' lived experiences and following the interview guide that

was focused around the purpose of this study. I ensured confidentiality for student-athletes, athletic advisors, and administrators in accordance with existing confidentiality policies in each university's athletic departments.

It was proposed that snowball sampling may have limited the study because it may not have provided a diversified population; however, including random and purposeful sampling at the university level ensured there were at least five HBCUs represented in the sample. There was a diversified population represented in the study. I proposed that athletic advisors and administrators may have been concerned about expressing their truth, posing a potential limitation, but all participants shared their lived experience without concerns. Having more than one university in the sample mitigated this limitation and prevented universities from being singled out.

Significance

The NCAA's (2018) mission was for each student-athlete to graduate and to earn a college degree, so student-athletes could be successful after graduation. This research contributed to filling a gap by providing data about Division I HBCU student-athletes pertaining to the impact of PTD on major selection and change.

Member institutions are required to report to the DOE the number of student-athletes who receive athletic related student aid (NCAA, 2018). Former U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings called for all higher education students to be tracked from initial enrollment to create a better picture of degree completion. Graduation and student success rates are significant to federal policy researchers and policymakers who study higher education, especially when that information is broken down by race, income, and

institutional type (Cook & Pullaro, 2010). The findings from this study provided policymakers more insight on the lived experiences of student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators including the impact of PTD amongst NCAA member institutions associated with the DOE. The results of this study brought meticulous insight from participants who selected or changed their major due to the impact of PTD requirements and emerging themes such as athletic schedule and rigor of program.

The research and findings will promote a social change in the largest intercollegiate athletic association in the United States and may influence the equity in athletics. The awareness garnered by this research will positively impact student-athletes' futures and encourage athletic advisors to enlighten student-athletes on the importance of major selection and change based on life after sports. In addition, it will help athletic advisors, athletic administrators, and NCAA understand the perspective of student-athletes and the impact PTD has on NCAA and DOE metrics and policies.

Summary

The NCAA, one of the largest intercollegiate athletic associations, implements numerous academic policies while keeping student-athletes in mind. Their mission is for student-athletes to be students first and athletes second. This study highlighted NCAA policies and the ideology of PTD for HBCU Division I athletic departments and student-athletes. Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study. Due to a lack of research in the Division I HBCU community, this study provided lived experiences of the impact of PTD on Division I HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators. Previous researchers focused on predominantly White member institutions and the

reasons for student-athletes' major selection. Researchers examined whether student-athletes were advised to choose certain majors.

The ACF provided the mechanism for policy-oriented learning by facilitating an understanding of Division I HBCU participants' lived experiences through the phenomenological approach. The sampling methods were random, convenience, purposeful, and snowball. The limitations, assumptions, and scope of this study were mentioned in Chapter 1 to provide validity and reliability to the study. The focus on the Division I HBCU community in this study fills in a gap needed to provide substantial information to the NCAA related to student-athlete academic success. Chapter 2 provides more detailed information regarding the research strategy, theoretical framework, and key concepts in this study. Chapter 2 also provides background information on studies from the NCAA pertaining to academic reform and student-athletes' major selection.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

PTD legislation impacts student-athletes' futures and creates the notion that athletics take precedence over students' potential career, professional interests, and their ambitions. NCAA Division I student-athletes may select and change majors based on athletics versus academics. Mamerow and Navarro (2014) found that student-athletes are advised into certain majors even if the major is not the student-athletes' choice. Student-athletes' academic success is based on NCAA academic reforms that track the students' progress until graduation. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the impact of PTD on the degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree received by HBCU student-athletes. As a result of academic reform, student-athletes' short-term goal is to remain eligible and meet PTD requirements, an objective that does not take life after sports into consideration.

More research is needed on the impact of PTD on Division I HBCU student-athletes' major selection. This study contributes to the research by providing federal policymakers with the perspective of HBCU student-athletes, athletics advisors, and athletic administrators regarding the impact of PTD on HBCU student-athletes' academic preparedness. The findings will aid policy makers as they consider the effectiveness of, or the need to change, PTD policy.

The NCAA (2018) places importance on the wellbeing of student-athletes on the field, in the classroom, and in life. The NCAA's stated mission is to ensure student-athletes are students first and athletes second. Scholars have consistently documented and

analyzed the relationship between higher education and the NCAA (Terrell, 2012). The main objective of higher education, to ensure all students receive an excellent education, is called into question by numerous NCAA scandals and cases of fraud that impact student-athletes' development (Cox, 2016). Student-athletes should be afforded a quality education that will allow them an opportunity to start a career and contribute to society once their time in higher education is complete (Cox, 2016).

The NCAA instituted a series of academic reforms aimed at achieving higher graduation rates (Cole, 2016). Castle et al. (2014) indicated that these reforms may have encouraged student-athletes to cluster into easier majors. As NCAA graduation rates increased, NCAA policymakers deemed the academic reforms successful. Student-athletes' APR and graduation rate increased tremendously since 2004 when the reforms were implemented; however, scholars claim the rates do not adequately address the deep concerns related to student-athlete preparedness for life after college (Avery et al., 2016).

Some student-athletes competed for universities and graduated but did not develop academically (Davis, & Hairston, 2013). According to Cooper (2016), student-athletes are recruited for their athletic ability, but their academic journey is controlled within the system. Student-athletes must meet the PTD requirements and academic standards set by the NCAA to remain eligible and comply with academic policies (Haslerig, 2017). When individuals and colleges do not meet PTD requirements, they become ineligible for competition, a possible reduction in scholarships, and may lose federal aid (Avery et al., 2016).

A study on the impact of PTD on Division I HBCU student-athletes has the potential to provide insight about the concerns and weaknesses of academic reform policies. Student-athletes would like job opportunities after their athletic career, so major selection is important (Kulics et al., 2015). Such insight will give student-athletes opportunities to be successful in school and career, aligning with higher education expectations (Cooper, 2016). Therefore, this study's purpose is to gain a better understanding of the impact of PTD on the degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree received by student-athletes attending HBCUs. Chapter 2 includes the literature search strategy, theoretical framework, an extensive review of key concepts related to the problem, and a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search spanned 5 years of publications, from 2012-2017; however, the literature review also contains older articles with significant relevance to this study and theoretical framework. An exhaustive search of keywords in EbscoHost provided initial articles related to the topic. Keywords included but were not limited to: *student athletes changing majors, progress towards degree, NCAA, HBCUs, Department of Education (DOE), NCAA Division I academics,* and *academic reforms.* I accessed the journal of sports and human kinetics journal through Walden University's library. The journals highlighted key issues related to this study. Also, a productive Google Scholar search contributed to the literature and background information for this study. I located information that provided substantial insight on NCAA academic reform and student-athletes' experiences related to PTD through the use of keywords *NCAA student-athletes*

and *changing majors*. These keywords, in combination with terms mentioned above, yielded substantive resources for this literature review.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the ACF. The ACF allows for the exploration of different perspectives and lived experiences from stakeholders on the impact of PTD. Such insight will bring awareness and lead to policy improvements. The ACF, developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, is an effective tool to solve a specific societal or organizational problem (Buchli, 2015). According to Sabatier and Weible (2014), those who share the same beliefs can create advocacy coalitions and act upon those beliefs to bring awareness to an issue. Advocacy coalitions are composed of numerous actors such as researchers, policy analysts, social interest advocates, and government officials. The central focus of ACF is policy-oriented learning. The framework is used to receive substantial information for developing a better understanding of a problem or issue (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). According to Sabatier and Weible, policy-oriented learning occurs when coalitions or actors share their perspectives and concerns on a topic to identify a problem within the belief system.

The initial application of ACF was geared more towards environmental and energy policy, but soon extended to different areas such as economic and health policy (Cairney, 2015). The ACF is known for elaborating on complex policy processes in many diversified applications and policy fields. The basis of ACF is policy change over time; change may not happen right away, but the ACF can be used to initiate a policy-oriented learning framework.

The ACF brought clarity to the impact of PTD for Division I HBCU student-athletes and guided the gathering of substantial information to initiate a policy change related to student-athletes' major selection. The first priority in the ACF framework is understanding what is needed to bring about a policy change using a policy-oriented learning process (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). The ACF facilitates a true understanding of coalition members' perspectives that ultimately assists with policy change over time. The advocacy coalition can then develop a method for policy change implementation that will highlight policy objectives and produce a favorable outcome (Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

Coalitions are composed of diverse actors with the same core beliefs who come together to create or improve policies (Buchli, 2015; Sabatier & Weible, 2014). A coalition is formed when all members share a common belief about the issue at hand, regardless of their individual beliefs on other issues (Sabatier & Weible, 2014) The ultimate goal of a coalition is to transfer core beliefs into public policy while compromising on major tenets within the framework of the policy. Coalitions of vested interest do not always agree; when two coalitions cannot agree, a third party known as a policy broker mediates with the goal of bringing the two groups together and facilitating the policy change (Green & Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

Policy-oriented learning comprises lived experiences, feedback, and perspectives from coalitions and individual actors (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). According to Stachowiak (2013), policy change happens and is initiated through actors and by factors outside of the policymaking environment. Another tenent of policy change is coverage over a long period of time (De Bosscher, De Knop, Van Bottenburg, & Shibli, 2006).

Feedback may come from external factors such as public opinion, which can heavily impact policy change by increasing understanding of a belief (Green & Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier & Weible, 2014). The main focal point of policy learning is the ability to change core beliefs or compromise core beliefs for a policy change that will make a positive difference in an organization, association, or government (Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

Improvement in an organization or association begins by understanding the possible risk or concerns within the organization or coalition related to the proposed policy change (Sato, 1999). The ACF guided a study on smoking policy control in Japan (Sato, 1999). Two opposing coalitions, one that promoted smoking over the age of 18 and one that did not, came together to discuss Japan's smoking policy. Each organization held diverse core beliefs on the issue of adult smoking; each organization shared its core beliefs and policies through the policy oriented learning. Although initially each organization's core beliefs were unique, one organization decided to change its secondary beliefs instead of its core beliefs to facilitate a policy change on smoke control (Sato, 1999). After learning about all organizations' core beliefs and policies, the smoking companies that were against smoking thought more deeply about their policies and were able to see and hear other perspectives by using the ACF (Sato, 1999).

Sabatier and Weible (2014) used ACF to examine two advocacy coalitions, the American Air Pollution coalition and the Clean Air and Economic Efficiency coalition. The goal was to make the coalitions aware of and understand their own belief system (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). Both coalitions were willing to hear the perspectives of the other to facilitate a policy change. Meetings, debates, and documented summaries

allowed the two coalitions to express their core beliefs through policy-oriented learning. The coalitions compromised on their secondary belief to reach agreement on the policy change (Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

Three nations, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia, used the ACF to analyze an elite sport policy (De Bosscher et al., 2006). Green and Houlihan (2005) identified growth and change of sporting excellence as the defining problem for elite sport policy. International participation and performance in sports strengthens countries' economic growth (De Bosscher et al., 2006). Therefore, a need existed to process elite sport policy change, analyze each country's insight into the problem, and develop an improved elite sport policy (Green & Houlihan, 2005). The ACF provided an ideal model for this study because the approach occurred over a span of 10-15 years and pertained to how sports policy developed (Green & Houlihan, 2005). The determining factor of the elite sporting process did not evolve; however, use of the ACF brought understanding of the elite sport policy and helped highlight similarities amongst the nations related to the elite sports policy (De Bosscher et al., 2006). Using the ACF, Green and Houlihan (2005) conducted a comparative analysis on conversations between coalitions. The coalitions gained deeper knowledge of everyone's perspective, so difficult topics could be discussed in a policy-oriented learning environment (Green & Houlihan, 2005).

Rationale for the Theoretical Framework

Higher education professionals are held to a standard of ensuring all students are prepared for their career fields after graduation (Haslerig & Navarro, 2016). The academic needs of student-athletes should be examined to prepare students for life after

higher education (Haslerig & Navarro, 2016). Throughout the NCAA's history, policy changes occur to meet the needs of the organization as a whole. Goodyear (2016) studied NCAA structure to gain a broader understanding of the organization's central goals. Academic reform fostered the implementation of PTD with an emphasis on academics first. Academic scandals and frauds, student-athletes choosing majors based on time constraints or simplicity, academic clustering, and student-athletes choosing a major for other reasons than interest drive the need for a coalition to study academic policy changes. The NCAA instituted academic reform in May 2004, partially triggered by the public's perception that the NCAA was not fully committed to its own mission and subsequent criticism that athletics came before academics (Davis & Hairston, 2013). The integration of higher education and athletics are part of the NCAA conversation and, according to Goodyear (2016), more work is needed to highlight continued integration problems. The NCAA is charged with social, moral, and economic decisions that maintain the organization's success (Horton, DeGroot, & Custis, 2015). Research on the impact of PTD will allow the NCAA to make informed decisions in the best interest of their student-athletes and member organizations. The ACF will allow the investigator to provide substantial insight for the NCAA, member institutions, DOE, student-athletes, and athletic administrations.

Stakeholders want to see a change in the student-athlete higher education experience. The ACF is a suitable theory for a study on the perceptions of those stakeholders related to academic reform. The literature indicates an ongoing issue with PTD and student-athlete academic success. A common problem exists within each study

reviewed that points back to a need for new academic reform policies. Goodyear (2016) reviewed previous studies pertaining to academic reforms to see if consistency exists in the academic reforms and to understand the viewpoints revealed by other researchers of the structural changes needed within the NCAA. Goodyear found that while many groups and researchers noted needed changes, none of the studies offered solutions for how change should take place (Goodyear, 2016).

Many actors can develop a coalition to initiate these changes including the community of higher education, student-athletes, athletic administrators, the NCAA, researchers, and the public. Research is a powerful mechanism for change because it allows professionals and peers to debate to initiate a change and can change the perceptions of coalitions, inviting improved processes and policies (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). A need to restructure the NCAA has been mentioned by researchers, but few have offered recommendations on what to change and how change may be accomplished (Goodyear, 2016). Due to the academic state of NCAA Division I student-athletes, it is time that a conversation is initiated that can be lifted to the legislative and congressional level (Horton et al., 2015). While the impact of NCCA academic reform and PTD policy was studied at the conference and division level, and by ethnic group (Bimper, 2014; Wolverton, 2014), no literature examined these same issues in HBCUs. This study fills a gap in the literature related to the impact of PTD on NCAA Division I HBCU student-athletes and their member institutions.

Due to the growth amongst the intercollegiate athletics in the United States, addressing concerns within the NCAA has become difficult (Horton et al., 2015).

Another part of ACF is the opinion of the public, which could be the main factor to initiate major change (Cairney, 2015). The concern of the consistent academic scandals is because different spectrums of the NCAA do not know everyone's standpoint. This leads into ACF and why it is important. A change cannot occur if those stakeholders and important leadership roles do not understand each other's beliefs or perspectives or are willing to adjust beliefs for the greater good of the NCAA (Comeaux, 2015). Many people feel that Congress, needs to get involved with the NCAA pertaining to the moral concerns and academic scandals (Horton et al., 2015). There have been a few NCAA policies that were taken to Congress, but nothing has transpired such as the National Collegiate Athletics Accountability Act, and no progress has been made (Horton et al., 2015). Making policy updates and changes will be significant for the NCAA, athletic advisors, coaches, student-athletes, and DOE. They will impact the direction of the NCAA (Comeaux, 2015). Members of the coalition could also be policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders. There are many researchers who have focus on Academic Reforms in the NCAA.

The NCAA Academic Reform has evolved and changed over years. The biggest change in the Academic Reform happened in 2003 with the thought process that they are making a better experience for student-athletes while integrating higher education amongst athletics. There will be different beliefs amongst the coalition that comes from experiences and perspectives. Each factor of the coalitions can discuss the issues with PTD based on experiences, and, through conversation, it could possibly lead to policy change.

Sometimes policies are implemented and may not work the way they were intended to work. This study will bring awareness to the NCAA, other stakeholders, and could initiate a policy change that will make a huge impact on higher education and the NCAA.

It is important to discuss the academic reform concerns and the direction of the academic reforms amongst the NCAA (Comeaux, 2015). The research questions were given to student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators to receive a better understanding of the impact of PTD. ACF provides a policy-oriented learning environment. The research questions asked are based off of substantial insight from current and former HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators. Receiving insight on lived experiences of student-athletes is a substantial component to this research, has developed a coalition, and created policy-oriented learning.

Literature Related to Key Concepts

Researchers apply both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to study topics of social importance. Studies on student-athletes' academic success include quantitative surveys and questionnaires as well as qualitative investigations into student-athletes' perspectives. Wyatt (2016) used a self-developed survey to investigate the practice of academic clustering and its impact on Division II African American student-athletes' success. The qualitative method afforded the researcher an opportunity to speak with athletes unlike previous studies on academic clustering (Wyatt, 2016). Kelly (2012) used a qualitative method that incorporated unstructured interviews with African American football and basketball players. Student-athletes from a PAC-10 Division I west coast

university participated in the study on major selection, completion of major, and student-athletes' expectations from their majors (Kelly, 2012). Foster and Huml (2017) sent surveys to Division I, II, and III institutions to record academic majors.

Navarro (2015) demonstrated that athletes who focused on athletics over academics had difficulty exploring majors aligned with their career paths. Kulics et al. (2015) used a survey to highlight the impact of PTD on eligibility, major selection, and even enrollment in summer school. Kulic et al.'s study consisted of midwest universities that were members of the Football Championship Subdivision (FBS). Data collection happened in team meetings in order to receive verbal consent to protect participants' privacy. One of the questions on the survey asked how participants felt about the increase in PTD (Kulics et al., 2015). The participants had positive and negative views. The positive view is participants felt like it kept them on track to graduate and the negative view it made them have anxiety to select their major too early.

Academic reforms such as PTD have given rise to an increase in collected data from athletic websites, Internet team rosters, and media guides to track majors, identify clustering, and reveal academic concerns (Severns, 2017). NCAA member institutions must be careful with the data they release, raising a concern for researchers who want to learn about student-athletes' major selections. Goodson (2015) did not know if media guides would be available or accurate to provide data for his study. Goodson first consulted the media guide and later contacted the school's sports information director for additional information on student-athletes attending North Carolina HBCUs during their junior or senior year. Goodson modified the study to include all academic years when he

was unable to retrieve enough information on his original target population. Eventually, Goodson utilized a published research tool that consisted of the GOALS Questionnaires that student-athletes take annually to learn about academic clustering and targeted major selection among student-athletes in the MEAC and CIAA Division II conferences.

Cox (2016) used a quantitative approach to compare major choice and occupation of Midwest Division I student-athletes (Cox, 2016). Cox collected data from athletic websites based on Senior student-athletes' cohort year (2009-2015) to view patterns. Cox researched student-athletes' career field interests to ascertain if their selected majors aligned with their desired career. Stokowski, Rode, and Hardin (2016) developed an online questionnaire for academic advisors in power conferences.

Navarro (2015) looked at how academic affairs offices best assist student-athletes with their major and career choices. Navarro's study was limited to one Division I university, so the findings did not provide a good representation of all Division I academic affairs offices.

Arroyo and Gasman (2014) employed a qualitative methodology, conducting interviews with students, faculty members, and administrators in an HBCU community. The findings revealed that HBCU students are successful when they experience help from faculty.

Gasman and Commodore (2014) revealed that research topics related to data-driven policies studied with a qualitative approach can provide substantial insight for policy change that betters the institution and helps students achieve their goals (Gasman & Commodore, 2014). Kneiss (2013) gave participants an incentive for participating in

focus groups on the subject of underrepresented students. Both Gasman and Commodore (2014) and Kniess (2013) highlighted the importance of studying HBCU student-athletes' experience so that HBCU schools can become better and create an enhanced educational experience for all students, especially those who are student-athletes.

The athletic department is responsible for student-athletes' academic and athletic success. Additionally, coaches and advisors impact student-athletes' major selection. Graduation rates for Division I HBCU student-athletes are lower compared to other Division I member institutions. More studies are needed in underrepresented conferences to fully understand the impact of NCAA academic reform policies (Wyatt, 2016). Progress Toward Degree requires that student-athletes meet certain conditions to maintain their eligibility to participate. The practice of choosing and changing majors based on athletic priority concerns NCAA member institutions, but most research on the topic was conducted in higher level Division I conferences.

A need exists to understand how PTD impacts student-athletes' academic decision making processes at Division I HBCU member institutions. In the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program (CITI) Program, it highlighted respect for persons, and it is important to respect participants' time. Giving an incentive helps express respect of time (Head, 2009) and shows participants a token of appreciation for their time and commitment (Doyle, 2016). Kneiss (2013) offered incentives to participants to thank them for participating in the study. Incentives are becoming more common than ever before because they help increase participation, which can increase validity in the study (Head, 2009). In giving incentives, participants will understand how valuable their lived experiences are in a phenomenon (Head, 2009). This study will give its participants incentives.

This study employs a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach. The purpose of the study was to extract the lived experiences of student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators about the impact of PTD on student-athletes' major selection. Phenomenology is concerned with the way individuals feels about a topic and/or a phenomenon and gives individuals the ability to express themselves to reveal the meanings they attach to the phenomenon (Sage, 2019). While other researchers used static data from media guides and Internet rosters to track major selection and change, or to understand the impact of PTD, this study's phenomenological approach may provide additional, substantial insight on the major selection phenomenon. Data collection will consist of interviews with participants to gain personal experiences. The phenomenological research tradition allows the investigator to reflect on others' experiences through the process of interviews, transcription, and analysis of live data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). I utilized random, convenience, snowball, and purposeful sampling methods to identify participants who were knowledgeable about the topic of student-athlete major selection and PTD. I contacted selected Division I HBCUs informing them about the study. Data collection was commenced upon approval from Walden University's IRB and the IRBs from each selected school. Participant names are not linked to their individual schools; all participants were from NCAA Division I HBCU member institutions.

Graduation Rates

Early NCAA academic policies focused on student-athletes' continuing eligibility; academic reforms later placed the emphasis on progress toward graduation

(Matthew, 2011). Member institutions increased graduation rates, demonstrating to the NCAA that schools take education seriously (Castle et al., 2014). The NCAA noted this increase in graduation among Division I student-athletes (Wolverton, 2014). For example, between the years 1998 and 2006, the University of Alabama increased its graduation rate from 39% to 73%. The University of Minnesota increased its graduation rate from 41% to 75%, and the University of Georgia increased its graduation rate from 45% to 82%. According to Davis and Hairston (2013), misleading graduation rates may hide issues that are beyond the scope of academic reform. Critics of the instated reforms questioned the purpose of increasing the academic standards if student-athletes are going into academic programs that do not market their skills or provide a meaningful education (Davis & Hairston, 2013).

Some universities developed a systematic approach to meet NCAA academic requirements, increase graduation rates, and improve Annual Progress Rate scores. For example, per team scores increased from 2004-2005 to 2013-2014 and the GSR increased by 30 points (Avery et al., 2016). According to Avery et al. (2016), these numbers cover the deep issues related to graduation rate. Even though rates increased, there remains no clarity on student-athletes' career success after graduation.

In Cox's (2016) study of Division I Midwest Conference schools from 2009-2015, student-athletes were examined on preparation for life after sports and if they chose majors based off of academics or athletics. The results showed that compared to the general population, student-athletes are not being prepared for life after sports. Athletics is a main priority amongst the athletic department and student-athletes. Athletic

departments focus on graduation requirements rather than life after sports preparation (Cox, 2016).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Edwin B. Henderson, an HBCU leader, helped create the Black Athletic Conference in 1906 (Cooper et al., 2014). The Black Athletic Conference was called the Inter-Scholastic Athletic Association of the Middle Atlantic State (ISSA) and helped unify HBCUs. During this time, African American student-athletes could not participate in the NCAA (Cooper et al., 2014). HBCUs' primary goal was to develop African American student-athletes and place them in an environment where they could embrace their Black culture. This environment was created to support students and create a family atmosphere (Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Cooper & Dougherty, 2015). HBCUs worked with what they had to ensure a great experience for Black student-athletes athletically and academically (Cooper et al., 2014).

HBCUs are unique in their mission and culture (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). The main mission of HBCUs is to provide quality education for African Americans (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). HBCUs are known for traditional African American moral principles and valuing the African American culture (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). HBCUs place great importance on facilitating the progress of African Americans. Arroyo and Gasman (2014) found that students feel supported at HBCUs and choose HBCUs over historically White colleges and universities (HWCU) because of the cultural impact HBCUs make (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). HBCUs provide a pathway for African American students to excel and progress athletically and academically (Comeaux, 2015). The foundation of HBCUs is to

be focused on students and their success; while HBCUs' original purpose focused on African Americans, today HBCUs include a diverse population with rich cultural and academic experiences (Gasman & Commodore, 2014).

HBCUs presidents feel they do not have many resources, but they tend to use what they have to be successful (Gasman & Commodore, 2014). HBCU athletic administrators and coaching staff believe that NCAA academic reforms and the APR negatively impact HBCUs (Parker, 2017). Institutions that have the resources they need and the monetary advantage to provide scholarship money are in the top echelon of schools in terms of athletic revenue and competitive standing (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015). The NCAA gave HBCUs more time to comply with the new academic policies because they are considered low resource institutions (LRI) (Goodson, 2015; Parker, 2017).

HBCUs are underrepresented in the NCAA Division I; the majority of HBCUs fall into the Division II category because schools are grouped by their ability to provide scholarships for student-athletes (Comeaux, 2015; Sanderson & Siegfried, 2017). Most Division I member institutions are HWCUs (Cooper, 2016). Twenty-four of the 105 HBCUs compete in Division I, and their resources are at a disadvantage to HWCUs (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015). Two Division I FCS conferences–the MEAC and the SWAC–include HBCU member institutions; the conferences' mission is to establish a meaningful education for Black athletes (Cheeks & Crowley, 2015; Cooper et al., 2014).

According to Cooper et al. (2014) and Scott (2017) there are 105 HBCUS in the US and Virgin Islands; HBCUs struggle to generate funds and other resources (Cooper et

al., 2014; Scott, 2017). HBCUs receive fewer resources and monetary support than HWCUs (Cooper et al., 2014). The DOE rankings show that HBCUs have the smallest amount of operating dollars in their athletic departments (Cooper et al., 2014). HBCUs face many challenges and inequity within the NCAA and often get penalized for their student-athletes' academic performance (Cooper et al., 2014). In an effort to meet the NCAA academic standards, HBCUs contacted the committee that established the academic rules to request a search for funds to give student-athletes the resources they need (Cooper et al., 2014; Reynolds et al., 2012). The HBCU committee was concerned that the needs and opinions of the HBCU community were ignored (Stuart, 2012). During this time, a member of the Division I board of directors pushed for HBCUs to receive the needed financial assistance to meet the new standards (Stuart, 2012).

The HBCU has experienced a consistent decrease in APR rates and increased penalties as a result (Cheeks & Crowley, 2015). HBCUs' initial admissions data usually highlight students who enroll in college with low test scores and weak academics (Goodson, 2015). According to NCAA data, the GSR is below 50 at 11 MEAC and 21 SWAC college teams; 12 HBCUs had academic penalties during the 2015-2016 academic year (Parker, 2017). In 2016-2017, seven HBCU teams were ineligible for post-season play; only one other non-HBCU university was not eligible (Parker, 2017). In 2014-2015, eight HBCU teams were penalized due to APR rates and scores (Cheeks & Crowley, 2015). There is a lack of research regarding HBCU student-athletes' perspectives of low graduation rates at HBCUs and the impact PTD requirements on student-athletes' academic success (Goodson, 2015; Parker, 2017). A study of Division I

HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators' perceptions and lived experiences with PTD may provide new insight that will improve HBCU standings within the NCAA (Gasman & Commodore, 2014).

African American Student-Athletes and Historically Black Colleges and Universities

African American student-athletes at HBCUs have higher educational goals than African American student-athletes at predominately white institutions (PWI) (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015). Black student-athletes like the social opportunities and campus environment offered at HBCUs (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015). The NCAA conducted a study in the 1980s in order to examine Black and non-black student-athletes' experiences at HBCUs and PWIs. However, Carter-Francique et al. (2015) demonstrated that African American student-athletes' social support at PWIs was lacking, affecting their institutional experience. At HBCUs, student-athletes are able to participate in academic activities that bring purpose to their major (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015). Differences exist between the academic experiences of African American and non-African American students (Cooper et al., 2017). A large gap exists between graduation rates of African American and Caucasian students (Davis & Hairston, 2013).

Public perception of African American student-athletes is that they are not academically successful and have low grade point averages (GPA; Carter-Francique et al., 2015). In Fall 2006, an NCAA graduation report showed the highest graduation rates for student-athletes, but when broken down into demographics, African American student-athletes had a 67% GSR and White Student-athletes had 86% (Carter-Francique et al., 2015). In the public and educational arena, HBCUs are known for low graduation

rates; however, research has shown that HBCUs provide quality education (Gasman & Commodore, 2014). Division I HBCU conferences have the lowest APRs, but also lack resources compared to other big conferences (Cooper, Cavil, & Cheeks, 2014; Davis & Hairston, 2013). In 2011, 33 out of 103 HBCU teams were penalized for low APR (Davis & Hairston, 2013). The number of bans on HBCU schools also differs (Davis & Hairston, 2013). Between 1998 and 2013, 29 HBCUS were placed on probation, and 20 HBCUS were placed on warning (Cooper et al., 2014). Four HBCUs lost accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), resulting in a negative impact and loss of federal aid (Cooper et al., 2014). Fifty percent of HBCUs received penalties; in the 2015-2016 academic year, the SWAC received a total of 11 penalties and the MEAC received a total of two penalties that all resulted in postseason ineligibility (NCAA, 2018).

Factors Affecting Student-Athletes' Academic Success

Many factors influence student-athletes' academic success. Major selection is only one of the issues that affects student-athletes' future following their postsecondary sports career. Student-athletes must also contend with a level of preparedness for the rigors of higher education and conflicts of time for academic pursuits.

Academic under-preparedness. Colleges and universities know their status is impacted by student-athletes who do not graduate, but admission policies remain at the discretion of each institution (Rost, 2015). Some schools incorporate special admission waivers for student-athletes. Rost (2015) found that 77 of 92 of the institutions studied distributed admission waivers for student-athletes (Rost, 2015). Special admission

waivers allow underprepared student-athletes admission who are immediately affected by NCAA initial eligibility policies. Rost's findings suggest that the retention and graduation rates for student-athletes may be tied to an issue of under-preparedness for the rigors of college academics.

According to Navarro (2015), there is a need for higher education professional development within NCAA athletic departments and support services. The impact advisors have on student-athletes means it is important that advisors receive the skill sets necessary to positively impact student-athletes (Gerlach, 2017). National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes (N4A) are advisors specifically trained for student-athletes (Gerlach, 2017). Student-athletes must complete a certain amount of hours in study hall per week and, in some cases, coaches also mandate student-athletes to meet with their advisors multiple times a week (Gerlach, 2017). Students who have more academic support services have higher graduation rates than students with limited academic support services (Rost, 2015). Gerlach (2017) discovered that advisors' perceptions of coaches were that coaches placed students' needs first. Rankin et al. (2016) found that student-athletes who work alongside athletic administrators show more academic success and receive more from the college environment toward academic success.

Available time for academic pursuits. Student-athletes' time constraints limit their opportunities to focus on academics (Rost, 2015). It is important to know how student-athletes appropriate time for various activities so coaches and administrators can implement rules based on facts, maybe even adjusting policies (Provencio, 2016).

Student-athletes are authorized to spend 20 hours per week in the athletic arena; however, they often go over that time (Kane, 2015). Student-athletes often spend at least 40 hours per week towards athletics (D'Aquila & Rudolph, 2014; Matthew, 2011; McCarty, 2014). Grimit (2014) found that student athletes at South Dakota State University spent 20 plus hours pertaining to athletics; Provencio revealed that Division I student-athletes spend 34 hours per week on athletics. Division I FBS football players spent 42 hours per week related to athletics. Also, the softball players spent 30 hours per week on athletics (Provencio, 2016).

Student-athletes have many obligations such as team meetings, study hall, community service events, strength and conditioning, and film review (Severns, 2017; Terrell, 2012). Stress factors include misalignment of class and sport schedules (Cosh & Tully, 2014). Student-athletes' time commitments impact major choice for the majority of student-athletes (Navarro, 2015; Tellez, 2017). One student-athlete knew his major had nothing to do with his career aspiration but felt he would meet eligibility requirements because of minimum time requirements involved with his major. Student-athletes' energy level can play a role in their interest in academics because it leaves no room for academic clubs and organizations (Terrell, 2012). When student-athletes know the benefit of choosing a major of interest, they may anticipate enjoying a career after their sports careers end (Cox, 2016).

Higher education institutions in the United States and within the NCAA value a positive learning environment for each student (Cooper, 2016) despite the fact that demographic data suggest otherwise. When coaches stick to the NCAA 20-hour per week

rule, student-athletes can spend more time working on their academics (Cooper, 2016). Presidents and athletic directors can serve as an accountability measure for coaches to ensure rules are upheld (Cooper, 2016).

National Collegiate Athletic Association

The NCAA, formerly the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS), is a private association established in 1910 for the purpose of designing and enforcing rules for athletic competition (Kane, 2015; Terrell, 2012). Due to the number of fatal injuries in collegiate sports during the early 1900s, President Theodore Roosevelt summoned White House representatives to assess and address the issue in collegiate sports (Goodyear, 2016; Horton et al., 2015; Sanders & Siegfried, 2017). Roosevelt's goal was to create rules that would decrease the number of fatal injuries and violence that occurred within football (Horton et al., 2015; Sanders & Siegfried, 2017). Roosevelt formed the IAAUS with 62 other delegates from colleges around the nation (Sanders & Siegfried, 2017). They established a committee to enforce rules and guidelines such as limiting players' eligibility to four years (Sanders & Siegfried, 2017). The Supreme Court deemed the NCAA a private actor, so the organization is not guided by federal agencies mandated by the Constitution (Goodyear, 2016).

The foundation of the NCAA is based on equality, fairness, and competition within member institutions (Cooper et al., 2017). Member institutions are universities or colleges with athletic programs governed by the NCAA. The NCAA president and governing body created policies that mandated member institutions to provide a better athletic experience (Davis & Hairston, 2013; Haslerig, 2017). Currently, regularly

scheduled meetings between presidents and chancellors improve the student-athletes' academic experience within each of the three divisions. In 1991, university presidents became the overseers of athletics due to concerns over student-athletes' academic integrity (Chandler, 2014). In the past, presidents of universities enforced policies to create a positive environment for intercollegiate athletics; however, the NCAA took control of policy enforcement when presidents were unable to maintain order in sporting competitions (Goodyear, 2016). Eventually presidents noticed the increase of revenue that the NCAA accumulated and came together to play a role in the governing body of the NCAA (Goodyear, 2016). The presidents also wanted athletic directors to be in charge of athletics due to the vast scope of the business and academic integrity concerns within athletic departments (Chandler, 2014). Because the NCAA continues to expand in both member institutions as well as the number of student-athletes, it is imperative that the NCAA's administrative decision makers maintain integrity (Cooper et al., 2017). The academic performance policies committee is comprised of two university chancellors or presidents, a faculty athletic representative, one director of athletics, one senior woman administrator, and a conference administrator (Chrabaszcz, 2014).

The NCAA is comprised of legislative bodies and an executive committee that gives organizational oversight. The executive committee is led by an eleven-member board of governors (Goodyear, 2016) and President Mark Emmert. Member representatives assist with the proposals of policies and decide which policies are adopted (NCAA, 2018). President Emmert stated, "The legislation and policies that are implemented are about the continuation of higher education and strive to make the

academic experience better for student-athletes and to continue to value the academic progress" (NCAA, 2018, 1). Collegiate sports were envisioned as a mirror of higher education that was a part of the higher education experience (Gayles, 2015; Goodyear, 2016). After focusing on implementing rules, the mission of the NCAA became the academic and athletic development of student-athletes (Snyder, 2015). The wellbeing of all student-athletes is significant to the NCAA on the field, in the classroom, and in life (NCAA, 2018). Student-athletes benefit when they have the academic experience as well as the athletic experience (Kane, 2015).

The governance structure of the NCAA includes conferences, member institutions, and student-athletes who all play a major role in the success of the NCAA (NCAA, 2018). In 1911, 95 members oversaw college athletics (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2017). Currently, the NCAA is made up of 1,123 colleges and universities, with 1,000 active members and 346 Division I college or university member institutions (Kane, 2015; NCAA, 2018). The NCAA created Divisions I, II, and III in 1973 (Gerlach, 2017; Gould, Wong, & Weitz, 2014; Haslerig, 2017; Sanderson & Siegfried, 2017; Tellez, 2017;). Each division within the NCAA is based on the universities' ability to provide for student-athletes while they are participating in athletics (Haslerig, 2017; Kane, 2015). Division III schools do not provide athletic scholarships (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2017). Division I and II both offer athletic scholarships; however, Division II athletic programs do not possess the capacity to provide as many athletic scholarships as Division I programs, thus explaining why there is a distinct difference in the level of competition between Division I and II in the athletic arena (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2017). Division I

member institutions provide more financial support for athletes than Divisions II and III combined (Kane, 2015). The known power conferences in Division I include Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten Conference (Big 10), Big Twelve Conference (Big 12), and Southeastern Conference (SEC) (Kane, 2015; Miller, 2014).

Division I member institutions are the well-known programs that produce the most revenues and are also known for prioritizing athletics over academics (Cooper, 2016). According to Chandler (2014), the higher-level conferences are well-known conferences that can increase university revenue, thus explaining why many universities try to reclassify into the higher-level conferences. Division I is divided into Division I-A (FBS), Division I–AA Football Championship Sub-Division (FCS), and Division I-AAA- the Non- Football Subdivision (Gerlach, 2017; Gould et al., 2014). Division I-A (FBS) consists of the highest-level conferences (Chandler, 2014; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). Sixteen schools reclassified to the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). Each conference must abide by NCAA bylaws, but they have autonomy and flexibility in how they manage their revenue and university policies provided the policies to meet NCAA guidelines (Kane, 2015).

The public's perception that the NCAA was not fully committed to its own mission partially triggered academic reform in May 2004 (Davis & Hairston, 2013). Academic reform began in 1980. Thus, for over 38 years, research has resulted in the innovative findings that currently assist with the implementation of academic reform today (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). Many researchers focus on academic clustering at the Division I and the higher level conferences but little is

known about the academic concerns amongst the lower conferences in Division I, II, and III schools (Wyatt, 2016). Researchers collected data from athletic websites, Internet team rosters, and media guides in order to track majors, identify clustering, and academic concerns (Severns, 2017). According to Goodson (2015) and Kirby (2017), no qualitative data exists on this topic to provide insight on why student-athletes choose their major in Division I lower conferences. However, similar studies provide insight from student-athletes and athletic administrators and provide lived experiences that can possibly promote change.

Academic Reforms

Due to academic concerns, NCAA implemented policies in order to protect the student-athlete and the NCAA mission (Hazelbaker, 2015; McCarty, 2014). According to Southall (2014), the Collegiate Model of Athletics began its rebranding process in 2003 under the leadership of the late NCAA President Myles Brand. It was here that the focus of the NCAA became student-athlete academic success and success in life. The purpose of the model was to show how the NCAA was integrating athletics with academics. The model was initiated due to the care and concern for NCAA reputation, the public view and negative publicity regarding the academic performance of student-athletes (Southall, 2014). In response to criticism and the public perception that academic values had become inferior to athletic interests, the NCAA enacted what would become the first in a series of academic reform initiatives (Davis & Hairston, 2013).

The driving force of the NCAA is that student-athletes who are a part of intercollegiate athletics are a part of the higher education experience (Hosick & Sproull,

2012). However, within the divisions and conferences, concerns abound about student-athletes' academic performance and educational experience (Cooper et al., 2017).

In 1990, the DOE instituted the Student Right to Know Act (SRTKA), requiring universities to report their graduation rates publicly (Huml et al., 2014). The NCAA agreed to make student-athletes' graduation rates available in compliance with the federal mandate (Southall, 2014). The FGR is the method for calculating graduation rate and is a success measure for universities and colleges (Chrabaszcz, 2014). By law, universities must report their FGR for student-athletes and the regular student body, especially if they receive federal funds (Avery et al., 2016; Chrabaszcz, 2014). Universities and colleges must send an annual report to the DOE that comprises graduation rates of scholarship athletes classified by type of sport, race, ethnicity, and gender (Chrabaszcz, 2014). The federal government utilizes a metric of a six-year cohort for schools that use federal aid (Avery et al., 2016; Chrabaszcz, 2014). The percentage is calculated for full-time freshmen who graduate within six years and stay at the same institution (Chrabaszcz, 2014; Goodson, 2015; Kelly, 2012; Southall, 2014). Student-athletes are only able to compete in a sport for four years (Goodson, 2015). If any student graduates after the six year mark, withdraws from the institution, or transfers, the student cannot be counted as a graduating student from that institution (Chrabaszcz, 2014). The FGR helps in comparing student-athletes and the regular student body, but it is not an accurate measure for transfer students, as they are not counted in the graduation rate (Southall, 2014).

The NCAA version of FGR is the GSR (Avery et al., 2016; Gayles, 2015; Wolverton, 2014). The NCAA claims that the FGR does not consider the dynamics of

student-athletes. In result, the academic measures are an inaccurate representation of actual student-athlete graduation rates (Chrabaszcz, 2014). Thus, the NCAA created the metric GSR and measures it by a six-year consistent cohort (Chrabaszcz, 2014; Parker, 2017; Southall, 2014). The GSR was implemented to track all student-athletes including transfer student-athletes (Chrabaszcz & Wolverton, 2014). There is no penalty within the GSR to transfer as long as student-athletes leave in good academic standing and are eligible to play (Wolverton, 2014). The GSR is a more accurate rate than the FGR because the FGR underestimates the total number of students who graduate from NCAA member institutions (Wolverton, 2014).

The NCAA measures student-athlete academic success by eligibility status and graduation rate as calculated by the GSR (McCarty, 2014). In 2003, the NCAA implemented the APR and GSR to increase academic efforts at member institutions (Terrell, 2012). Presidents and chancellors from member institutions supported the GSR and claimed it was a more accurate measure of graduation rates. The Academic Performance Program (APP) was introduced in 2004 with increased PTD requirements to hold institutions accountable for student-athlete graduation rates (Wolverton, 2014). The purpose of increasing PTD percentages was to also increase student-athlete graduation rates (Terrell, 2012).

A formal hearing in 2013 highlighted stakeholders' concerns about the NCAA's new academic reforms. Mark Emmert, NCAA president, led the discussion (Southall, 2014). President Emmert focused on the mission of the NCAA and stated, "student-athletes are receiving a great and meaningful educational process" (Southall, 2014, p.10).

During the hearing, President Emmert did not focus on academic concerns, but instead focused on success stories. He discussed the increased initial eligibility requirements, mandatory progress toward degree requirements as well as APRs and GSRs (Southall, 2014). The PTD requirements mandate that student-athletes must complete 40% of their degree at the end of their second year and 20% each year after to remain eligible based on the PTD 40-60-80 measure (Carter-Francique et al., 2015). The PTD requirements act as the accountability measure amongst member institutions so that student-athletes can have a paramount experience (Terrell, 2012). The NCAA president stated that more student-athletes are receiving their college degrees and it is a direct result of the academic reforms that are in place.

The academic standards within the NCAA consist of initial eligibility rules, the number of times students can participate in athletics per week or daily, PTD, and APR (Davis & Hairston, 2013). Setting standards must come from the member institutions, and institutions must set the tone for the amount of time students spend toward athletics (Davis & Hairston, 2013; Matthew, 2011). All member institutions within the NCAA must follow the regulations set by the NCAA and enforce all policies to uphold the NCAA mission (Kane, 2015). The NCAA added academic support for student-athletes. Therefore, member institutions are permitted to give students the resources they need to succeed in the classroom. (Davis & Hairston, 2013).

Progress Toward Degree

PTD is a requirement to keep student-athletes on track for graduation (NCAA, 2018). PTD consists of minimum grade point average, annual and term-by-term credit

hour requirements, and percentage of degree requirements (NCAA, 2018). If the requirements are not met, student-athletes are deemed ineligible to participate in sports (Haslerig, 2017; NCAA, 2018). The PTD was initially a 25-50-75 percentage towards degree, and studies show that this gave student-athletes time to explore majors during their freshmen and sophomore years (Terrell, 2012). However, in Fall 2003, PTD increased from 25-50-75 to 40-60-80 percentage towards degree (Terrell, 2012). According to Bollig (as cited in Terrell, 2012), the NCAA bylaw pertaining to the 25-50-75 percentage rule required student-athletes to complete 25% of their degree by the beginning of their third year, 50% by the beginning of the fourth year, and 75% by the fifth year. The 40-60-80 percentage rule was established to encourage student-athletes to complete their degree on time (Terrell, 2012). PTD requires student-athletes to complete 40% of their degree by the beginning of their third year, 60% in the fourth year, and 80% before their final competition to remain eligible for participation (Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Matthew, 2011; Tellez, 2017). Student-athletes should have 40% of their degree completed by the end of their first four semesters (Severns, 2017). After the first four semesters, an additional 20% of the degree should be completed each academic year (Severns, 2017). Student-athletes do not have many options when it comes to their academic career (Davis & Hairston, 2013). If a student-athlete desires a career change, the student cannot simply change majors due to the impact of PTD because the percentage of degree completion will not be met (Terrell, 2012).

The NCAA considers maintaining eligibility a part of academic success (Carter-Francique et al., 2015). Eligibility also includes meeting PTD requirements and

graduation (Carter-Francique et al., 2015). The change in the initial percentages of PTD came about because of student-athletes' low graduation rates (Terrell, 2012). Low graduation rates occurred with the 20-50-75 rule as student-athletes took a majority of elective courses versus required degree courses (Wolverton, 2007). As a result, the NCAA implemented APR, and PTD increased to 40-60-80 percentage towards degree (Avery et al., 2016; Cole, 2016; NCAA, 2018; Terrell, 2012). The APR was an excellent monitoring system, but the increase in PTD interfered with student-athletes' academic decisions (Terrell, 2012).

The NCAA releases to the public an annual review of member institutions' APR, GSR, and retention scores (Chandler, 2014). The APR and GSR help NCAA member institutions monitor student-athlete progress towards graduation (Chandler, 2014). If member institutions do not meet the APR requirement, their teams are penalized; teams cannot compete in championship games and could lose scholarship money and practice time (Avery et al., 2016; Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Chandler, 2014; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). The formula for APR is a team's total points divided by possible points and multiplied by 1,000 (Chrabaszcz, 2014; Comeaux, 2015). Individual teams must earn a minimum of 900 points for APR, and an average 925 points over two years–the equivalent of a 50% graduation rate (Chandler, 2014; Cole, 2016; Huml et al., 2014; McCarty, 2014). The maximum score a team can achieve is 1,000 points; points are based on graduation rates, retention of scholarship student athletes, and eligibility (Avery et al., 2016; Chrabaszcz, 2014; Cox, 2016).

APRs are reported at the end of the academic year, normally in the month of May (Avery et al., 2016). Student-athletes earn points for remaining in school each year and earn one point for remaining eligible (Avery et al., 2016; Chrabaszcz, 2014; Cole, 2016; Parker, 2017). The APR gives coaches and athletic administrators an overall view of how students are doing pertaining to PTD (Chrabaszcz, 2014; Provencio, 2016). The APR is measured each academic term for each Division I team (Cox, 2016). If student-athletes get off track at the end of one term, the monitoring of APR per term gives them a chance to get back on track with PTD (Chrabaszcz, 2014). Transfer student-athletes who are ineligible or indigenous student-athletes who are ineligible lower the score (Chrabaszcz, 2014). APRs are only calculated for student-athletes who receive athletic financial aid (Avery et al., 2016; Chrabaszcz, 2014; McCarty, 2014). Student-athletes who receive financial aid are significant members of each team in that any student-athlete who does not graduate will affect their team's APR (Chandler, 2014).

Policymakers believed increasing PTD requirements would also increase graduation rates, and more student-athletes would complete their degree within six years (Wolverton, 2007). Moreover, NCAA administrators believed the new requirements would make student-athletes put academics first (Wolverton, 2007). The NCAA's initial mission is for student-athletes to focus on academics first and athletics second; however, the increase in PTD requirements had an opposite effect for many student-athletes (Terrell, 2012).

Well-known NCAA member institutions have lately been the targets of academic scandals (Ganim, 2015; Grantham, 2015; Wolverton, 2015). According to Wolverton

(2015), the tight rules of the NCAA academic standards have caused an increase in academic violations because of student-athletes' need to remain eligible. Academic fraud increased to the point that now the NCAA allowed member institutions to help with academic fraud cases; if the task becomes too difficult, the NCAA will step in with an investigation (Gerlach, 2017). Universities now must create their own academic policies for the general student population as well to maintain the school's academic integrity (Gerlach, 2017). The largest recorded scandals occurred at the University of North Carolina and Syracuse University (Grantham, 2015). A total of 32 academic scandals occurred in member institutions from 1952-2010 (Grantham, 2015).

Smith and Willingham (2015) and Maricocchi (2017) highlighted that eligibility concerns influenced the way many universities try to beat the NCAA academic reform system. Cole cited that University of North Carolina Chapel Hill student-athletes were cheated out of an education as a result of academic scandals. Those who help student-athletes beat the system devalue student-athletes' education (Cole, 2016). Academic fraud cases exist within the NCAA; examples include athletic advisors steering student-athletes into easier majors and even creating courses that do not involve learning (Cole, 2016). Universities and colleges created remedial courses to encourage student-athlete success, but did not call the courses remedial as that would have affected student-athletes' eligibility (Cole, 2016; Cox, 2016). Member institutions acted upon academic fraud to keep the student-athletes and the institution from being penalized (Cole, 2016). Policy implementation was designed to help decrease misconduct or academic fraud (Gerlach, 2017). The scandal at the University of North Carolina and many other

universities constitute serious concerns for the NCAA, leading the organization to put systems into place to guard against future cases of fraud; however, more cheating scandals may occur as institutions work to meet the new requirements and keep student-athletes eligible (Cole, 2016).

Public perception as a result of recent scandals and fraud is that schools focus on winning over academics which, in turn, impacts student-athletes' opportunity to receive a quality higher education (Cox, 2016). Selecting easy majors downgrades the purpose of higher education and the mission of the NCAA (Cox, 2016). The betterment of society is threatened if the NCAA, member institutions or student-athletes prioritize athletics over academics (Cox, 2016).

The ideology of PTD is not a representation of higher education standards (Kulics et al., 2015). The NCAA requires student-athletes to choose their major by their sophomore year. This policy makes students feel like they are not able to explore majors that will align with their career aspirations (Navarro, 2015). Student-athletes have different circumstances pertaining to PTD. Some student-athletes need remedial courses in college and the PTD does not allow remedial courses within the percentages because such courses do not count toward students' degrees (Wolverton, 2007). Transfer students must be eligible at their previous college to transfer with an eligible status, and must meet specific requirements of PTD (NCAA, 2018). Community college transfer students are affected by the 40-60-80 rule because the rule makes remaining academically eligible a challenge; most community college transfers are not declared upon arrival at a member institution (Severns, 2017). Summer school is an option to meet PTD requirements as it

allows student-athletes time to complete additional credit hours to meet required percentages towards a degree (Kulics et al., 2015). More studies are needed to understand student-athletes' perceptions about eligibility and NCAA policies that may increase student-athletes' well-being (Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2013).

Student-athletes experience more stress factors and other issues than non-athletes (Gerlach, 2017; Tellez, 2017). Student-athletes are at a disadvantage; however, the public feels that student-athletes have a better position in college than the regular student body (Gerlach, 2017). The NCAA academic reform was established for continued student-athlete success and an increase in graduation rates. The NCAA and member institutions place importance on closing the gap between student-athletes and non-athletes (Cox, 2016). Student-athletes' graduation rates are higher than the general student population (Gayles, 2015; Reynolds, Fisher, & Cavil, 2012; Routon & Walker, 2015). The NCAA wanted to improve academic success and graduation rates within their member institutions (Kulics et al., 2015). According to Gayles (2015), the NCAA was concerned that student-athletes were receiving the same educational experience as the general student body. Rost expressed concern that student-athlete graduation rates are not reflective of student-athletes' academic underpreparation for college (Rost, 2015). Athletes may enroll in certain courses and majors to improve their likelihood of graduating; this practice may influence graduation rates among student-athletes (Gerlach, 2017). Member institutions sometimes cluster student-athletes into majors with a lower level of rigor to help student-athletes maintain eligibility (McCarty, 2014). Educational

values are important in higher education and clustering into majors could hinder student-athletes' educational value (Davis & Hairston, 2013).

The term jock is used as a stereotypical term used for student-athletes (Grimit, 2014; Stone, Harrison, & Mottley, 2012). So called "jock majors" may be questioned for their perceived academic rigor, especially if athletic friendly instructors lead courses and do not provide the academic rigor intended by the university. According to Carter-Francique et al. (2015), faculty members had positive attitudes toward student-athletes who were in less rigorous majors, and faculty members influenced the academic success of student-athletes, especially African American student-athletes. Academic rigor is needed so student-athletes can take full advantage of scholarships (Davis & Hairston, 2013). Conditions exist that are unfair for student-athletes, yet student-athletes complete eligibility requirements and retain their scholarships (Beamon, 2008; Kane, 2015).

The NCAA initial standards are lower than the standard for non-athletes; however, the NCAA has gradually raised the expectations for student-athletes entering college (Rubin & Rosser, 2014). Institutions should focus on student-athletes' academic experiences initially and throughout students' higher education career (Rubin & Rosser, 2014). Student-athletes must compete against other graduates for coveted positions in the career market; therefore, student-athletes must focus on their academic success (Routon & Walker, 2015).

When student-athletes choose majors and do not meet PTD requirements, they are left with a difficult academic decision in which they must choose between eligibility and academic/professional career (Kulics et al., 2015). Such a mindset can affect student-

athletes' career goals and influence them to neglect their ambitions to meet athletic requirements (Foster & Huml, 2017). The struggle between higher education's core beliefs and the demands of athletic participation may result in student-athletes who are less academically developed at graduation (Cox, 2016). Mamerow and Navarro (2014) asserted that student-athletes are an at-risk population within higher education today.

Coaches play a major role in student-athletes' athletic careers as they have the authority to give and remove scholarships, make decisions on playing time, and can even heavily influence student-athletes' lives after graduation (Terrell, 2012). Division I coaches are critical in the struggle to balance athletics and academics (Avery et al., 2016; Gerlach, 2017; Hazelbaker, 2015). Coaches must be expected to foster increased APR and GSR among their teams and for each individual student-athlete (Cooper, 2016). Coaches are held accountable by their team's APR score; the APR score is publically viewable on the NCAA website (Avery et al., 2016). Many coaches do not want or allow student-athletes to miss practice, so they tend to pick a major for student-athletes that will coincide with athletic participation requirements (Cox, 2016).

Student Athletes

Strictly enforced policies may place additional pressure on student-athletes (Gerlach, 2017). Member institutions should put resources in place to allow student-athletes to balance academics, competition, and the stress incurred as a student-athlete (Gerlach, 2017). Athletic competitions at the collegiate level create an exciting environment for students, alumni, and fans (Southall, 2014). Student-athletes struggle with career exploration, academic concerns, and a demanding schedule (Gerlach, 2017).

Student-athletes' dual roles cause priority concerns between academics and athletics excellence (Avery et al., 2016; Huml, Svensson, & Hancock, 2017; Mamerow & Navarro, 2014; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). The NCAA board of directors implemented policies to enhance student-athletes' academic performance and assist student-athletes with the balance between academics and athletics (Comeaux, 2015). Academic reform data pertaining to student-athletes should be carefully examined so the NCAA can understand student-athletes' experiences at the institution level (Comeaux, 2015).

Athletic Advisors

Student-athletes are advised into specific courses and major clusters to meet the requirements of PTD, eligibility standards, and competition standards (Mamerow & Navarro, 2014). Many student-athletes have a difficult and challenging time making decisions pertaining to their academics and career, thus highlighting the importance of advisors to guide students correctly (Burns, Jasinski, Dunn, & Fletcher, 2013). Athletic advisors guide students throughout their academic career and help student-athletes remain eligible for competition (Castle et al., 2014). The advisors' careers rely on the student-athletes' eligibility, fostering advisors to prioritize eligibility at all costs (Castle et al., 2014). Athletic advisors' who receive emergent notices to keep student-athletes eligible must choose between eligibility and student-athletes' personal interest (Navarro, 2015). Some athletic advisors steer student-athletes away from majors that will increase student-athletes' stress (Terrell, 2012). Advisors track student-athletes' PTD and ensure student-athletes meet required eligibility benchmarks (Tellez, 2017). Student-athletes, academic

advisors, and athletic advisors must engage in the same goals and communicate on a regular basis (Stokowski et al., 2016).

The initial enrollment process of student-athletes sets the tone for future academic success. When admission standards are not heavily enforced, and student-athletes do not meet admission requirements, student-athletes may struggle academically later in their college career (Avery et al., 2016; McCarty, 2014; Kirby, 2017). The Advanced college credit can impact a student-athlete's eligibility and influence PTD; such students may be forced to take a premature course or major selection to meet eligibility requirements (Gerlach, 2017). Some student-athletes and their advisors believe that selecting an easier major will help the student-athlete stay on track with PTD.

When student-athletes have positive interaction with faculty and classmates and receives a high level of academic support, they experience an educational culture that is conducive to their success. Rost (2015) found that higher graduation rates are linked to the mandate that all student-athletes should meet with their academic advisor at a certain time. The N4A acts as the balance between academics and athletics amongst NCAA member institutions (Comeaux, 2015). The N4A assists with athletic advisors' professional development (Navarro, 2015). Athletic advisors offer student-athletes resources that can increase graduation rates if student-athletes take advantage of the full experience (Southall, 2014). The NCAA wants to continue to improve athletic programs and strive for athletic and academic excellence at member institutions (Kane, 2015). Member institutions bear the ultimate responsibility for student-athletes' academic

success; student-athletes' success is dependent on member institutions' efforts to advise student-athletes effectively (Davis & Hairston, 2013).

Stakeholders demonstrated concern regarding NCAA organizational values due to the presence of academic scandals at member institutions (Cooper, Weight, & Fulton, 2015). Coaches and academic advisors lead student athletes into easier courses, making it difficult for them to choose a major based on interest (Kulics et al., 2015). Academic advisors may receive direction from athletic administrators to put student-athletes in certain majors to prevent eligibility concerns (Severns, 2017). When athletic directors set the tone for the athletic department and stakeholders, member institutions may abide by the NCAA mission (Cooper et al., 2015; Lee & Sten, 2017; Tellez, 2017). When student-athletes are advised into certain majors by the athletic department, students may not be prepared after graduation. This leads to concerns about the effectiveness of NCAA academic reforms (Castle et al., 2014). A focus on winning does not assist student athletes in academic success and may also impact their ability to be successful after graduation (Cox, 2016).

The NCAA provided student-athletes with career and academic counseling (Goodyear, 2016; Hazelbaker, 2015). NCAA bylaws now state that student-athletes are required to spend time engaged with support services that provide counseling and tutorials for student-athletes (Rost, 2015). NCAA law 16.3.1 requires all Division I colleges and universities to implement academic counseling and tutoring services for all athletes (Burns et al., 2013; Comeaux, 2015).

When the administration believes in the NCAA core values, student-athletes will follow suit (Cooper et al., 2015). Student-athletes become motivated to choose a major of their interest if they have awareness of the job market (Lee & Sten, 2017). The NCAA mission is met when athletes meet initial standards and high academic expectations (Castle et al., 2014).

The advising practices within member institutions highlight the problems within the academic reform (Cooper et al., 2015). According to Rockwell (as cited by Cooper, 2016), a learning specialist from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill stated that the institution's priority is to educate and help students versus pushing student-athletes into specific majors and wasting their time. Such organizational values allow administrators and faculty to embrace the values of the NCAA, making the mission more successful (Cooper et al., 2015).

Academic support services are offered in member institutions due to the at-risk nature of student-athletes' academics and career development. However, many academic support centers highlight eligibility over high academic expectations (Comeaux, 2015). Special departments and programs target improving retention rates within the higher education institution (Scott, 2017).

Universities have varied academic support services, but all student-athletes must participate in the NCAA Champs/Life Skills Program (Burns et al., 2013). The NCAA Champs/Life Skills Program is part of an Academic Performance Program (APP) initiative started for low resource NCAA institutions (LRI) (Cooper et al., 2014). The goal of the program is to increase retention rates (Cooper et al., 2014). The program also

offers professional development for staff and additional financial aid to enroll student-athletes in summer school, if needed (Cooper et al., 2014). An LRI pilot is offered to schools with an APR improvement plan in place for a three-year period (Cooper et al., 2014). Studies are needed in different sports, conferences, and institutional types to review and analyze student-athletes' academic performances, academic policies, and graduation rates (Matthew, 2011).

Student Athletes Major Selection

A study conducted with 1,027 NCAA Division I participants from the Midwestern Athletic Conference of the FBS showed that some student-athletes' career interests were more significant than eligibility concerns when it came to selecting and choosing majors (Kulics et al., 2015). Contrarily, some student-athletes focused on eligibility over career interest when selecting majors (Foster & Huml, 2017). The academic decision of putting career interest or eligibility first varied based on gender and sport type (Kulics et al., 2015). According to Foster and Huml (2017), academic reforms caused or influenced students to choose majors based on athletic purposes. Three student-athletes in the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) division stated eligibility concerns impacted their major choice and two other students stated they changed their major for continued eligibility (Kulics et al., 2015). A survey highlighting the main reason for selecting majors showed that 85% of student-athletes chose majors not due to eligibility concerns, 5% based their selection on eligibility concerns, and 11% stated being a student-athlete did not allow them to choose a major they desired (Kulics et al., 2015). The survey results demonstrate the impact that PTD is having on student-athletes' decision making.

Scholarship student-athletes tend to graduate at a faster rate than student-athletes who are not on scholarship (Gerlach, 2017). Rubin and Rosser's (2014) study focused on student-athletes with and without scholarships; student-athletes without scholarships tended to have a higher GPA than student-athletes on scholarship. Rubin and Rosser highlighted that student-athletes who received scholarships were impacted by PTD (Rubin & Rosser, 2014). Even though many student-athletes are not on scholarship, academic measures and graduation rates are only reported on those student-athletes who receive scholarships, which may lead to skewed results (Rubin & Rosser, 2014). According to researchers, student-athletes on scholarships are more than likely to be retained and graduate (Rubin & Rosser, 2014).

Wyatt (2016) found that Division II student-athletes in revenue-generating sports cluster into certain majors (Wyatt, 2016). Clustering is a practice that ensures student-athletes have a simplistic academic route (Svyantek et al., 2017). Academic clustering happens among every stage, gender, conference, and division and is not limited to revenue-generating sports and conferences (Wyatt, 2016). In the Big 12 Conference, football teams experienced academic clustering in every football season reviewed while 60 % of student-athletes' major selection was not influenced by anything (Wyatt, 2016).

In the Atlantic Coast Conference, minorities tended to participate in academic clustering (Foster & Huml, 2017; Gerlach, 2017; Severns, 2017). According to Schneider, Ross, and Fishner (as cited by Severns, 2017), academic clustering exists in the Big 12 Conference; upperclassmen are more than likely to cluster into majors within their athletic teams. In a study on ACC football teams, 73% of schools had at least two

clustered majors (Castle et al., 2014). Goodson (2015) reviewed the phenomenon of clustering by academic major by observing trends associated with student-athletes' majors (Goodson, 2015). Findings revealed HBCU student-athletes clustered in sports management; physical education; and exercise, sports, and kinesiology majors (Goodson, 2015). Student-athletes in the CIAA and MEAC clustered into sports management, criminal justice, and business management consistently over a four-year timespan (Goodson, 2015).

Grimit (2014) reported that being a student-athlete kept students on track and eligible for graduation. Out of 67 participants, 38 student-athletes agreed their participation in sports motivated them to meet eligibility requirements and graduate (Grimit, 2014). Student-athletes had concerns and a lack of knowledge of eligibility/PTD and relied heavily on the athletic department for advising (Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2013; Parker, 2017). Similarly, Kelly (2012) found that student-athletes were lacking knowledge about their major or any information on life after sports (Kelly, 2012). Student-athletes felt that their coaches cared about their academics because academic success affects athletic eligibility (Kelly, 2012). According to Parson (2013), 31% of student-athletes stated they were advised to stay away from harder courses and 22 student-athletes stated their coaches assisted them with course selection. Mahoney (2011) found that student-athletes viewed academics with the mindset of having to do well to remain eligible and meet NCAA academic requirements.

Student-athletes change and choose majors for eligibility purposes (Foster & Huml, 2017). PTD will not allow student-athletes to prioritize their future career when

selecting their major (Kulics et al., 2015). Twenty-nine percent of students stated that although athletic friendly majors are suitable for eligibility purposes, they are not useful for career purposes (Kulics et al., 2015). Alternatively, student-athletes had negative perceptions of PTD because they had to choose a major immediately and correctly at the first declaration opportunity (Kulics et al., 2015). One student stated, "PTD kept [me] on track but pressures student-athletes into easier majors" (Kulics et al., 2015, p. 8). A Kansas State University student-athlete wanted to be a veterinarian, but because he had to meet PTD requirements, he changed to an athletic friendly (i.e., social science) major (Levine et al., 2014).

The majority of student-athletes in Kulics et al.'s (2015) study felt locked into majors and experienced an inability to explore other academic opportunities. Student-athletes perceive that the 40-60-80 percentage rule does not allow student-athletes to explore their career path, and if they do change their major, the rule does not give them an opportunity to recover academically (Terrell, 2012). Some student-athletes believed that the eligibility requirement limits time to view majors that best fit student-athletes and their career goals (Terrell, 2012). Student-athletes may be interested in other majors, but the program's rigor may influence them into easier majors that will allow them to maintain eligibility requirements (Castle et al., 2014). Clustering happens so student-athletes do not run into a schedule conflict that may further impact PTD requirements (Goodyear, 2016; Mamerow & Navarro, 2014).

Academic progress is based on a percentage towards a degree (Carter-Francique et al., 2015). PTD takes academic clustering into account and may affect student-athletes'

professional careers (Severns, 2017). Recent studies revealed the commonality of clustering at NCAA colleges and universities (Foster & Huml, 2017; Kulics et al., 2015; Levine et al., 2014). Severns (2017) focused on the presence of academic clustering in Mid-American Conference institutions, highlighting its occurrence among women's basketball and softball student-athletes. Literature emphasizes that academic clustering and prioritizing academics is an issue for student-athletes (Goodyear, 2016b; Haslerig & Navarro, 2016a). According to Wolverton (2007), a survey in the Mid-American Conference on how PTD affected student-athletes revealed that 11% of the 1,000 student-athlete's respondents stated their participation in athletics impacted their major choice, with 23% of respondents stating they would have changed majors if it were not for PTD. As Goodyear (2016) noted, many athletes declare majors for which they have no interest (Goodyear, 2016). Gerlach (2017) expressed concern that student-athletes would choose different majors if they were not student-athletes, while Routon and Walker (2015) found that student-athletes change majors across all sports.

NCAA academic policies and procedures make it difficult for student-athletes to choose majors they desire. The result is that student-athletes do not have the ability to explore career opportunities and make the best academic decisions for life after sports (Terrell, 2012). A total of 170 Division I student-athletes were questioned on the reason they chose their degree (Terrell, 2012). Findings assisted researchers in gaining insight on student-athletes' major choices and eligibility concerns (Terrell, 2012). When student-athletes choose their major with the advice of influential people in their lives, they can make the best decision for their future career endeavors rather than their athletic

obligations (Terrell, 2012). According to Maram and Jaradat Mustafa (2017), choice of major could be affected by many people such as parents, siblings, role models, and counselors. Additional factors include academic rigor, academic athletic advisors, and NCAA rules (Terrell, 2012).

One athletic advisor stated that many advisors believe their main role is to keep students on track for eligibility but cautioned that this should not be advisors' main concern (Gerlach, 2017). According to Gerlach (2017), one advisor stated the responsibility is to make sure student-athletes meet the NCAA academic rules and athletic rules. The advisors' mission is to serve student-athletes so athletes can have success on the field, off the field, and after graduation. The focus is on how academic advisors support the wellness of student-athletes. Their job is to monitor student-athletes, and, if a student becomes ineligible, advisors must report the occurrence to the respective persons (Gerlach, 2017).

Many student-athletes do not know what they want to major in until much later in their academic career, but eligibility rules make changing majors to something they want to do difficult because student-athletes do not have enough degree-granting credits when they switch majors (Gerlach, 2017). One advisor Gerlach (2017) interviewed stated she had a student-athlete who was a physics major and who was very intelligent. The student-athlete had completed most of his credits but in order to meet the eligibility rule he had to choose another major. Many advisors have concerns with the strict eligibility policies because they feel the policies do not give student-athletes freedom to choose their major, thus limiting their academic experience (Gerlach, 2017).

Cooper (2016) recommended that student-athletes have a mentor outside of the athletic department who can advise them in their academics (Cooper, 2016). Athletic advisors push the easier majors to keep student-athletes eligible and student-athletes cluster into those majors and courses (Cox, 2016; Davis & Hairston, 2013). When a student changes a major, the first question that often arises is if the student-athlete will be eligible to compete (Castle et al., 2014). According to Castle et al. (2014), one advisor stated students are encouraged to keep their education first, but the main focus of advising remains on eligibility. NCAA Division I, II, and III academic advisors reported the pressure of academic policies can push student-athletes to academic clustering and push athletes into courses with guaranteed academic success (Weight & Huml, 2016).

Maram and Jaradat Mustafa (2017) collected data from former Division I Midwest Conference athletes who participated in the seasons 2009-2015; 45.6 % of the 1,725 participants indicated university advisors did not have any influence on selecting their major. Navarro (2015) interviewed a student-athlete who indicated that her athletic advisor informed her she would need to pick a major that would allow her to remain eligible to play softball. Navarro found that many student-athletes chose majors on the basis of making PTD.

Castle et al. (2014) examined athletic advisors' efforts to learn if academic reform changed advisors' advising strategies. Approximately 60% of academic athletic advisors stated they were likely to cluster students in specific majors, and approximately 58% stated they were likely to use elective credits earlier in a student-athlete's career (Castle et al., 2014). Academic reform fostered strategies to keep student-athletes eligible (Castle

et al., 2014). The major selected may be influenced by communication with the athletic department, academic affairs, and the student-athlete's inability to balance academics and athletics (Navarro, 2015).

Wolverton (2007) demonstrated that PTD forces student-athletes to choose their major quickly and makes it difficult for student-athletes to switch their majors if desired. According to Maram and Jaradat Mustafa (2017), 36.9% of students changed major their sophomore year. It is best for students to wait to declare their major to prevent change of majors numerous times later in their academic career, but student-athletes may not be afforded the luxury of waiting to declare their major (Maram & Jaradat Mustafa, 2017).

Tellez (2017) reported that 79% of the study's 81 respondents stated earning their degree was important. One participant expressed a desire that the athletic department assist student-athletes with their career choice outside of sports, so they could understand their career better (Tellez, 2017). In contrast, another student-athlete stated that passing classes facilitated playing in sports (Tellez, 2017). There is a need for a better system to assist student-athletes with life after sports (Matthew, 2011). As in this study, Matthew's (2011) purpose was to raise awareness among higher education policy makers and administrators at the federal, state, and institutional level, and to encourage college presidents, NCAA officials, student affairs officers, and athletic administrators and staff to revisit academic reform policies (Matthew, 2011).

Summary

Student-athletes are a specialized population within U.S. higher education (Goodson, 2015). NCAA academic reform policies place student-athletes' future careers

in jeopardy (Ganim, 2015). Public concern for student-athletes raises a concern that student-athletes do not receive a valuable education. Student-athletes are consumed by athletic requirements that shift academics to second priority and cause student-athletes to become athlete-students (Wyatt, 2016).

NCAA policies have changed throughout the organization's shared history with higher education (Goodson, 2015). According to Wolverton (2015), the tight rules associated with NCAA academic standards preempted an increase in academic violations because of student-athletes' need to remain eligible to compete. Twenty investigations on 20 NCAA campuses related to issues of academic integrity prompted concern about the efficacy of NCAA academic policies (Wolverton, 2015). Goodson (2015) asserted that the main focus of NCAA academic policies is graduation rates (Goodson, 2015). The PTD requirement helps students stay on track for graduation, but forces student-athletes into simple majors to maintain eligibility.

Academic clustering is a common practice in NCAA member institutions (Ganim, 2015). Academic clustering occurs when student-athletes and their advisors perceive a need to protect the student-athlete's eligibility. Student-athletes in revenue-generating sports and conferences tend to cluster into majors at their respective member institutions (Wyatt, 2016). Academic clustering also occurs in HBCUs due to student-athletes' similar interests and shared culture (Goodson, 2015). Major selection impacts student-athletes' future careers; PTD impacts student-athletes' career choice because of its influence on major selection (Goodson, 2015).

The NCAA implemented academic reform to increase student-athlete graduation rates. Currently, academic reform policies influence student-athletes' choice of major. Certain NCAA Division I conferences experience a high level of academic clustering as advisors steer student-athletes into simplistic majors in preference of eligibility. However, there is a lack of research on the impact of PTD on HBCU student-athletes' major selection. HBCUs are underrepresented in studies and substantial information may foster increased awareness and change at the HBCU level and in the NCAA as a whole.

Chapter 2 presented literature on NCAA student-athletes' major choices, but there is a paucity of studies on this phenomenon in the HBCU community related to PTD's impact on student-athletes' major choices. This study provides insight on Division I HBCU student-athletes' academic decisions, the impact of PTD, and student-athletes' major choices. The study's focus on a conference outside of the FBS will inform the NCAA and other stakeholders on the scope of the phenomenon. This study contributes literature that will encourage a conversation about Division I HBCU member institutions' role within the NCAA.

This study is a qualitative phenomenological investigation of student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators' perspectives of the impact of PTD on student-athletes' major choices. Responses to the self-developed interview guide provided substantial insight for HBCUs, the NCAA, and the DOE. Focus is based on the lived experiences of Division I student-athletes and the institutional staff who support them.

Chapter 3 contains a detailed discussion of the study's research design. In this study, the goal is to understand the lived experiences of Division I HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators to capture any trends that may be present. Eight student-athletes and seven athletic advisors and/or athletic administrators participated in semistructured phenomenological interviews. The data collection method assisted in understanding the participants' stories and provided insight about the impact of PTD on NCAA Division I HBCU student-athletes' major selection.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the impact of PTD on the degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree received by Division I student-athletes attending HBCUs. Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology (including participant selection methodology, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, and data analysis plan), issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures, and a summary of the overall research design.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions that formed the foundation of this study were:

RQ1: For student-athletes, how has/did the PTD affect your major selection?

RQ2: For athletic advisors or administrators working at HBCUs, how has alignment of the PTD requirements to the DOE standards affect retention of student-athletes in their initial majors?

The practice of academic clustering and guided major selection is well documented for NCAA Division I conferences (Gerlach, 2017). There is a lack of research on whether Division I HBCU student-athletes change their majors based on PTD requirements. Unknown reasons exist for why student-athletes choose their major in Division I HBCU conferences. More insight into this phenomenon may assist policymakers in decision making related to PTD policy (Goodson, 2015; Kirby, 2017).

This study was conducted to close the gap of understanding HBCU student-athletes' educational experience.

The research tradition an investigator selects guides the inquiry to understand the scope of the problem. Therefore, researchers must select a tradition that provides maximum benefit for understanding the phenomenon. Qualitative research has four major research traditions: ethnography, grounded theory, case study, and phenomenology (Grand Canyon University, Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching [CIRT], n.d.). Each tradition strategically narrates studies in its own way.

A phenomenological approach allowed me to glean substantial insight from student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators' perspectives on the impact of PTD for major selection. Phenomenology gives participants an opportunity to share their lived experiences in a semistructured way (Van Manen, 2014). The main goal of phenomenology is to understand the phenomenon more deeply from the participants' lived experiences and perceptions through in-depth interviews (CIRT, n.d.). During in-depth interviews, investigators ask participants open-ended questions for a deeper understanding of the topic (CIRT, n.d.). The minimum number of participants in this type of study is 10 participants; however, meeting saturation is a significant aspect of phenomenology so the lived experiences of participants can portray the reality of the main population (CIRT, n.d.). The ultimate goal of phenomenology is to have participants provide meaning to their lived experiences, which makes for a more evocative study (CIRT, n.d.; Van Manen, 2014). The use of open-ended questions gives the interview a conversational feel and makes participation more personable.

The NCAA's mission is to ensure student-athletes fulfill their academic responsibilities first and their athletic responsibilities second (NCAA, 2018). PTD is a part of the academic reforms implemented to prioritize student-athletes' academic journey. The goal of this study was to examine if the NCAA's mission is successfully implemented by understanding the lived experiences of student-athletes, athletic advisors, and administrators at Division I HBCU schools.

This study highlighted ideologies about the PTD policy and provided analysis of the impact of PTD amongst Division I HBCU athletes. I asked open-ended questions during semistructured phone interviews with participants to gain substantial information on the lived experiences of student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators working under the PTD policy. The findings reflect policy-oriented learning from the ACF, which can be provided to the NCAA, its member institutions, athletic administrators, and policymakers.

Role of the Researcher

My primary role was to ensure consistency in questioning and to align the interviews with the purpose of the study to answer the research questions. The bracketing process allowed me to separate my own perceptions of the phenomenon from those of the participants and allowed participants the opportunity to express their own experiences and perception of the phenomenon (see CIRT, n.d.). I created a positive environment and displayed professionalism and respect for each participant through tone of voice and active listening without bias. My job was to make sure the interview remained focused on the interview questions and participants' lived experience. I protected participants'

privacy and ensured every participant answer was recorded accurately through the use of a digital recording device.

I am a former Division I HBCU student-athlete with more than 10 years' distance from that role. I also worked in an athletic department as a retention specialist. My alma mater was excluded from study site selection, but the snowball sampling method included one participant from my university. Participants guided me on a journey of their lived experiences with the phenomenon, thus reducing the possibility of researcher bias.

Phenomenology allows for participants to share their lived experiences, which can sometimes mean time away from their family and regular daily activities. Many social issues are happening across the world, and participants who share their lived experiences on a specific phenomenon contribute to a social change. Incentives have contributed to participants taking the time out of their schedule to share their experiences (Silverman, Jarvis, Jessel, and Lopez, 2016). I offered student-athletes who completed a phone interview a $10 Amazon eGift card and offered athletic advisors and administrators a $15 Amazon eGift card to thank them for their time.

Methodology

The only HBCU Division I conferences in the NCAA are the SWAC and the MEAC. The SWAC has a total of 10 Division I HBCUs and the MEAC has a total of 12 Division I HBCUs for a total of 22 member institutions. The population for this study was Division I HBCU scholarship student-athletes who are currently enrolled in Division I HBCUs and former scholarship athletes at Division I HBCU member institutions who graduated from 2003-present. The population also included athletic advisors and/or

athletic administrators who are currently or were previously employed at an HBCU during the academic years of 2003-present. The population of the HBCUs used in this study includes approximately 10,000 student athletes in the SWAC (2017). The number of athletic advisors and administrators in the two conferences is estimated to be 230 (MEAC, 2018; SWAC, 2018).

The population for this study was Division I HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators. The sampling strategy in this study was random, purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling methods. I used random sampling to choose five Division I HBCUs using a number generator in Microsoft Excel. I selected the schools with the first five numbers. To create the random sample, I inputted all 22 member institutions into a spreadsheet as listed on the SWAC and MEAC athletic sites, excluding my alma mater and one other university with which I have a professional relationship with the associate athletic director, but when I conducted the study the associate athletic director had transitioned to another university. The random number generator command is = rand (); the random number generator created a random value for each member institution. Member institutions were sorted by random value from 1-20; the target sample included the first five institutions. A convenience sample allowed me to select universities whose response time was prompt and only required Walden's IRB approval with their additional university's documentation. I contacted the IRB department at selected universities via e-mail to determine if there was a requirement to obtain approval to recruit students from their university, and if so, I confirmed the school's IRB protocol. The universities' IRB had 7 days to respond to the interest e-mail.

The request to recruit students from the university included information about the study and the purpose of the study. The sixth university selected for this study was chosen based on professional relationships already established with the athletic department. I did not allow professional or personal experiences to affect the integrity of the study and mirrored that notion in the interviews to minimize personal bias. I remained focused on the lived experiences of the participants and listened to the insight of the current and former student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators to add to policy-oriented learning regarding PTD.

I used purposeful sampling to find participants who may meet the study requirements. Purposeful sampling assisted me with recruiting current HBCU student-athletes and athletic advisors; snowball sampling assisted with recruiting former student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators within my network. In addition, snowball sampling extended the sample beyond my network. Following Kenrose's (2014) suggestions for ethical snowball sampling, participants were informed that they could choose to recommend other participants for the study. Both sampling methods provided privacy for participants and their universities and ensured that participants were free to express their lived experience of the phenomenon. Purposeful and snowball sampling methods ensured privacy, population diversity, and a targeted student sample from Division I HBCUs. Purposeful sampling allowed for representative universities' confidentiality, and I identified participants with a pseudonym distinguishing them as student-athletes, athletic advisors, or administrators from a Division I HBCU.

Former student-athletes met the following inclusion criteria for participation: (a) a former student-athlete at a NCAA Division I HBCU, (b) a male or female former scholarship athletes at a NCAA Division I HBCU, (c) 18 years or older, (d) participated in Division I athletics between the years 2003-present, and (e) understood the meaning of PTD. Current student-athletes met the following inclusion criteria for participation: (a) a current male or female student-athlete at a NCAA Division I HBCU, (b) a current scholarship athlete at a NCAA Division I HBCU, (c) 18 years or older, (d) currently participating in Division I athletics, (e) Junior or Senior status, or a Sophomore with a declared major; and (f) understood the meaning of PTD. Athletic advisors and athletic administrators met the following inclusion criteria for participation: (a) currently or formerly employed at an NCCA Division I HBCU, (b) currently or formerly employed as an athletic advisor or athletic administrator, and (c) understood the meaning of PTD. Any potential participant outside of the inclusion criteria was excluded from the study. A screening guide (Appendix A) facilitated participant selection.

I conducted the screening process via phone using the screening guide once a potential participant expressed interest in the study. The screening stopped at the point where a potential participant did not meet the requirements for the study, and I thanked the individual for their time. Eligible participants scheduled an interview appointment while on the phone. At the conclusion of the screening, I sent the participant an Amazon eGift Card via text or e-mail to thank the participant for their time. I informed participants about the length of the interview so participants could plan accordingly. Participants received a pseudonym to protect their identity and ensure privacy at the time

of the interview. Each participant's contact information was added to the communication tracker.

Overrecruiting ensured a list of back-up participants should any of the minimum number of participants decide to withdraw from the study. I proposed to have five former student-athletes, 10 current student-athletes, and 10 athletic advisors and/or athletic administrators participate in the study. I received more participants through snowball sampling. Recruitment continued until the study had enough participants for saturation to be met. In the final study, I had 8 student-athletes and 5 athletic administrators who completed the entire interview process, and saturation was met.

Procedures for Recruitment and Participation

I obtained IRB approval from Walden University (approval number 05-31-19-0283346) and the selected universities that required Walden's IRB approval or a form of documentation for recruiting participants from their university. Once IRB approval was obtained, I sent flyers to athletic administrators to post on campus and near athletic arenas. The flyer will include information about the study including the voluntary nature, confidentiality/anonymity, eligibility requirements, and how to contact me. Sources for snowball sampling include posting the flyer on Facebook and searching LinkedIn for student-athletes, athletic advisors, athletic administrators in the Division I HBCU community.

I obtained email addresses of athletic advisors and administrators from the universities' athletic websites. Administrators had seven days to respond to the email and then would receive a follow-up email. I stopped emailing the administrators once the

study sample size was met. I tracked all emails and communication to and from participants and universities. Participants received the consent form once the interview was scheduled and returned it prior to the phone interview. The participant received a reminder email about the phone interview 24 hours before appointment or sooner. If the participant did not attend the scheduled call, I left a voicemail and ask the participant to call and reschedule. Participants had 48 hours to respond to the voicemail; if they did not respond, I would move to the next qualified individual and the participant data would be removed from the study.

The sample in the study represents all Division I HBCUs. Saturation of data ensures sound representation of the study population. Saturation occurs when a minimum of 10 individuals are interviewed and/or the researcher starts hearing the same responses repeatedly (Mandal, 2018). This study proposed to have included a minimum of 15 current and former student-athletes and 10 athletics advisors and/or administrators to ensure the participant pool is over the average number for saturation. However, I was able to complete interviews, member checking, and reach saturation with a total of 14 current and former student-athletes and athletic administrator.

Instrumentation

The questions used on the interview guides (Appendix B) were based on the research of the impact of PTD on NCAA HBCU student-athletes and included the key concepts discussed in Chapter 2. I served as the primary instrument for this study and conducted interviews using the approved interview guides. Three researcher-developed interview guides facilitated data collection from student-athletes, athletic advisors, and

athletic administrators. The interview guide was used to collect participants' responses. The interview guide included a memo section in which I wrote down notes from the interview. Interview questions were open-ended to facilitate maximum insight from the phenomenon from the participants' lived experiences and perceptions.

The interview guide included prompt questions aligned with the research questions to make sure all parts of student-athletes' and athletic advisors'/administrators' lived experiences are included. Two content experts reviewed the interview guide and established content validity to ensure that the interview questions accurately address the research questions. I tested the interview questions with a former Division I head coach who was also a former student-athlete. Additionally, I field tested the interview questions with a former Division I HBCU student-athlete. The interview questions prompted accurate details of the coach's lived experience as an athletic administrator and student-athlete.

Procedures for Data Collection

I scheduled a phone interview with participants based on the participants' availability. I conducted interviews from a private office setting, collecting data through the questions in the interview guide. At the beginning of the interview, I reiterated the components in the consent form and reminded participants of the voluntary nature of the study. I reread the privacy and confidentiality clause and reassured participants they could decline answering any questions for which they did not feel comfortable answering because the intent of the interview was for participants to express their lived

experiences. Each interview was proposed to last approximately 45 minutes. However, the interview averaged to be 26 minutes.

The interview guide contains an introduction to the study and permission to record the interview. Audio recordings provide the opportunity to capture a realistic lived experience from participants and enhance the researcher's note taking (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). I used the NoNotes application to record phone interviews. I tested the application prior to the study's commencement to ensure its functionality for the interviews. The interview guide included a closing statement to reiterate key steps to the study, participants' confidentiality, and assurance of privacy. Participants' names or the names of their universities were excluded from the final study report. Participants received an explanation of the follow-up procedures at the conclusion of the interview. A follow-up appointment for member checking was scheduled at the conclusion of the interview. Participants were reminded that the member checking appointment would be 15 minutes or less.

I transcribed all recorded data captured by the NoNotes application within 3-5 business days. Transcribed interviews were loaded into Microsoft Outlook Drive for organization along with a back-up USB flash drive, at my home, contained within a locked safe, within my locked home. Participants received the transcribed interview for the purpose of member checking.

During member checking, if participants indicated their transcripts did not accurately reflect their statements, I listen to the recording again, corrected any errors, and returned the transcript to the participant for a second review if needed. It was

estimated that data collection, organization, and member checking would take up to two months, but it took longer.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Bracketing responses in categories and completing first and second coding cycles during data analysis prevented preconception formulation in this study and reduce bias. I inputted all data into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I created different worksheets within the spreadsheet of various categories to highlight any patterns in the study. Diagrams were proposed to be generated from the Excel results to display
any significant patterns in the study but is not appropriate to display findings.

All participants were identified by pseudonyms to protect privacy and confidentiality. Data is reported in the aggregate. I conducted many cycles of hand-coding to identify significant factors in the responses from the participants and the notes from the memo section. The codebook is listed in the Table Lists since coding is complete. First and second coding cycles was followed by a continuous process to comprehend the phenomenon. Once coding was complete, it was important to compare and analyze what was within each coded category. In my proposal, graphs were thought to enhance the analysis of the data and assist with reviewing patterns and providing information to the research questions, but they were not needed. Once data was collected, analyzed, and the dissertation is approved by Walden, I will complete a brief video of the study to send to all participants.

Any discrepant cases were identified. Data only included answered questions; if a participant decided not to answer a question that decision was noted. Participants

reserved the right to decline answering any question or to resign from the study altogether. I noted the participants in my findings who didn't complete the interview or member checking without identifying the participant.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Member checking was a significant component in this study because it provided trustworthiness to the study to ensure participants responses were portrayed accurately. To assist participants with their level of comfort, I informed participants that all data collected will be deleted in five years per Walden University's protocol. Every participant received a pseudonym that was used throughout the study. All interviews were conducted the same way and allowed the participants to tell their own story. It was also important to make sure there was no bias in the study; I eliminated bias by manually coding the interview data to make sure there was an in-depth understanding of each participant's lived experiences. Saturation of the data aided in the elimination of bias. Saturation is met when no new information is revealed. Data collection continued until saturation was met. To increase credibility, my chair, committee, and peer reviewer provided credibility to the study by their expertise and feedback. The research instruments were field tested to increase the reliability of the data collection process. External validity of the self-developed interview guide was achieved through content expert analysis.

The process of data collection mentioned earlier in the chapter provided dependability in the results. I recorded phone interviews with the NoNotes application and transcribed interview data verbatim. Continuous coding with multiple steps allowed

me to highlight emerging patterns within the data. I reflected on the coding process once it was complete and provided a discussion of the rationale for coding decisions.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures included gaining Walden University IRB approval as well as approval needed from the selected study sites. The IRB process ensured the protection of participants' rights. Participants signed a Consent Form to be a part of the study. All permissions were gathered prior to the commencement of data collection.

The recruitment material was flyers and emails sent to the approved universities athletic departments via email. I ensured that messaging encouraged, not pressured, individuals to contact me. This study included individuals 18 years and older and did not include a protected population. Potential ethical concerns associated with recruitment could have included athletic advisors and athletic administrators answering interview guide questions that go against NCAA policy; therefore, confidentiality was important.

Before starting all interviews, I informed participants how long the interview would take and reiterated that all information they provided is confidential. If any participant decided midway through the study to decline participation, the participant was not pressured to continue the process and I would immediately document participants' decline request in the study. The questions participants decided to answer were added to the study, and whatever they did not answer was not added to the study.

All data is confidential; participants are only identified as current or former student-athletes or athletic advisors/athletic administrators of a Division I HBCU.

Participants provided contact information in the form of a name, phone number, and email address so that interviews proceeded, and incentives were awarded.

All study data was stored on a personal computer, and password protected on a Microsoft Outlook drive, along with a back-up USB flash drive, at my home, contained within a locked safe, within my locked home. Study data will be viewed only by my dissertation committee and me. All data will be deleted in five years, due to IRB requirements. I used incentives in this study to thank participants for their time.

Summary

This phenomenological study allowed participants to share their lived experiences and for me to analyze the phenomenon. Chapter 3 included a detailed discussion of the methodology and the procedures of data collection. The chapter included a presentation of ethical concerns and ways they were prevented in this study. The interview protocol was mentioned in detail so the study can be easily replicated. The sampling method for this study is random, convenience, purposeful, and snowball sampling, which allowed the participant pool to increase by participant recommendation and by selective participants. Chapter 4 will include the lived experiences of the participants and a discussion of the data analysis.

Chapter 4

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the impact of PTD on the degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree received by student-athletes attending Division I HBCUs. The impact of PTD on student-athletes in well-known conferences has been analyzed through quantitative studies. This qualitative phenomenological study consisted of interviewing current and previous HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators in the SWAC and MEAC, which are the only HBCU Division I Conferences. The research questions conveyed the lived experiences of participants and the impact of PTD. The study also expressed the lived experiences of athletic administrators, understanding in-depth the alignment of PTD to the DOE standards and the effect on student-athletes in their initial majors.

For current or past HBCU student-athletes who selected or decided to change their major, the research question was:

RQ1: How has/did PTD affect your major selection?

For athletic advisors or administrators working at HBCUs, the research question was:

RQ2: How has the alignment of PTD requirements to the DOE standards affected retention of student-athletes in their initial majors?

In this chapter, I highlight lived experiences of 13 participants who completed the entire interview process. In addition, I examine settings, demographics, data collection,

data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of the study. Lastly, I explore the research questions in more detail.

Setting

I interviewed current student-athletes, graduated student-athletes, and athletic advisor/athletic administrators for there to be a holistic view when analyzing the impact of PTD and the alignment between PTD and the DOE. The top five Division I HBCUs were randomly selected through the random sample method through Microsoft Excel. Also, the snowball and purposeful sampling methods were used in selecting participants. The study was conducted in my office using the Jabra Headsets and NoNotes Application. I used the interview guide when I conducted each interviews, and each participant had an opportunity to share their lived experience. The interviews were not completed at a central location because it included participants in various states and Division I HBCUs. The interviews were live telephone calls, and each participant completed their interview in a location of their choosing. The interviews provided substantial information on the impact of PTD.

Demographics

The demographics of the participants for this study were Division I HBCU scholarship student-athletes who were currently enrolled in Division I HBCUs and former Division I HBCU student-athletes who graduated from 2003-present. All participants were 18 years old or older and understood PTD. Also, student-athletes had to be sophomore, junior, or senior who declared a major or a Division I HBCU graduate student-athlete. There were four current student-athletes and four graduated student-

athletes who were interviewed. There was a total of five current and former female student-athletes and three current and former male student-athletes from the MEAC and SWAC (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1

Current Student-Athletes Demographics

Participant	**Gender**	**Classification**
P1	Female	Senior
P2	Male	Graduate Student
P3	Female	Senior
P4	Male	Senior

Note. *For confidentiality purposes, participants are listed in the order they completed their interview. They are also protected by pseudonyms, so they are not identified by their actual name.

Table 2

Graduate Student-Athletes Demographics

Participant	**Gender**
P1	Male
P2	Female
P3	Female
P4	Female

Note. *For confidentiality purposes, participants are listed in the order they completed their interview. They are also protected by pseudonyms, so they are not identified by their actual name.

The population also consisted of athletic advisors and athletic administrators who were currently or were previously employed at an HBCU. I had a total of seven athletic advisors and athletic administrators who completed the screening process, six who were interviewed, and five who completed their member checking. One participant did not complete member checking. After a few outreaches for member checking, I did not add the participant's interview to the data collection or study. The five athletic administrators who did participate were very detailed and articulated their knowledge and experience very well. The athletic administration consisted of various titles, which are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Athletic Administration Demographics

Participant	Gender	Current and previous job titles
P1	Female	NA
P2	Female	Athletic Advisor, Coordinator of Academic Excellence, Director of Academic Enhancement, Assistant Athletic Director for Academics, Associate AD for Academics in Senior Woman Administrator, Director of Academic in Life Skills Services for student-athletes.
P3	Female	Director of Compliance, Senior Associate Athletic Director, and Senior Woman Administrator
P4	Female	Associate Athletic Director for Student Athlete Support Services
P5	Male	Learning Specialist and Athletic Academic Advisor
P6	Male	NA
P7	Male	Assistant for Compliance and the Learning Specialist

Note. *For confidentiality purposes, participants are listed in the order they completed their interview. They are also protected by pseudonyms, so they are not identified by their actual name.

Data Collection

I interviewed and completed a member checking process for 13 total participants who are a part of the Division I HBCU community. Four current student-athletes, four graduated student-athletes, and five athletic advisors and athletic administrators were included in the study. The current student-athletes are actively participating in sports at a Division I HBCU and are a part of the MEAC or SWAC. The graduated student-athletes were all former student-athletes at a Division I HBCU from at least 2003. The athletic administrators all held various titles in the Division I HBCU Athletic Departments. All participants went through the screening process over a phone call and met the requirements. One potential participant completed the screening process but did not follow up for an interview. Also, another participant completed the interview, but did not follow up with the member checking appointment, so those individuals' data was omitted from the study.

I completed data collection in my home office. The interview guide (Appendix B) structured the interview and allowed for prompt questions, which were dependent on participants' lived experience. I recorded each interview with the NoNotes application. Overall, participants' interviews were approximately 26 minutes, interviews for student-athletes were approximately 22 minutes, and athletic administrators approximately 30 minutes. Most of the interviews that lasted between 30-43 minutes were completed by the athletic advisors, athletic administrators, and graduate student-athletes. Each participant completed their consent form, understood the scope of the study, and knew their rights. However, at the beginning of the interview, I reiterated they would be recorded and could

stop the interview at any time. Furthermore, I reminded participants no one could link their answers to their name or university.

After the interview, I downloaded the recording and transcribed it in Microsoft Office. As I coded the data, I was in the home office, so I could focus on the themes that emerged. I inserted the transcript responses to Microsoft Excel and organized the data to prepare for coding. All participants but one completed the member checking, and I did not add that participant's information to the Microsoft Excel template. All recordings have been saved and password protected in OneDrive and a flash drive. I completed the first and second cycle coding when focusing on participants' responses and then responses per question. Firstly, the focus was on the participant's individual responses and secondly on responses for each question. In the data collection process, the only unexpected circumstance was when I was not able to follow up with member checking with one of my participants who completed their interview. I executed the systematic plan in Chapter 3 throughout the interview, data collection, and coding process.

Data Analysis

I organized, coded, and analyzed all data. The interview recording was completed on NoNotes, and I transcribed the interview. All transcripts were saved in a password protected OneDrive and flash drive. Before organizing data, I completed member checking to ensure no corrections were needed on the transcripts. I coded and analyzed data per participant and question with the first and second cycle coding. The first cycle represented descriptive and concept coding. The second cycle coding was represented by pattern coding. In analyzing data per participant, I made sure I focused on each

participant's responses for each question. When it was time to analyze the coding per question, I analyzed each question's responses. I did not proceed to the next participant or question until the analysis was complete. If I had to stop working at any time, I would know where to continue by color coding data, so I would not miss any significant details per participant and question. Each coding cycle was concluded with a summary of the emerged codes, categories, and specific themes.

In completing the first and second cycle coding, I viewed patterns and themes that were repetitive amongst participants. The codes, categories, and themes were originated through the data, transcriptions, and through the coding cycle. There was a concern in the literature review in Chapter 2 about student-athletes selecting majors to stay eligible and not selecting desired majors. Major selection is a significant decision student-athletes must make and their decisions are impacted by different factors. The codes, categories, and themes that emerged from analyzing data from graduate student-athletes, current student-athletes, and athletic advisors/athletic administrators' lived experiences are in Table 4 below.

There was an understanding of the value of student-athletes' scholarship and making sure athletic and academic schedules aligned. Current student athlete participant 1 understood her scholarship would help her obtain a degree and stated, “I wouldn't be able to afford college if I did not play a sport.” Participants understood the value of their scholarships and the importance of obtaining a degree. A pattern that emerged with graduate student-athletes is all participants changed majors but for different reasons. Another theme emerged which was the rigor of program. One graduate-student-athlete

participant stated, “You know I wanted to do what was best for me I didn’t want to get into a rigorous program, and then I fall behind.” Some selected majors based on the emerging theme which was rigorous of program.

Throughout all athletic advisor and administrator participants’ interviews, there was a genuine care for their student-athletes. They had substantial information on the alignment of PTD and the DOE. One athletic administrator stated their job was to, “make sure the students are receiving everything they need to matriculate towards graduation.” Participants shared their lived experiences, they were able to express themselves, and dig deeper based on the questions asked. Even if they discussed topics that were not a part of the study, it still provided substantial information on experiences within the athletic community. It allowed me to understand the full scope of the Division I HBCU student-athletes' and athletic advisors/ administrators’ experiences, concerns, and perspectives.

Table 4

Codes, Categories, and Themes—Progress Towards Degree Effect on Major

Codes	**Categories**	**Theme**
Major selection	Advisement from student-athletes	Athletic/competition schedule
Metrics and benchmarks	Tracking system	Major selection
Consequences of not remaining eligible	Consequences of not remaining eligible	PTD/rigor of program
Advisors	Ways to remain eligible	Advisement from student-athletes
Eligibility	Athletic/competition schedule	Scholarship
Family members	Scholarship	Eligibility
Athletic/competition schedule	PTD	
Teammates	Loss of scholarship	
Scholarship	Major selection	
Coaches	Rigor of program	
Rigor of program	Lose post season eligibility	
Major change	Summer school	
PTD	Forced into undesired major	
Freshmen	Major change	
Tracking system		
Sophomore		
Major change		
Junior		
Course of study		
Forced into undesired major		
Ways to remain eligible		
Loss of scholarship		
Drop courses		
Ineligible		
Lose post season eligibility		
Summer school		
Advisement from student-athletes		

Table 5

Athletic Advisors and Administrators

Codes	**Categories**	**Theme**
Major selection	Major selection	Eligibility
Metrics and benchmarks	Metrics and benchmarks	Major selection
Consequences	Consequences	Metrics and benchmarks
DOE	FGR	Consequences
Table 5 (continued)	PTD	
Eligibility	Eligibility	
GSR	Tracking system	
PTD	APR	
NCAA	Loss of scholarship	
Tracking system		
Graduation		
Matriculation		
Coaches		
Course of study		
Family		
APR		
Loss of scholarship		
Competition		
Post season eligibility		
Drop courses		
Summer school		
Progress reports		
Instructors		
FGR		

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility ensures that participants' lived experience are portrayed accurately (Trochim, 2020). In Chapter 3, I discussed strategies that will increase the credibility of the study. Those strategies mean following the proposed steps in chapter 3. Immediately after the screening, I sent the Consent Form, a reminder of the appointment, and the Amazon eGift card. Every participant has a pseudonym throughout the study. Before the interview, each participant sent me their signed Consent Form. In which confirmed they understood that I would not use their personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. During the interview, I read the interview guide that reminded participants they would be recorded and that they could stop the interview at any time. Throughout the process, I made sure each participant knew I appreciated their time and lived experience.

A part of the Chapter 3 process is to make sure data is kept secure on both a Onedrive, along with a back-up USB flash drive, at my home, contained within a locked safe, within my locked home. On the Consent Form, participants acknowledged they understood data would be kept for at least five years and then destroyed as required by the University. One of the main strategies of credibility was to complete member checking to ensure participants' responses were being portrayed accurately. I manually coded each recording to have an in-depth understanding of each participant experience. In doing this, it helped eliminate bias. I made sure I followed the proposal, so each participant can have the same interview experience that allowed them to express their

own lived experience. The comfortability of the participants was essential and allowed them to express themselves deeper.

According to Trochim (2020), transferability is when the researcher analyzes data, synthesize data, and can explain the data with clarity. A total of 14 Division I HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators were selected through a sampling method to represent a population. Each participant's lived experience is a representation of individuals within the Division I HBCU athletic community. There was a first and second coding cycle completed per participant and per-question to help analyze and synthesize data. As I coded, I was able to highlight themes and patterns that were summarized per participant and per question. Analyzing the data assisted with understanding the codes, categories, and emerging themes in detail. I analyzed and synthesized the data to make the experience of the participants clear. Manually coding consisted of highlighting significant quotes and repeating coding cycles until lived experiences were expressed clearly and concisely.

The ability to repeat the same study and receive the same results is dependability (Trochim, 2020). For dependability, I followed the systematic approach from the proposal to ensure consistency throughout the interview process. I created interview guides, screening guide, coding documents in Microsoft Office to execute the interview process. As stated, data is saved on a flash drive and OneDrive, which is password protected. Due to the processes implemented, each participant was provided the same opportunity to express their experience. In transcribing recordings, I used the same

transcribing process. I coded each participant's responses and questions the same. The interview and data collection were consistent for all participants.

For confirmability, I followed the data collection process and followed the interview guide. The participant led the interview and I guided with the interview guide questions. I recorded important notes in the interview guide to highlight participants' experience. Through first and second coding cycle, I wrote down patterns and summarized each participant's responses and coded based on interview guide questions solely. After coding all 13 participants data, themes and patterns were originated based on lived experiences which eliminated biases.

Results

In the results section, the impact of PTD will be explored, along with the potential alignment of PTD requirements to the DOE. Data was collected through the interview guide, and it highlighted the lived experiences of participants. Below, I have presented codes, categories, and themes based on participants' lived experience, and it will be broken down per research question. The research question for the current/graduate student-athlete was:

RQ1: How has/did the PTD affect your major selection?

The research question for the Athletic Advisors and Athletic Administrators

RQ2: How has alignment of the PTD requirements to the DOE standards affect retention of student-athletes in their initial Majors?

In the interview guide, I asked questions that enabled the participants to think deeper about their experience and gain more knowledge about the research question.

Student Athlete Findings

RQ1: How has/did the PTD affect your major selection?

When selecting a major, you have to examine various factors. The themes that emerged were scholarship, major selection, athletic/competition schedule, PTD/rigor of program, advisement from student-athletes, and eligibility. Current student-athlete participant 1 stated, “If you're not at practice you don't get to play and if you don't play you are more than likely not going to be brought back.” Some of the factor's student-athletes considered when selecting major were the highlighted themes. Current student-athlete participant 1 highlighted how the academic program would have to work around the athletic schedule and stated, “that it has to work around my athletic schedule.” Majority of the current and graduate student-athlete participants considered rigor of program to see if it aligned well with a hectic athletic schedule.

There were other thoughts on what to consider when selecting a major. Current student-athlete's participants 3 and 4 considered life after sports when selecting majors. Graduate student-athletes participants said they considered graduation and financial stability. Most important, participant 2 stated, “thinking of the future and after graduation how easy would it be to find a job.” The main themes will be highlighted below.

Scholarship with current student-athletes. Scholarship was a code that emerged throughout data analysis. The main purpose for current student-athletes enrolling at their university was having their college degree paid for with an athletic scholarship while playing a sport they loved. Scholarship student-athletes appreciate and value their scholarships which can lead to another factor contributing to major selection. Participant

1 stated, “I wouldn't be able to afford college if I didn't play.” The participant recognized how important it was to keep the athletic scholarship while working towards a degree. The reason Participant 3 enrolled into her university she stated, “mainly to have free education while I'm playing the sport that I love." Also, Participants 2 and 4 felt the university was a great fit academically and had a great connection with the coaching staff.

Scholarship with graduate student-athlete. A scholarship gives student-athletes a great opportunity to play sports while obtaining a degree and sometimes being an athlete can impact major selection. A half of graduate student athletes enrolled at their university because of the HBCU nurturing environment. In addition, majority of graduate student-athletes participants reported mainly because they received a scholarship.

Major selection with current student-athletes. Advisors, family members, and student-athletes themselves influenced current student-athlete major selection and change. Early in their academic career, the current student-athletes knew their potential major. Participant 1 stated, “Really coming in; it was my freshman year,” that she knew her major. Majority of participants said they knew what they wanted to major in within the first two years, and one knew their major before enrolling in the university.

Major selection with graduated student-athletes. Graduate student-athletes were influenced by coaches, parents, advisors, peers, and teammates. Majority of graduate student-athletes selected their major their Sophomore/Junior Year. One student-athlete already knew what she wanted to major in coming into the university. Lastly,

graduate student-athlete Participant 3 stated she selected her major but was not sure what she wanted to major in even in her senior year.

Athletic/competition schedule with current student-athletes. Student-athletes were asked if they were not a student-athlete would they still choose the same major. If current student-athlete participants were not a student-athlete, majority of them stated they would select the same majors. One participant stated she would have found her way back to Social Work but would have started with Psychology if it was not for being a student-athlete. Participant 3 stated his major would have stayed the same, but he did mention he never thought about that question and used some time to reflect. In addition, student-athletes stated they would still choose the same major; however, if you review the previous quotes, over half of the current student-athlete participants did mention they did not select certain majors due to the rigor of the program. As an athlete, they did not feel like they could remain on track successfully as a student and athlete.

Athletic/competition schedule with Graduated Student-Athletes. Graduated student-athlete Participant 3 stated, " if I was not a student-athlete I would probably continued to be in nursing because I would have way more time to give to it and that's what I wanted to do coming in so I would have made it happen for myself." Graduated student-athlete Participant 1 stated "I feel like I probably would have stayed with business, " and stated " that major requires a lot of time and a lot of studying and you know being an athlete," he did not feel like he would have time to put in the work successfully due to his athletic schedule.

PTD/rigor of program with current student-athletes. In the interview, a question pertaining to the impact of PTD was discussed with each participant. One current student-athlete participant felt like PTD did affect her major selection because she had to think about academic and athletic decisions to make sure they aligned. Participant 1 stated, “it most definitely has affected my major selection because you can't just go to school and think about just school." In this study, student-athletes stated they had to consider the rigor of the academic program. Sometimes they did not select their initial major because of the rigor and felt like they would not be successful in the classroom, on the field, while remaining on track with PTD. Participant 4 never changed his major, but he selected his major based on the rigor of the program. He wanted to be a computer engineer, but he did not think he could balance and remain on track for PTD. Participant 4 stated, “yes I would say it definitely did because I thought it would be so challenging that I would stress myself out and I didn't want my time in college to be full of stress.” Participant 4 stated, “I thought it would be pretty hard to maintain that major and be a Division I athlete.”

Participant 1 was a transfer student and felt like PTD was a hardship because she was credits behind when beginning the new program. The participant could not major in the intended major because it interfered with the PTD track. She stated “ I was put so far behind that none of those classes were even towards my degree because they were all basics so I figured might as well switch it over since my progress towards degree wasn't enough anymore for that major so I ended up switching.” Majority of the current student-athletes participants stated they have never changed their major, but one stated they

thought about it. Participant 2 said PTD did not affect his decision, but it did make him think deeper on the major requirements and see if he could realistically meet the academic and athletic requirements.

PTD/rigor of program with graduated student-athletes. Participant 3 graduate student-athlete stated, “you know I wanted to do what was best for me I didn’t want to get into a rigorous program and then I fall behind.” With half of the graduated student-athletes, the solution was to select a major that would be less rigorous in order to remain on track with PTD. Graduated student-athlete Participant 1 stated, to be honest, coming in as a freshman, I didn't know anything about PTD only thing I knew was eligible and not eligible you take these classes you are going to be eligible if you fail this class ineligible.” Participant 3 said, “if I wasn't playing ball, I probably I would've been more apt to choose a degree that was probably a little bit more challenging that's what I feel.” Also stated, “Yeah so I felt that it kind of did I would say I may have chosen something a little bit easier you know so that I would be able to play ball and so that I would not fall behind.” This student-athlete wanted to complete Nursing, but she felt the program was too rigorous for a Division I student-athlete, so she changed her major. Participant 4 felt like PTD did not impact her major selection because she was able to get ahead by taking additional general education courses at a community college.

Eligibility with current student-athletes. Student-athletes were asked if they were declared ineligible based on NCAA Academic Policies what did/would they do. None of the participants were declared ineligible but some were close and were able to rectify the situation quickly. If current student-athlete participant 1 was declared

ineligible she stated, “I wouldn’t be able to afford to go back to school.” Participant 3 stated, “you change your major in order for you to get the requirements needed for you to stay eligible.” Lastly, participant 4 believes it depends on your classification in order to make a decision. If he was a Senior, he would focus on his academics and getting back on track, but if a Junior or Sophomore, he would go to play professional ball or go to summer school to get back on track.

Eligibility with Graduated Student-Athletes. Overall, the graduated student-athlete participants felt like if you were declared ineligible understanding why you were declared eligible and contact athletic advisors is vital to get back on track. Graduate student-athlete Participant 4 was referring to her advisor when she stated, “I went to him pretty much all throughout my college matriculation, my academic advisor was very helpful and was patient.” Overall, using your advisors to assist with getting back eligible.

Advisement from student-athletes with current student-athletes. Each student-athlete was asked to provide one tip for future student-athletes. One current student-athlete mentioned she already provides feedback to her teammates, and she informed one particular teammate to make sure her major selection does not interfere with her sport. Participant 1 stated, “ you don't get to choose what you what you love you kind of have to choose what you need instead but try not to get too far from your passion because you will spend the rest of your life thinking what if.” Another participant said to choose a major that makes you happy but also something that will pay your bills.

Advisement from student-athletes with graduated student-athletes. Participant 2 stated, “don't be scared to take your time choosing a major.” Participant 3

said, “Choose something that you like and something that you know you can handle because of the time.” This goes back to the previous context where a student stated you must consider the rigor of program requirements and make sure the major aligns with the athletic program. In addition, make sure it aligns with practice and competition schedule.

The advisement of student-athletes is important. Athletic administrators play a key role in the various operations within the Athletic Department. The main role they play is the impact that they have on their athletes. That is maybe why the athletic administrator participants stressed the importance of the policies that they need to know in order for the student-athlete to have a holistic athletic experience.

Athletic Advisors and Administrators Findings

RQ2: How has alignment of the PTD requirements to the DOE standards affect retention of student-athletes in their initial Majors?

The athletic administrators interviewed held many titles and job descriptions. They all cared and were passionate about the students and this topic. The different titles that were held are listed in Table 3. The job descriptions that were mentioned were mostly being assigned specific sports and working with the athletes one-on-one. In order to make sure they know their academic standing and where they are with PTD. Participant 1 stated, “I worked with men’s basketball and baseball. I had to work one on one with a student athlete to try to determine you know what their current academic standings was in terms of progress towards degree.” Some job descriptions oversaw academic services and student-athletes to make sure they were matriculating through their program to remain on track for PTD and maintain eligibility. Participant 4 stated his

job description is to “ensure that all our student-athletes are eligible that they stay eligible that they are taking the right classes towards PTD.”

Overall, there were advising duties to make sure student-athletes met all benchmarks. Participant 3 stated, “I make sure the students are receiving everything they need to matriculate towards graduation.” Compliance officers consisted of recruiting, eligibility, and working with various departments across the university. Specifically, working with the Financial Aid office so it can be monitored for all sports and athletes and to know their aid limit. Participant 2 stated, “I am responsible for keeping up with the financial aid piece for all of our programs for sports programs, making sure they stay within their aid limits and compliance in the business office.” There are other job descriptions that assist with APR and making sure the athletic department complies with its conference and the NCAA policies.

Eligibility. If a student-athlete is struggling or at risk of failing, participants would discuss student-athlete's strong points and weaknesses and provide services and support that they may need. Possibly students will need to study more to increase their grades. Four participants recommended tutorial services for students who were at risk of failing a course. Participant 4 stated, “send them to tutoring center and send them to their professor to see if there is any additional help.” Two participants reported meeting with student-athlete one on one weekly, and Participant 6 stated, “meet with this student weekly to make sure they are meeting those benchmarks.” Participants feel they should communicate with the professor when student-athletes are not performing well. Another solution two participants mentioned was to drop courses that the student is failing only if

it keeps them in compliance within the current semester. Providing tutoring is a popular response to this question, but also being proactive and sending out progress reports to check the status of student-athletes early on or before they reach the status of failing is essential.

Major selection. According to the data of athletic administrators, there can be many factors that influence major change and selection, and one is student-athletes not having a full expectation of the program, realizing the program is not for them, or not what they expected. Coaches, advisors, teammates, family, and student-athletes influence their major. Participant three stated they might come in "too ambitious." They later realize the major is too difficult for them. Participant 4 added, teammates have a significant impact on major selection; sometimes, a student may see another student-athlete not having to study as much and will change majors due to that reason or to take classes with their teammate.

Three participants stated initially, student-athletes select majors based off of what their parents want and later down the road realize that is not their passion. Participant 2 said, "sometimes you hear students say I know my mother or my parents want me to major in this and it's just not what they want. Student-athletes are influenced by their parents and they let their parents decide what major that they want."

Participant 2 also mentioned major change can occur, "if all identified that a major change is warranted because that student may be putting his eligibility in jeopardy and so it may be suggested that the student, they want to take a look at different major to continue on a path." In addition, "Being Division I we have put student and the advisors

in a predicament where they have to choose if they want to be academically eligible or they want to pursue a certain major."

Metrics and benchmarks. There are many academic policies athletic administrators must be knowledgeable in advising student-athletes. Athletic Administrators must be conversant with the NCAA rules. Participant 1 stated, "determine what may count towards progress towards degree is imperative." It's important to know initial eligibility, eligibility rules, and the Degree Plan. Participant 3 stated you have to be very familiar with what classes are degree applicable." Also, you need to know the 6-9-18-24-hour rule. Participant 2 mentioned each student-athlete is" "required to pass 6 hours between each academic term to remain eligible." There are various NCAA policies that athletic administrators must track.

According to participants, PTD helps maintain integrity and accountability amongst member institutions and student-athletes. One participant mentioned, "NCAA wants the student-athletes to graduate, and you cannot graduate if you are not meeting progress towards degree." Overall, participants felt the implementation of rules is used to assist the student on the path to graduation, obtain a degree, and a career after sports. Also, it ensures student-athletes are not focusing on just the athletic portion but academics first. It assists in keeping students on track to make sure they meet the benchmarks.

Consequences. Three of the participants had the same responses that the consequences for student-athletes who do not make PTD include unable to compete, sit out a semester or year, unable to practice, and deem ineligible. Participant 2 stated

consequences are, “no longer athletic academically eligible to compete, some students may sit out a semester or they may sit out the entire year for different sports and will not be able to practice.” In some cases, dependent on the coach, the student may or may not be able to practice with the team. Participant 5 stated every coach is “different you know some coach have different stipulations they might say I'm going to reduce your scholarship or I might take your scholarship.” Other consequences are possibly losing or have your scholarship reduced. You will possibly have to go to summer school to get back on track and will have to use own money to pay for the summer classes. Participant 4 stated, “if you are repeating a course, you have to pay for that course out of your pocket.” One participant said when students are not making PTD, the goal is to find a way to make the student academically healthy.

Participants were asked about the alignment of the PTD requirements to the DOE standards. Participant 7 stated, “I think that it definitely kind of mirrors the No Child Left Behind (NCLB).” Participant 2 stated, “The NCAA had somewhat of a metric that will measure retention rate and so it aligns with the federal graduation rate.” Some mentioned factors that possibly led to the alignment. Participant 3 stated, “there is still a push at certain institutions for student-athletes to remain eligible.” It was due to the PTD increase that happened many years ago because many student-athletes were exceeding the minimum requirements and many were not graduating, so the NCAA had to make a change. APR is how the NCAA measures graduation, eligibility, and retention. At the end of the academic year, universities receive grades based on those categories. These metrics are aligned with the FGR and the GSR and anyone receiving athletic aid will be

in the calculation. If you are a federally funded school, the funds come from the DOE, and you receive money based on retention. Participant 4 stated, “alot of our federal money comes from the DOE and it's based on the number of students we retain in classes. I know I have to submit a report on that, and so I think that with the implementation of how big APR is really and how big it is getting with the DOE that they do correlate.”

If benchmarks are not met, teams can lose postseason eligibility. Participant 2 stated, “we have to ask ourselves the question in the fall was a student eligible was the student retain at the institution. If the answer is yes, we put a one if the answer is no, we missed that point and so there are consequences for postseason ineligibility, so I think that the education Department has influenced the NCAA and vice versa.” APR is a major factor for the NCAA and participant believes it correlates with the DOE and impacts athletics metrics. Participant 4 stated, “Yes, I think it goes hand and hand PTD and APR because if you are not meeting PTD then more than likely you loss an eligibility point for us because of APR and if you loss an eligibility point that means you are not eligible to compete.”

There were not any discrepant cases. I did have a participant who completed the screening process and interview, but did not complete the member checking, so their information was not added to the coding sheet. Also, I had a participant who completed the screening guide and scheduled an appointment but canceled appointment because she needed permission to participate from leadership. All data was collected and coded meticulously, so the lived experience of the Division I HBCU participants could be portrayed accurately.

Summary

In Chapter 4, we discussed the findings and lived experiences of current student-athletes, graduate student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators from the Division I HBCU conference. We gain a better understanding of the impact of PTD and alignment to the DOE from different perspectives, titles, roles, within the athletic department.

The first research question stated: How has/did the PTD affect your major selection. One participant mentioned student-athletes sometimes have to choose the major or choose to play. From coding and analyzing the data, PTD does impact major selection for some student-athletes. In addition, there are other factors to consider on the Division I student-athletic journey, but the highlight is PTD. PTD does not affect all student-athletes directly because they try to understand the rigor of the major before declaring their major. They take into consideration if they will remain on track with PTD and with their athletic obligations.

The second research question stated: How has alignment of the PTD requirements to the DOE standards affected retention of student-athletes in their initial Majors? In interviewing participants, the 6-hour rule, PTD, APR, and GSR, came up a lot because all are metrics to getting student-athletes to graduate. If students are not eligible, they can lose a point towards their APR score. In addition, if they do not make PTD and become ineligible, that impacts APR, GSR, and FGR, which correlates to the DOE. The graduation rates of student-athletes who receive athletic aid are reported to the NCAA

and DOE. There is an alignment between PTD and the DOE and it increases the push to keep student-athletes eligible and on track with their PTD.

In Chapter 4, I was able to understand the lived experience of the participants in the study. We analyzed the data, discussed the themes that arose in the data, and summarized the meanings of the data. In Chapter 5, there will be a discussion of the integration, synthesis, and evaluation of the literature with my results. It will conclude with the study limitations, future study recommendations, and the implications for social change.

Chapter 5

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the impact of PTD on the degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree received by student-athletes attending Division I HBCUs. The impact of PTD amongst student-athletes in well-known conferences has been analyzed through quantitative studies. This qualitative phenomenological study consisted of interviewing current and previous HBCU student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators in the SWAC and MEAC, which are the only HBCU Division I conferences. With participants sharing their lived experiences, a deeper understanding was received of the impact of PTD on degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree by student-athletes.

Summary of Key Findings

Themes that emerged from the study provided substantial information on the impact of PTD and the alignment between PTD and the DOE. There is an impact on major selection amongst student-athletes that can come from various sources. The overall impact on selecting a major comes from PTD/rigor of program, athletic/competition schedule, and eligibility. All factors contributed to remaining on track with PTD. For current student-athletes, they knew what they wanted to major in before enrolling in the university. Student-athletes considered PTD/rigor of a program and managing athletics simultaneously and would typically not choose their desired major because they were not confident they could handle the major and athletics. There was an overall understanding

that PTD helps student-athletes to remain on track for graduation. Still, the concern was if the major being selected is what the student-athlete desired.

Graduated student-athletes all started with initial majors but changed their majors later in their academic year for different reasons. There was a common theme again of PTD/rigor of the program that was taken into consideration. Athletic advisors are in favor of PTD because it keeps student-athletes on track, but it can sometimes put them in predicaments of choosing between desired major or sport. In the findings, it highlighted that student-athletes and advisors are put in quandary in choosing between eligibility and desired major. Findings showed that there is an alignment of the PTD requirements to the DOE standards. All students who are on athletic aid are mandated to have reports submitted to the DOE by their member institution. NCAA has various policies implemented to meet standards and PTD impacts each policy such as the GSR, APR, and DOE reports, and that is why it is a significant policy.

Interpretation of the Findings

In Chapter 2, I highlighted key variables of the study through previous studies and articles. I reviewed Chapter 2 variables and analyzed if they related to the data collection of the student-athletes, athletic advisors, and athletic administrators who were interviewed. Themes identified in Chapter 4 found that student-athletes enjoy the nurturing feeling that is provided in the HBCU community. One participant stated he chose the HBCU based on the community and positive environment. The findings confirmed what Arroyo and Gasman (2014) found that students feel supported at

HBCUs. Graduated Student-Athlete Participant 4 stated her advisor assisted her through graduation, and it was a nurturing environment.

According to Terrell (2012), in Fall 2003, PTD increased from 25-50-75 to 40-60-80 percentages towards degree, and one of the athletic administrator participants recalled this change in policy and when there was an increase in PTD percentages. This study confirmed Terrell (2012) that the increase in PTD requirements had an opposite effect for many student-athletes (Terrell, 2012). Participants are selecting majors based on the rigor of the course program requirement, ensuring they could manage to remain on track with PTD and still compete. One participant stated, “You don't get to choose what you love, you kind of have to choose what you need instead”.

There were some student-athlete participants who stated they would select the same major if they were not a student-athlete. In contrast, some participants considered the rigor of the program as an athlete and said they would not select the same major if they were not a student-athlete. This highlighted Gerlach's (2017) concerns that student-athletes would choose different majors if they were not student-athletes. Before selecting a major, one participant already knew she could not complete nursing because of the program requirements and rigor of the program, so she selected a major where she knew she could maintain eligibility. Another participant changed from business to physical education because the math courses were too difficult and made it a challenge to remain on track, so he changed his major. He stated if he could do it all over again, he would have stayed in his major.

Every participant understood the consequences for when you do not meet PTD and APR requirements. Participants mentioned student-athletes could lose their scholarship, not compete or practice, and this aligned with previous studies discussed in Chapter 2 (Avery et al., 2016; Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Chandler, 2014; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). A participant discussed student-athletes who receive aid have to report APR and GSR benchmarks to the conference, NCAA, and DOE (see Avery et al., 2016; Chrabaszcz, 2014; McCarty, 2014). Student-athletes have to meet the benchmarks in order to earn the points needed to have a successful report for the NCAA and DOE.

There were similar concern with athletic administrators; they saw student-athletes in a predicament of choosing between major or eligibility. This confirms Geralach's (2017) and Navarro's (2015) studies that the policies do not give freedom to choose a major and rather force a choice between eligibility and personal interest. Additionally, it confirmed, Kulics et al.'s (2015) study that stated that student-athletes are left with a difficult academic decision in which they must choose between eligibility and academic/professional career.

According to Severns (2017), community college transfer students are affected by the 40-60-80 rule because the rule makes remaining academically eligible a challenge; most community college transfers' majors are not declared upon arrival at a member institution (Severns, 2017). For the student-athlete to maintain eligibility, transfer student-athletes have to select a major that keeps them on track for PTD. The athletic administration efforts to get them back on track eventually and to their desired major,

does not always work. This confirms what Mamerow and Navarro (2014) stated. Another major finding was that the major selected is typically not the student-athletes' first choice.

All athletic administrator participants were student-athlete centered, informed student-athletes of the policies and encouraged students to change majors within the first 2 years of college and if not, you counseled on the consequences that could result in being ineligible. This confirms Terrell's (2012) study that if a student-athlete desires a career change, the student cannot simply change majors due to the impact of PTD, because the percentage of degree completion will not be met.

All athletic administrators understood the consequences for when the school did not meet PTD and APR requirements. Participants mentioned student-athletes could lose their scholarship, not compete or practice, and this aligned with previous studies discussed in Chapter 2 (Avery et al., 2016; Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Chandler, 2014; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). A key issue was the requirement for student-athletes who receive aid to report APR and GSR benchmarks to the conference, NCAA, and DOE (see Avery et al., 2016; Chrabaszcz, 2014; McCarty, 2014). Student-athletes had to meet the benchmarks in order to earn the points needed to have a successful report for the NCAA and DOE. Overall, participants considered competition/athletic schedule, PTD/rigor of program, and eligibility when selecting their major. One participant considered program requirements to see if she could meet program requirements with the hectic athletic schedule. Half of current and graduate student-athletes changed their majors for different reasons. Two participants who did not change their major did not select their desired major due to the rigor of the program and concern of not being able to remain on track

with PTD. Athletic advisors, athletic administrators, and student-athletes feel they must choose between eligibility and major. This exemplifies, PTD policy needs to be discussed in detail with researchers and policymakers in order to enhance student-athletes' academic experience.

Theoretical Framework

Current and graduated student-athletes and athletic administrators provided a holistic view of the tenets of ACF. The sharing of their lived experiences supported the beliefs and values within a coalition (student athletes, school athletic administrators) can be used to influence a policy change amongst interest of all concerned. This study provided an opportunity to take an in-depth look at the experiences of student athletes and school sport administrators are affect the coalition between the DOE, NCAA, and member HBCUs. A HBCU's Policy-oriented learning is at the foundation of the HBCU's Division one focus on ensuring student athletes meet the requirements of the PTD and DOE by supporting the athlete's selection of a program of study that allows maintaining their scholarship requirements, continued participation in the rigorous athletic program schedule, and the school's need to meet DOE requirements. Sabatier & Weible (2014) stated policy-oriented learning comprises lived experiences, feedback, and perspectives from coalitions and individual actors. Many actors can contribute to policy-oriented learning. The interviews of various viewpoints, titles, and experiences allowed for an exploration of themes and confirmation of variables mentioned in Chapter 2. As stated in Chapter 2, according to Sabatier and Weible (2014), those who share the same beliefs can create advocacy coalitions and act upon those beliefs to bring awareness to an issue.

The athletic advisors and administrators play a significant role as front runners for the student-athletes, as athletic administrator Participant 7 stated. Also, current and graduate student-athletes were able to provide an impact as a primary group affected by the policy. They were able to dig deeper into the effect of PTD. Through policy-oriented learning, ACF can transform, initiate, or influence policy formulation. This study's interviews and the lived experiences expressed resulted in a catalyst for policy formulation.

The study confirmed that PTD helps keep students on track for graduation but causes student-athletes to choose eligibility over major. Student-athletes research the rigor of a desired major and analyze if it will keep them on track with PTD. PTD is a policy that is connected with the APR and GSR policy. The APR and GSR policies are linked to reports that must be submitted to NCAA, conferences, and the DOE. This highlights the importance of PTD and the impact it has on participants but also additional policies. Participants expressed other policy concerns in the athletic community and the predicament they can be in sometimes in choosing between eligibility and major.

Limitations of the Study

Some participants focused on another topic and drifted away from the central issue phenomenon and while interesting was beyond the scope of the study. A major limitation is the small number of participants and while experiences were similar it was not possible to determine any particular pattern in which major selection was changed the most or selected as the one easiest to meet the PTD requirements. This limitation will be a useful area for future studies. Recruitment was challenging sometimes within the

athletic administration category as even with assurance of confidentiality and no school identification there were concerns about candid responses may have impacted some of the respondents.

Recommendations

Current findings and in recent literature show there is an impact of PTD on Division I HBCU student-athletes and overall Division I student-athletes (see Castle et al., 2014; Cox, 2016). Their major selection is based on the athletic competition/schedule, PTD/rigor of program, and eligibility. There was a common theme in the current findings with community college transfers, and when they enroll in universities, they are underprepared (see Severns, 2017). Future research is needed to see how community college student-athletes are prepared to transfer to a Division I University and the impact of PTD on transfers.

Participants expressed concerns about having to choose between eligibility and major. There needs to be a discussion on not putting student-athletes and athletic administrators in this predicament and what solutions could be implemented within the policy to make sure student-athletes can choose their desired major over eligibility each time. Further research is needed to identify ways to improve PTD amongst Division I student-athletes to put them in place to be able to compete and choose their desired major. Furthermore, determining how to implement career services within the athletic department for student-athletes is beneficial, so that they can gain more knowledge on their career versus the rigor of the program.

The impact of PTD is also on APR, GSR, and the DOE reports. Current findings highlight there is a link between PTD and the DOE. Student-athletes who receive athletic aid must have their GSR reported to the NCAA, conferences, and DOE (see Avery et al., 2016; Chrabaszcz, 2014; McCarty, 2014). Further research is needed on the combined policies of the NCAA and the DOE and the impact it has on Division I student-athletes.

The findings of the study have suggested that a conversation is needed within the Division I athletic department to explore the experiences of their student-athletes. Also, Division I universities should collaborate with community college athletic departments to ensure resources are implemented for transfer student-athletes to enroll in the Division I university academically prepared and able to choose a major they desire. Also, they should create Career Services specifically for student-athletes, so the passion for the major will allow the student-athletes to select the desired major while remaining on track with PTD.

Secondly, conversations with respective individuals within the NCAA organization who helps implement and create policies should be initiated. Student-athletes' experiences should be examined strategically with implementation of annual satisfaction surveys within operations of the athletic department and their policies. This will help inquire the mindset of the student-athlete, so they can have a paramount academic experience. Lastly, the NCAA and DOE needs to have a conversation on the impact of each entity's policies and understand what is working to provide all students with a quality education.

The overall goal of PTD is to hold student-athletes accountable, keep them on track until graduation, and make sure they have a paramount experience. Per policy, student-athletes do not have to declare their major until after their sophomore year. However, based on PTD, student-athletes need to know what they are majoring in their first year to have an idea of what courses to complete, so when they enter their junior year, they will be on track on completing 40% of their degree. I suggest that PTD percentages be adjusted. Initially, the percentages were 25-50-75 and are now 40-60-80 percentages towards the degree. It will benefit the student-athlete to lower PTD percentages. It will allow them to explore majors. Further studies are needed on what the appropriate percentages should be and could contribute to student-athletes being more comfortable selecting the major of their choice despite the program's rigor, athletic/competition schedule, that could impact their eligibility. In addition, there is a need to consider an interim step that allows for a warning status before they are deemed ineligible. This could provide flexibility and minimize the impact of PTD on major selection.

Implications

Positive Social Change

Through the ACF, participants were able to share their lived experiences and perspectives of the phenomenon. The current findings will benefit student-athletes, parents of future student-athletes, athletic administrators, NCAA, conferences, and DOE as it provides insight into the predicament of receiving an athletic scholarship that allows them to pursue their sports interest and but at the cost of not pursing a college education

in their major interest. The demands of maintaining their scholarship often forces the pursuit of a college education on paper only as the first choice in course of study must be abandoned to be able to afford to attend college. This can begin a dialogue between requirements of DOE, PTD, HBCUs, NCAA to work toward a better balance between student athletes need for their scholarship as a means to acquire an education and their commitment to the HBCU's athletic program. Division I HBCUs student-athletes can benefit from the findings to seek support from their administrators about their progress and what administrators go through to run a successful academic, athletic department.

Athletic Advisors can use the results to see the common themes amongst Division I HBCUs athletic departments and read the perspective of current and graduated student-athletes to better support student-athletes throughout the academic journey. As the research continues and information is discussed amongst researchers, policymakers, NCAA, and the DOE, they can brainstorm on ways to improve the policy for the betterment of student-athletes' academic experience and career afterwards while making sure benchmarks are met.

Conclusion

As an Athletic administrator stated, "NCAA has a commercial that says, most NCAA student-athletes will go pro in something other than sports." That is why athletic advisors and administrators want to see their student-athletes excel in their major and life. Division I HBCU athletic advisors and administrators are passionate about what they do for their student-athletes. They want to see each athlete graduate in the major they desire. Majority of graduate student-athlete participants did not experience having an athletic

administrator and wish they had that support, but now 100 percent of current student-athletes have the support they need from their athletic administrators. That is growth. Growth is inevitable and is needed within the NCAA policies as well. Athletic Administrators do not want to be in a predicament in telling student-athletes you have to choose between major or eligibility. Student-athletes do not want to decide between majors based on athletic schedules/competition, PTD/rigor of program, and eligibility which all relates to PTD. They prefer to choose their desired major.

PTD provides accountability for student-athletes to keep them on track. Accountability is needed, however, understanding a student-athlete experience is necessary to update policies so student-athletes can have a paramount academic experience. In conclusion, the impact of PTD must be considered on all levels of the athletic hierarchy such as, but not limited to, Athletic Department, conferences, NCAA, and DOE. The collaboration of this topic will result in, student-athletes going professional in something other than sports and with a passion for their career.

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Appendix A: Screening Guide

Student-Athlete

1. Are you 18 years old or older?
   Yes No
   If you answered No, Stop. Unfortunately, you do not meet the requirements of the study.

2. Are you or were you currently enrolled at a HBCU Division I college or university?
   Yes No
   If you answered No, Stop. Unfortunately, you do not meet the requirements of the study.

3. Are you or were you a Scholarship Student-Athlete from 2003-Present?
   Yes No
   If you answered No, Stop. Unfortunately, you do not meet the requirements of the study.

4. Are you a Sophomore who declared a major, Junior, Senior, or graduate?
   Yes No
   If you answered No, Stop. Unfortunately, you do not meet the requirements of the study.

5. Do you understand Progress Towards Degree (PTD)?

   Yes No
   If you answered No, Stop. Unfortunately, you do not meet the requirements of the study.

Athletic Advisor and Athletic Administrators

1. Have you ever worked or was employed at a Division I HBCU as an athletic advisor or as athletic administrator?
   Yes No
   If you answered No, Stop. Unfortunately, you do not meet the requirements of the study.

2. Do you understand Progress Towards Degree (PTD)?
   Yes No
   If you answered No, Stop. Unfortunately, you do not meet the requirements of the study.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Guide
Student-Athletes Who Graduated

Date:	
Start Time:	
Pseudonym:	
Location of Interview:	Via Phone-In home office
Introduction:	Hi, this is April Chestnut. Thank you very much for participating in this study. As you know, the purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the impact of Progress Towards Degree (PTD) on the degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree received by student-athletes attending Division I Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
Continuing Introduction:	This should last about 45 minutes. After the interview, I will transcribe the recording and I will transfer it into Microsoft Excel. Once I have downloaded your transcript, we will complete our second appointment that will be approximately 15 minutes. Any questions?
Continuing Introduction:	I will not identify you by name in my documents, and no one will be able to identify you or university with your answers. You can choose to stop this interview at any time. Also, I want to remind you that this interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. Do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin?

Question 1	When you decided to enroll in your university, what was your main purpose of choosing your university?
Question 2	At what point (Freshmen, Sophomore, Junior, or Senior Year) in your academic career, did you know what you wanted to major in?
Question 3	As a graduate Division I HBCU Student-Athlete, what did you consider when selecting your major?
Question4	Have you ever changed your major and Why?
Question5	Have you ever been declared ineligible based on PTD? If you were declared ineligible based on PTD, what did you do and Why?
Question 6	How did the PTD affect your major selection?

Question7	What or who was the most important factor that influence your major change or selecting a major as a student-athlete? Why?
Question 8	Do you feel your initial major was a challenging major and if yes how did you handle the challenging courses?
Question 9	Do you feel like you are successful in your career due to your choice of major? If Yes, Why? If No, Why?
Question 10	If you were not a student-athlete, would you have chosen your major Why or why not?
Question 11	If you could inform current student-athletes of one pointer pertaining to choosing a major, what would it be?
Question 12	Thank you for your answers. Do you have anything else you'd like to share?
Additional Notes:	

	Do you have any questions for me? Before I let you go, Let's schedule an appointment for next week, so we can discuss your transcriptions. Again, all information is confidential, and your name will not be mention in the study. Thank you for your time. Goodbye.
End Time:	
Conclusion:	

HBCU Division I Athletic Advisors, Athletic Directors, Coaches, or Athletic Administrators.

Date:	
Start Time:	
Pseudonym:	
Location of Interview:	Via Phone-In home office
Introduction:	Hi, this is April Chestnut. Thank you very much for participating in this study. As you know, the purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the impact of Progress Towards Degree (PTD) on the degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree received by African-American student-athletes attending Division I Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
	This should last about 45 minutes. After the interview, I will transcribe the recording and transfer it into Microsoft Excel. Once I have downloaded your transcript, we will complete our second appointment that will be approximately 15 minutes. Any questions?
Continuing Introduction:	I will not identify you in my documents, and no one will be able to identify you or university with your answers. You can choose to stop this interview at any time. Also, I want to remind you that this interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. Do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin?

Question 1:	What is/was your Title and Job description at the Division I HBCU you were or are employed for?
Question 2:	Can you name and describe a few Academic Policies you must be knowledgeable with to advise student-athletes?
Question 3:	When students are in danger of failing a course, how do you respond and how do you advise them?
Question4:	What or who do you think is the most important factor that influence student-athletes major change or selection and why?
Question 5:	In your own words, what is Progress Towards Degree (PTD)?
Question 6:	What are the consequences of student-athletes who do not make PTD?
Question 7:	Why is PTD significant within NCAA member institution?
Question 8:	How has alignment of the Progress Towards Degree requirements to the United States Department of Education standards affect retention of student-athletes in their initial Majors?

Question 9:	In your position or previous position, if you can change one thing about any NCAA Academic Policy or specifically PTD what would it be and Why?
Question 10:	Thank you for your answers. Do you have anything else you'd like to share?
	Do you have any questions for me? Before I let you go, I want to schedule an appointment which will last 15 minutes, so we can discuss your transcripts. Again, all information is confidential and your name will not be mention in the study. Thank you for your time. Goodbye.
End Time:	
Conclusion:	

HBCU Division I Student-Athletes

Date:	
Start Time:	
Pseudonym:	
Location of Interview:	Via Phone- In home office
Introduction:	Hi, this is April Chestnut. Thank you very much for participating in this study. As you know, the purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the impact of Progress Towards Degree (PTD) on the degree choices and perceived academic value of the degree received by African-American student-athletes attending Division I Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
	This should last about 45 minutes. After the interview, I will transcribe the recording and transfer it into Microsoft Excel. Once I have downloaded your transcript, we will complete our second appointment that will be approximately 15 minutes. Any questions?

Continuing Introduction:	I will not identify you in my documents, and no one will be able to identify you or university with your answers. You can choose to stop this interview at any time. Also, I need to let you know that this interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. Do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin?
Question 1	When you decided to enroll in your university, what was your main purpose of going to college?
Question 2	At what point (Freshmen, Sophomore, Junior, or Senior Year) in your academic career, did you know what you wanted to major in?
Question3	As a Division I HBCU Student-Athlete, what did you consider when selecting your major?

Question 4	Did you ever change your major? If yes, Why?
Question5	Do you feel your initial major was a challenging major and if yes how did you handle the challenging courses?
Question6	If you were declared ineligible based on NCAA Academic policies, what did you do and Why? If you are ever declared ineligible based on NCAA Academic policies, what would you do and Why?
Question7	What or who was the most important factor that influence your major change or selecting a major as a student-athlete? Why?
Question 8	How has/did PTD affect your major selection?

Question 9	If you were not a student-athlete, would you still choose the same major? Why or Why not?
Question 10	If you could inform current student-athletes of one pointer pertaining to choosing a major, what would it be?
	Thank you for your answers. Do you have anything else you'd like to share?
	Before I let you go, I want to schedule an appointment which will last 15 minutes. Again, all information is confidential and your name will not be mention in the study. Thank you for your time. Goodbye.
End Time:	
Conclusion:	