2020

First Generation African American College Student-Athletes and their Lived Experiences

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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MA, St. Ambrose University, 2007

BS, Viterbo University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

April 2020

Abstract

First-generation African American male student-athletes are faced with challenges when attending a four-year institution of higher education. Many of these individuals are leaving their family and hometown for the first time, which can cause them to feel lonely and as if they are an impostor. Using the imposter syndrome lens as the conceptual framework, this case study sought to understand the experiences of first-generation African American male student-athletes at a primarily Caucasian NCAA Division III campus. Three participants responded to recruitment flyer for the face to face interviews. Themes derived from the analysis of individual interviews with 3 participants and archival records. After analyzing all content, the themes were reviewed and defined. The themes were key factors for enrolling in a four-year college, tapping into athletics to attend and navigate the college campus, personal circumstances faced in college, navigating course load, sense of community, key challenges facing African American male student-athletes, navigational strategies of first-generation African American male student-athletes, and lessons learned from the overall college experience. Findings revealed that tutoring, on campus social activities, mentoring from teammates and coaches may encourage future generations to attend college to improve themselves as well as their communities. This study will promote social change by informing college administrators, coaches, high school faculty, and mentors of practical ways to equip first-generation African American student-athletes with the necessary resources to excel in college such as mentoring, tutoring, and service-learning.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my mother Susie Holman, my brother, Faraji Martin, as well as my mentors and basketball coaches throughout the years who have helped me on this journey. Also, I would like to acknowledge my chair, Dr. Bold, and my committee member, Dr. Benoliel for encouraging me to complete this process. Lastly, I want to acknowledge the youth and the people I grew up with in Racine, Wisconsin who inspired me to complete this process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

First-Generation African American College Student-Athletes

First-generation African American college student-athletes often face challenges when attending a four year institution. Many of these students come from low-income backgrounds. They lack a parent who has the experience of attending college (Irby, 2012). Irby (2012) found that first-generation African American men navigate the college application process without the support of their parents. Also, a first-generation African American college student-athlete may experience isolation because they are leaving the place they have been familiar with for many years for a new environment unknown to them (Wang, 2014).

The unique nature of a first-generation African American student-athlete transitioning to a predominately Caucasian college campus requires support from family, friends, and college personnel (Wang, 2014). Furthermore, these students have to make new friends, adapt to the new environment, and perform well in academics and sports (Wang, 2014). Wang (2014) concluded that first-generation students struggle due to having a lack of relationships with teachers, resources, and someone who attended college to assist them through the process. However, they did well when they believed there was support from teachers. Stephens, Brannon, Markus, and Nelson (2015) discussed the importance of providing resources to low-income students who have parents with no college experience. Resources considered include being paired with individuals that can help them navigate through college life (Stephens et al., 2015).

Background of the Problem

The transition to college means that student-athletes will be called on to adapt socially, academically, and in their sport (Rubin & Moses, 2017). Moreover, balancing their time between being social, studying, and competing in their sport can be challenging (Rubin & Moses, 2017). Comeaux (2016) found that African American student-athletes at primarily Caucasian colleges have a difficult time due to feelings of social isolation, racial discrimination, limited support, and lack of integration. I found no research looking at how first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution.

Providing programs can assist African American student-athletes in exceling in their courses. Gill Jr and Farrington (2014) found that assistance for African American student-athletes, such as, an intensive learning program helped them improve their grade point average. Stephens, Hamedani, and Destin (2014) concluded that disadvantaged students' different backgrounds matter and they could be successful in college given the appropriate tools. Also, researchers have found that African American male college students can be successful if they work hard (Strayhorn, 2014). Rutledge and Michael (2017) found in their qualitative study at a primarily Caucasian institution that being driven to do well in school and athletics along with self-determination are the motivating forces that prepare African American and diverse student athletes for success and a variety of ventures as they navigate higher education. Strayhorn (2014) found that

through continuous effort and constant hard work, African American men can sustain academic success in college.

The experiences of first-generation African American college student-athletes at a Division III institution have not been discussed in the literature. My study sought to provide a better understanding and address the research question: How do first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution? Roberson (2017) said that many African American male student-athletes' journeys in post-secondary institutions are seldom brought to light. The focus is often on negative stereotypes of young African American men being criminals, incarcerated, or unintelligent athletes (Roberson, 2017). Therefore, the participants in this study offered insight into the journey of these first-generation African American college student-athletes to assist in pinpointing useful strategies that can be used by future first-generation African American male student-athletes in their pursuit of a four-year degree.

A theoretical framework that can offer a better understanding of their experiences is imposter feelings (Galina, 2017). Impostor feelings entail having multiple stressors, including fear to succeed, affect experiences, opportunities, and outcomes of ethnic minorities on college campuses (Cokely, McClain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013). This framework will be detailed later in this chapter and again in Chapter 2.

Statement of the Problem

The experience of attending higher education and adjusting to a new environment can be a challenge for all students (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). According to

Stephens, et al. (2014) first-generation college students from challenging circumstances are confronted with barriers in this process, including being unprepared for college, coming from a low socioeconomic background, and lacking family support. Additional barriers for these students include being underrepresented on campus and lacking high academic self-confidence. Also, two-thirds of all African American men who enroll in college leave before attaining their degree (Strayhorn, 2014). As a result, African American men have the top attrition rate across all races and both sexes (Strayhorn, 2014).

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (2016) reported that only 47% of first-generation student-athletes strongly agreed that they would have enrolled in a four-year institution had they not participated in a sport. According to Comeaux (2016) African American student-athletes at primarily Caucasian colleges have a difficult time due to feelings of social isolation, racial discrimination, limited support, and lack of integration. Comeaux (2016) concluded that there is a need for more research to understand the relationship among African American male student-athletes and faculty.

While the existing research mentioned presents some key findings, I have found no studies exploring through the lens of first-generation African American male student-athletes on how they navigate college while attending primarily Caucasian NCAA Division III colleges. In my review of literature across four databases, I found only six articles addressing how first-generation African American male student-athletes navigate college at NCAA Division I, II, and III colleges. Warner (2016) conducted a qualitative study with interviews of 19 Division I first-generation student-athletes. Turner (2017)

conducted a qualitative case study with eight first-generation student-athletes attending a NCAA Division II university. Gill Jr. and Farrington (2014) used a learning program to assist NCAA Division I first-generation college student-athletes transition to college life. Naphy (2016) conducted a qualitative study with open-ended interviews of first year student-athletes at a Division III NCAA school to better understand this population. A study was conducted on leveling the playing field for first-generation student-athletes attending college (Ortagus & Merson, 2015). Lindemann-Litzsinger (2017) explored high student-athletes who attended a private college and found a possible relationship between participation in varsity high school athletics and graduation of first-generation student-athletes. The six aforementioned studies will be discussed further in the literature review.

I found one study that looks at these individuals' social and academic experiences at a primarily Caucasian Division III post-secondary college in Pennsylvania (Scarcella, 2016). Scarcella (2016) used a case study to explore six male and female first-generation student-athletes social and academic experiences at a Division III college. Interviews, observations of student-athletes, and documents were used to present a rich description of their experiences and lead to a greater understanding of their social and academic experiences (Scarcella, 2016). As a result, seven themes emerged from the study, including (a) having support from their coaches, (b) having good relationships with their counselors, (c) being part of an athletic team, (d) having concerns about financial hardships, (e) managing their time at the college, (f) dealing with being away from home, and (g) the importance of their academics (Scarcella, 2016).

The study gave a better understanding of the challenges, supports, and unique experiences of first-generation student-athletes on a Division III college campus (Scarcella, 2016). Scarcella (2016) said that future studies should explore first-generation student-athlete seniors. The current study will include seniors. Furthermore, Scarcella (2016) study failed to address specifically first-generation African American male college student-athletes and how they navigate college at a primarily Caucasian NCAA Division III institution.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to understand the experience of first-generation African American male college student-athletes in higher education. No existing research has looked through the lens of disadvantaged first-generation African American male student-athletes on how they navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution.

Research Question

RQ: How do first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution?

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative multiple case study will explore the experiences of first-generation African American male student-athletes through an impostor feelings lens. Clance and Imes (1978) used the impostor phenomenon to depict the characteristics and actions of a group of high-achieving women who were fighting to internalize their success. The women communicated that they felt like impostors for failing to attribute

their success to their talents in spite of many accomplishments and honors (Clance & Imes, 1978). Cokely, McClain, Enciso, and Martinez (2013) conducted a study of three ethnic minority student groups and found that there was a significant connection between minority student status stress and imposter feelings with psychological stress and mental welfare among Asian, African American, and Latino students. Findings demonstrate that imposter feelings was the strongest predictor for psychological stress and welfare for these students (Cokely et al., 2013).

The impostor phenomenon can transpire amongst gender, racial/ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, and professions (University of Houston, 2017). People live in continuous fear of the reality of their abilities being exposed by their peers, leaders, and scholars thus; they work hard to be successful and receive acknowledgment while putting on a façade of being confident (University of Houston, 2017). Individuals with impostor feelings are commonly proficient at persuading their peers that they are self-confident, self-assured, and full of pride about their achievements (University of Houston, 2017). Impostor feelings provides a framework for understanding how multiple stressors, including fear to succeed impinge on experiences, opportunities, and outcomes of ethnic minorities on college campuses (Cokely et al., 2013). Galina (2017) discussed that first-generation students doing well in post-secondary education may feel that their success is not related to their hard work or abilities. Rather, these students credit their success to fluke or happenstance (Galina, 2017). Hence, I will use impostor feelings as a framework for understanding how first-generation student-athletes at a primarily white Division III institution navigate college.

Operational Definitions

African-American-: In this study, participants' self-identification of ethnicity is African-American.

First-generation college student-: Common language describing a student who is the first in their family to attend college.

Student-Athlete-: Common language referring to an individual who participates as a student and an athlete in their sport of choice full-time at an institution.

Impostor feelings-: A person fighting to internalize success and a persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud (Clance & Imes,1978).

Division III college Institution-: Common language describing a level of the NCAA that does not give out athletic scholarships to their athletes.

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)-: A non-profit and regulates student-athletes, colleges, and organizations.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations

This section I discussed the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of my research.

Assumptions

An assumption is that participants will answer openly and honestly. Also, an assumption is that participants will have experienced challenges in college.

Limitations

A limitation is the findings from this study will be limited to the interpretation of the participants. Moreover, a limitation is results may not be generalized to first-generation African American females student-athletes on a primarily Caucasian Division III campus.

Delimitations

A delimitation is the results are limited to first-generation African American males student-athletes on a primarily Caucasian Division III campus.

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Significance

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The current study could be an inspiration for future first-generation African American male college student-athletes to attend college. For example, there may be many first-generation African American male students who are thinking about attending college but do not do so due to fear. Fear may consist of these students being uncomfortable adapting to a predominately Caucasian institution due to lack of support from school personnel and campus life (Payne & Suddler, 2014). This qualitative multiple case study could give potential first-generation African American college student-athletes hope that they can attend college and be successful in the classroom and in sports.

Moreover, the study could contribute to college officials understanding athletes from diverse backgrounds, learning ways to assist these student-athletes, and providing the necessary resources to help them excel in the classroom and in athletics. For example, colleges and universities could look at past practices with this population and begin to

reshape their institutional cultures, teaching styles, and educational support systems to be geared toward these student-athletes. Higher education institutions may consider hiring first-generation professors, coaches, and staff to work with and mentor first-generation African American male student-athletes. Also, college campuses may explore having a first-generation college student club on campus where students can learn from upper class students and mentors on how to navigate college, refrain from dropping out, and be successful as a student and an athlete.

Summary of Chapter One

The life of a first-generation college student-athlete includes being away from family, friends, and peers while trying to be the first in your family to attend a four year college. Often these student-athletes have guilt and fear due to they having transitioned to better themselves while leaving behind their support system. Researchers have found that despite these individuals improving their life they struggle to accept the success they may achieve while attending college, thus making them feel as if they are an impostor. Studies have found ways to assist first-generation college African American students in being successful on primarily Caucasian college campuses include providing mentors, resources, and programs. However, there is no literature that discusses how these students navigate college as a first-generation African American male student-athlete. This study sought to uncover the experiences of first-generation African American male student-athletes on how they navigate college, accept success, and describe the barriers they face at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution. This chapter will be followed by a review of the related literature in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I will describe the study

design; participants, procedures, assessments to be used and how information will be gathered and assessed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This section I reviewed past literature on how first-generation African American student-athletes navigated college on a predominately Caucasian college campus. I reviewed how first-generation African American student-athletes navigated college on the NCAA Division I and II level. I found one study that explored explore six male and female first-generation student-athletes social and academic experiences at a Division III college (Scarcella, 2016). I failed to find literature on how NCAA Division III first-generation African American student-athletes navigated college on a predominately Caucasian college campus. What I found is a gap in research.

Literature Research Strategy

I performed the literature research for this study was using a number of sources. I used Google Scholar for general search terms "*first-generation student-athlete*" and "*African American male student-athletes*". I performed a narrow search on the Google Scholar website using the terms "*first-generation African American male college student-athletes*". The NCAA website provided information regarding student-athletes and the difference in Division I, II, and III collegiate athletics.

I searched the EBSCOHOST database with the key terms "*challenges of student-athletes*", "*African American male athletes*". A narrow search was conducted using the key terms "*barriers of African American student-athletes*". ProQuest provided articles on African American college student-athletes'. SocIndex was used to search additional articles of student-athletes' experiences on campus. I found no studies that explored how

first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution. Moreover, through my searches, I found one study that explored six male and female first-generation student-athletes' social and academic experiences at a Division III college (Scarcella, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

The present qualitative multiple case study will investigate the experiences of first-generation African American male student-athletes through an impostor feelings lens. Aspelmeier, Love, McGill, Elliott, and Pierce (2012) said that first-generation students frequently internalize their educational accomplishments (Aspelmeier et al., 2012). Moreover, as a result of internalizing their educational accomplishments first-generation students are at-risk of experiencing impostor feelings (Galina, 2017). Impostor feelings are when people reach a high level of success and believe that their achievement is not attributed to their hard work or talent (Clance & Imes, 1978). Rather, they credit their accomplishments to external factors including flukes, coincidences, or the simplicity of an endeavor (Clance & Imes, 1978). The feelings of being not genuine has a negative effect on their performance in school, incorporating with society, and emotional well-being (Clance & Imes, 1978). Clance and Imes (1978) used the imposter phenomenon to depict the characteristics and actions of a group of high-achieving women who were fighting to internalize their success. The women communicated that they felt like an impostor for failing to attribute their success to their talents in spite of many accomplishments and honors (Clance & Imes, 1978).

Cokely et al. (2013) conducted a study of three ethnic minority student groups and found a significant connection between minority student status stress and impostor feelings with psychological stress and mental welfare of Asian, African American, and Latino students. Findings demonstrate that impostor feelings was the strongest predictor for psychological stress and welfare for these students (Cokely et al., 2013). Impostor feelings thus provide a framework for understanding how multiple stressors including fear to succeed affect experiences, opportunities, and outcomes of ethnic minorities on college campuses (Cokely et al., 2013). King (2016) found in a study of African American student-athletes at a predominately Caucasian institution that they suffered from feeling as if they were impostors due to believing they did not belong despite their success in sports and the classroom. The study focused on five high-achieving African American student-athletes at a primarily Caucasian Division I NCAA institution (King, 2016). King (2016) said the goal of his study was to use the findings to assist African American male student-athletes, parents, coaches who work at the Division I level, professors, college personnel, and other stakeholders. In the current study, I explored the experiences of first-generation African American male college student-athletes and how they navigate college, accept success, and describe the barriers they face, at a primarily Caucasian NCAA Division III institution.

Review of the Literature

Galina (2017) referred to first-generation college students as individuals who are the first in their family to attend college. Whereas Unverferth (2012) described first-generation students as individuals who may have completed some college. According to Comeaux (2013), first-year student-athletes deal with change socially and academically at the collegiate level. Also, before enrolling in college, these students deal with barriers including being low income, having a lack of educational resources available to them, as well as assistance with deciding on a college (Galina, 2017). Turner (2017) conducted a qualitative case study with eight first-generation student-athletes attending a NCAA Division II university. He referred to first-generation college students as individuals who were first in their family to enroll in post-secondary education (Turner, 2017). Turner (2017) found that the first-generation student-athletes did not know what to expect by attending college but knew that receiving a scholarship through athletics would improve their life immensely. Furthermore, the search for a college to attend was a struggle due to having a lack of support from their parents who had never attended higher education and failed to know how the process worked (Turner, 2017). However, each participant used their athletic talents to attend college (Turner, 2017). Turner (2017) suggested that higher education should offer first-generation student-athletes knowledge on classroom size, culture of the school, what is expected as a student-athlete, and what supports are available to them prior to attending the college to ensure they can be successful in their sport and academics (Turner, 2017).

According to Wohn (2013) first generation college students struggled with knowing what is expected with the college application process. Moreover, first generation college students have less support from their parents than their non-first-generation college student counterparts (Wohn, 2013). Falcon (2015) said that many first-generation college students attending deficient schools that lack enough highly qualified teachers and are underfunded are directly correlated with the type of education they receive. Gamez-Vargas and Oliva (2013) asserted that another barrier for these students is a shortage of understanding the value of the high school core curriculum and how it relates to being prepared and ready for higher education amid first-generation college students' parents.

Enrolling in higher education and growing accustomed to a new atmosphere can be a challenge for all scholars (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). According to Stephens, et al., (2014), first-generation undergraduates from difficult backgrounds are threatened with barriers in this process including being college ready, deriving from a low socioeconomic background, and lacking family support. Sadberry and Mobley (2013) said that college student-athletes have challenges adapting to the campus environment, including their ability to fit in and abide by educational and social expectations; this particularly true for African American student-athletes. A case study of 10 first-generation students and six faculty at a small private college looked at the barriers the students faced (Valdez, 2016). Barriers included students being afraid of the professors, which caused them to have minimal interactions with them (Valdez, 2016). Valdez

(2016) found that first-generation students suffer from leaving their family, friends, and relationships behind when they enroll in a college setting.

Wilkins (2014) found that first-generation African American student-athletes on a predominately Caucasian campus struggle to relate to African American men who were non-athletes. The norm on campus was for these athletes to associate with their fellow athletes and treat other African Americans differently (Wilkins, 2014). According to Smith et al., (2016) several African American students at a predominately Caucasian institution suffered from being treated like criminals due to campus police harassing them on and off campus. Smith et al., (2016) expressed that, without higher education, many African-American men will have limited opportunities to climb the socioeconomic ladder. Wang (2014) concluded that first-generation students struggled due to having a lack of a relationship with teachers, resources, and failing to have someone who attended college assist them through the process. However, they did well when they believed there was support from teachers. Comeaux (2016) concluded that there is a need for more research to understand the relationship between African American male student-athletes and college personnel.

Stephens et al. (2014) argued that these students' diverse backgrounds matter and they could be successful in college given the appropriate tools. Irby (2012) said supports include faculty, advisors, mentors, and participating in extracurricular activities. Fortune (2015) suggested that first-generation African American men on a predominately Caucasian campus can succeed if given a support system that encourages them that they

can flourish academically and socially. Support systems include having peer mentors,

advisors, and faculty who have special training in working with first-generation African

American men (Fortune, 2015). Dupree (2012) argued that for many of African American

students having a lack of opportunity at the collegiate level results in them struggling to

improve their socioeconomic status. Furthermore, failing to have a solid educational

history could lead to them dropping out of college and using illegal activity to survive in

society, possibly resulting in them becoming part of the criminal justice system and being

imprisoned (Dupree, 2012).

African American Student-Athletes

Wang's (2012) qualitative study included semi-structured interviews of 30 first-

generation African American students who had mentors on campus. The themes that

emerged included (a) the importance of attaining good grades, (b) appreciating being in

school, (c) increasing future potential, (d) making positive decisions, and (e) having

support and encouragement from their mentors when selecting a course or major (Wang,

2012). Wang (2012) discussed that having mentors can serve as a way to assist first-

generation African American students with being successful in academics and on a

college campus. According to Wang (2012) knowing what messages students are

receiving and should be receiving could assist professors in understanding how they can

best serve and counsel first-generation college students.

Warner (2016) conducted a qualitative study with interviews of 19 Division I

first-generation student-athletes. She explored how these athletes deal with their various

roles, and balance their athletic performance, academic affairs, autonomy, and possible stereotypes (Warner, 2016). Student-athletes at the collegiate level encounter a unique set of demands, pressures, and experiences (Warner, 2016). Students competing in college athletics take on the burden of being a student and an athlete, alongside balancing social relationships, including friendships, family matters, and bonds with fellow players and coaches (Warner, 2016). Warner (2016) concluded that future studies should explore first-generation student-athletes' individualities and their lived experiences to gain a better understanding of how to help these individuals as scholars, and distinct individuals with complex needs.

Owens (2015) used a qualitative study and interviews with African American student-athletes at a primarily Caucasian NCAA Division I institution in the Midwest to understand their lived experiences on the college campus. A case study revealed that each participant felt they were committing more time to their individual sports than their academics (Owens, 2015). Owens (2015) found that each participant felt isolated due to primarily being around teammates and failing to see people who looked like them on campus. Also, the participants received social support from teammates and mentors during their time on campus (Owens, 2015). Owens (2015) study revealed that student-athletes met some non-athletes on campus but they associated with teammates and coaches while on campus. According to Owens (2015), college administrators should find ways to engage African American student-athletes on predominately Caucasian college campuses. Furthermore, Owens (2015) said there is a need for more studies to explore how African American student-athletes navigate a college campus.

Strayhorn (2014) found that two-thirds of all African American men that enroll in college quit, falling short of receiving their degree (Strayhorn, 2014). Thus, African American men have the uppermost attrition rate amid all race and both sexes (Strayhorn, 2014). NCAA (2016) reported that only 47% of first-generation student-athletes strongly agreed they would not have joined a four-year institution had they not participated in a sport. According to Comeaux (2016), African American student-athletes at predominantly Caucasian colleges have a tough time due to feelings of social isolation, racial discrimination, limited assistance, and lack of integration. Moreover, African American Athletes fail to experience a typical academic way of life that traditional college student experiences due to the demands of training for their sport and traveling throughout their season; thus, they must learn time management skills (Comeaux, 2016). First Generation African American student athletes have the task of balancing family, friendship, being a student and athlete, as well as, maintaining a relationship with their instructors, teammates, and coaches (Comeaux, 2016).

According to Villegas (2015) some student-athletes recruited for their talents in a sport come from underprivileged households and are frequently unprepared for college work on the collegiate level. However, there have been supports put in place on college campuses to ensure student-athletes to do well in their sport and to ultimately graduate (Villegas, 2015). Villegas (2015) conducted a qualitative study of lived experiences of seven African American former college football student-athletes that participated in Division I NCAA sport. The study revealed that being involved in college athletics, being encouraged by professors, academic staff, coaches, and mentors, as well as, performing at

a high level in their academics, growing as a person, and social capital played a role for these individuals being successful before and after graduation (Villegas, 2015).

Gill Jr. and Farrington (2014) found in their study that assisting first generation African American student-athletes can be a way to help alleviate their transition to college with implementing programs such as the intensive learning program which focuses on these students adapting to campus life, sports, and their academics. Stephens, Brannon, et al., (2015) found that these students who lack parents that have attended some type of higher education need resources such as peer mentors to assist them with navigating on a college campus. Strayhorn (2014) expressed that African American student-athletes on a predominately Caucasian campus were successful if they gave a great effort in the classroom.

Webb (2015) through a qualitative narrative inquiry and photo elicitation of NCAA African American athletes competing in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math on a primarily Caucasian college campus found six themes from the individuals participating in the study. The first theme discussed that being a student athlete takes sacrifice in the classroom and in the sport (Webb, 2015). The second theme that emerged was race and racism (Webb, 2015). African-American student athletes believed they were being watched and had to be careful on how they represented themselves on campus (Webb, 2015). A third theme included having the ability to breakdown athletics and coursework down (Webb, 2015). Webb (2015) expressed that participants felt that the tutors were more concerned with the athletes staying eligible rather than working toward

a major. The fourth theme included the students being humbled by the academics (Webb, 2015). According to Webb (2015) despite being an African American student athlete or a non-African American student-athlete the academics was challenging and hard for all students attending the college. Webb (2015) discussed how each participant believes that their family and community support played a role in them being in college. The last theme included the participants discussing how being a college athlete is like a business due to it is about generating money and winning (Webb, 2015). Webb (2015) suggested that African American athletes should be offered the platform to reveal and share their experiences on college campuses.

Furthermore, student-athletes face being alienated from the non-athletes on campus due to they are around their teammates the majority of their time (Tucker, et al., 2016). Student-athletes have to deal with the reality that they could be cut and lose their scholarship if they have a career ending injury (Dean & Reynolds II, 2017). Gayles and Baker (2015) said student-athletes have the challenge of demonstrating the same dedication used for learning plays and techniques to perform in practices and games at a high level to studying and doing well on a test.

Patterson (2015) discussed that over the years the NCAA has been well paid from student-athletes performance on the court and field. Specifically, African American male student-athletes have made the most profits for Division I institutions of higher education by performing well in basketball and football (Patterson, 2015). According to Patterson (2015), the NCAA have exploited African American student-athletes and they are

pressured to do well on the field and court to increase revenue while failing to have the opportunity to experience campus life with non-college athletes, concentrating on their studies, and preparing for life after sports. Student-athletes at the Division I and II level are unable to have a job during the school year which can be a burden on the athletes financially to pay for things that the scholarship does not cover (Gould IV, William, Wong, & Weitz, 2015). The current study will explore through the lens of first-generation African American male college student-athletes how they navigate college at a primarily Caucasian NCAA Division III institution.

First-Generation African American Male Student-Athletes

First-generation college students that enroll in higher education are at a higher risk of failing to obtain an Associates or Bachelor degree (Hutchison, 2015). Hutchison (2015) study used focus groups to understand the experiences of first-generation and non-first-generation college students. The study revealed that non-first-generation students were prepared for the academic rigors and social life of a college campus compared to firs-generation college students (Hutchinson, 2015). Hutchinson (2015) found that first-generation college students and non-first-generation college students had similar reasons for interacting with college faculty. According to Hutchinson (2015) both groups had interest in attaining letters of recommendation, while being comfortable around their peers in the classroom and faculty, as well as, relevance of the class were generally mentioned as encouragements to have a dialect with faculty (Hutchinson, 2015).

Stebleton and Soria (2012) found in a study comparing non-first-generational and first-generational college students that first-generation students are more likely to come upon hindrances that compromise their success in the classroom compared to their counterparts. First-generation college students encountered more difficulties with having to work, take care of family, poor English and math skills, along with poor study habits (Stebleton & Soria 2012). Also, compared to non-first-generation students, first-generation college students had more emotional issues such as being unhappy and stressed out (Stebleton & Soria 2012). Stebleton and Soria (2012) said that more qualitative studies should be conducted to understand the lived experience of first-generation college students.

Sato, Hodge and Eckert (2017) explored four African American men and two women at a NCAA Division IA Football Bowl Subdivision lived experiences through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were explored using a constant comparative approach and revealed that the student athletes had been subject to academic challenges and negative social dynamics; however they had access to resources and training in relation to athletics (Sato et al., 2017). Sato et al. (2017) said to best support African American student athletes college officials, sports coaches, and non-student athletes need to respect and value the identities, as well as the culture of student-athletes from various backgrounds.

Worthy (2017) conducted a qualitative study on African American male student athletes participating in college basketball from high-crime backgrounds. According to

Worthy (2017) these college basketball players are at greater risk of committing crimes on campus than students from stable homes. The study revealed that college coaches positive relationships with African American student athletes has an influence on their players making positive decisions when they are not around (Worthy, 2017). According to Worthy (2017) the study indicates that when disadvantaged African American student athletes feel that they can gain knowledge from the coach, while continuing to contributing to the relationship, then they grow into confident student–athletes. Results from the study showed that when disadvantaged African American student athletes report a positive relationship with their coaches, they become more confident in the classroom and they have control over their feelings and actions, as well as, display less aggression (Worthy, 2017). Worthy (2017) said that the findings indicate that the coaches-players relationship can be key for athletes that come from high-crime societies, due to they are at a greater risk for committing crimes in adulthood. Coaches need to understand that they play a key role in disadvantaged African American student athletes being successful in their sport and on the college campus (Worthy, 2017).

Becoming a student-athlete is a way to obtain enrollment on a college campus and opportunity to take part in athletics at a high level such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (Lane, 2016). African American male college student-athletes are one of the most vulnerable populations on college campuses in respects to retention (Smith, 2016). The graduation rate of African American male college student-athletes is lower compared to their Caucasian counterparts (Smith, 2016). In his study barriers for first-generation African American male football players included the parents and athlete

having the knowledge of how to communicate with the university about their needs, which cause parents to be less interested in assisting their child while in college and ultimately can cause isolation for the student-athlete (Smith, 2016). Moreover, the student-athletes faced being stereotyped that they were just there for sports rather than to receive an education (Smith, 2016). Unverferth et al. (2012) said that barriers for first-generation students are typically they have lower grade point averages, a lack of financial resources, and fail to know what to expect from the college they are attending.

Morena (2016) expressed that first-generation college student's deal with guilt when leaving their family for college. According to Morena (2016) family members have a hard time understanding why their loved ones would want to leave their close family behind to improve their lives. Morena (2016) explored the lived experiences of six first-generation college students and the guilt they faced for leaving their community and family behind. Furthermore, Morena (2016) found that guilt occurred when the students put their needs ahead of their family and enrolled in higher education. The females in this study revealed that the distance between them and their love ones was the reason they felt guilty (Morena, 2016). Also, the males in this study experienced guilt due to they placed a financial burden on the family by attending college or they failed to be home where they could work and contribute to the family income (Morena, 2016).

A barrier to first-generation student athletes on a college campus include being isolated from their peers that are primarily going to school for their academics (Peterson, 2017). Peterson (2017) expressed that are affiliated with the NCAA and the National

Association of Intercollegiate Athletics are mandated to offer academic services to assist student athletes in their coursework. According to Peterson (2017) while these requirements guarantee that these students be given the resources they need to be prosperous in the classroom, individual athletic programs often provide these services in a team setting where the individual meets with a team tutor or studies with the team. As a result, the student is unlikely to participate in activities outside their sport or become engrained in the campus culture (Peterson, 2017). Peterson (2017) suggested by promoting student-athletes to participate in social activities outside of their sport could provide connection to the campus and could serve as motivation to the athlete to complete their education. Practice and games keep a student-athlete from interacting with non-athlete students, contributing to the concern that student-athletes are less likely to participate in nonathletic, socially engaging activities that could promote a greater connection to the campus and, thus, could lead to a greater motivation to persist (Peterson, 2017).

According to Benjamin (2015) between 2007 and 2010, African American males were 2.8% of full-time, in quest of a degree students; however, comprised 57.1% of football and 64.3% of basketball teams. Thus, the NCAA's continuing promotion to emphasize the positive outcomes of being part of collegial athletics has failed to tackle the core problems affecting African American male student-athletes (Benjamin, 2015). Benjamin (2015) said that African American student-athletes often believe in their adolescence that having a talent in sports is more important than academics due to their talent could gain them access to college as well as improve their life. According to

Benjamin (2015) the problem occurs when these athletes arrive on campus unprepared for the rigors of the academics and the universities focus shifts from assisting the student in their coursework to receiving considerable financial benefits at the cost of their academic success. Benjamin (2015) suggested that athletic directors and school officials of revenue sports on college campuses need to balance the pressure to win against the obligation to deliver culturally relevant support that allows African American male student-athletes to be understood and incorporated in all facets of life on a college campus (Benjamin, 2015).

Warner (2016) found that 19 male and female first-generation student-athletes faced barriers during their transition from high school to college. They struggled with balancing being a student and athlete (Warner, 2016). Additional barriers included balancing relationships with professors, coaches, family, friends, and teammates (Warner, 2016). Warner (2016) found that the information gathered during this study suggest proposes that male and female student-athletes may need programs that are geared toward their needs and diverse learning groups. Furthermore, Warner (2016) said that more studies should be conducted that investigate the needs of first-generation college student-athletes to serve them best and support their needs.

Naphy (2016) conducted a qualitative study with open-ended interviews of first year student-athletes at Division III NCAA school, Rowan University. According to Naphy (2016) his goal was to gain a better understanding through the eyes of student-athletes attending Rowan University what was their lived experience in their first year.

The data revealed that incoming freshmen student-athletes struggle with time management, failing to know on campus resources that they can utilize to succeed in their academics and socially, feeling disconnected from what activities were occurring on campus life, as well as, these student-athletes associate having success in athletics with retention (Naphy, 2016).Naphy (2016) said that there should be programs put in place prior to the student-athletes attending Rowan so they can be prepared for college Also, Naphy (2016) expressed that there needs to be more studies conducted that focus on the lived experiences of first year student-athletes at NCAA Division III schools.

Supports for African American Male Student-Athletes

Student Support.

Petty (2014) said that higher education plays a key role in assisting first-generation students to stay in college. According to Petty (2014) field trips, planning for making the transition to college with associates, and discussion of the college experience from first-generation college students already enrolled in college can help motivate this group of students to complete college. Diaz-Espinoza (2017) used a qualitative case study to explore first-generation Latino males and their motivation to stay in school at a mid-sized college. The Latino students expressed that the motivation for staying in school was due to their support system (Diaz-Espinoza, 2017). The support system for Latino male students included college officials, professors, family, and peers on campus (Diaz-Espinoza, 2017). NCAA (2016) study of first-generation student-athletes found that coaches and school advisors played a key role in the college selection for first-generation

student-athletes. Furthermore, Twenty-six percent of first-generation student-athletes participating in NCAA sports expressed that from their childhood, their family expected them to turn out to be professional or Olympic athletes (NCAA, 2016).

Lindemann-Litzsinger (2017) investigated two cohorts of first-generation college student-athletes that participated in varsity sports in high school and non-college student-athletes that did not participate in sports while attending high school. Also, a focus group was conducted to understand how the first-generation college student-athletes made the transition from high school to a suburban private college (Lindemann-Litzsinger, 2017). The mix-methods study revealed that first-generation college students that participated in high school athletics had a substantially higher high school grade point averages and post-secondary grade point averages after two semesters, compared to college athletes and non-athletes (Lindemann-Litzsinger, 2017). Lindemann-Litzsinger (2017) said that the first-generation athletes that participated in high school sports attribute their academic success and confidence in college to the discipline and rigors of participating in high school sports.

Hackett (2013) conducted a qualitative study with a focus group involving eight African male student athletes and a phone interview with an administrator at a small Hispanic college. Furthermore, four themes emerged from the study (Hackett, 2013). The themes reflected the supports that each participant believed was necessary for them to be successful in college (Hackett, 2013). The first theme interpersonal and intrapersonal meant that having the support of parents and faculty could assist with these students

doing well in their academics and sport (Hackett, 2013). Hackett (2013) expressed that another theme that emerged was building affiliations on campus. Participants expressed that being part of programs and participating in activities on campus has helped with them staying in college (Hackett, 2013). Hackett (2013) found through his study that mentoring was a factor that helped the student-athletes feel part of the campus. Mentoring was described as receiving mentorship from faculty, teammates, and coaches (Hackett, 2013). Hackett (2013) found that participants felt academic success was important and could be attained if provided tutors and background knowledge on the coursework. According to Hackett (2013) future studies should explore more interviews with student-athletes that could bring about themes with suggestions on how best to promote academic success for African American male student-athletes on college campuses.

Smith (2016) utilized interviews at a National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) college in California with first year African American student athletes. Results revealed that the bulk of African American male students believed that specialized academic and cultural programs, support from family members and mentors, as well as a will to improve the lives of their family members were the primary reasons for continuing with their education (Smith, 2016). Also, the study found that the shortage of social integration skills, and cultural barriers, affected the resolve of African American athletes at the community college. Lane (2016) expressed that becoming a scholar athlete is a way to enroll in college and partake in college athletics at various levels of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Furthermore, student-athletes face different experiences depending on the level of their NCAA membership (Lane, 2016). Although

some of these athletes report, regardless of the level that they struggle with being stigmatized by their fellow students and faculty members (Lane, 2016). Monk (2016) investigated with semi-structured interviews the constructed identities of five African American male college student's academic engagement at a metropolitan institution of higher education in the Northeast. According to Monk (2016) there was a number of respondents that had a lack of academic engagement. Monk (2016) concluded that to expand the rates of engagement amongst African American college students there should be more personnel and school officials that support as mentors and advisors.

Kelly and Dixon (2014) said that the first two years are critical for African American student-athletes in a primarily Caucasian university. African American student-athletes may do well on the field; however, they may have trouble in the classroom and socially (Kelly & Dixon, 2014). Kelly and Dixon (2014) discussed having several of people in the student-athlete life serve as mentors, known as constellation mentoring. Individuals serving in the role include coaches, faculty members, peers, and teammates (Kelly & Dixon, 2014). Kelly and Dixon (2014) said that having mentors can assist the student-athlete in navigating the college sport, as well as social and academic environment. The authors concluded that future research should explore having college students offer in-depth knowledge about the challenges they have faced as they have adapted to the pressure of a more competitive sport, higher academic standards, as well as, a new campus environment (Kelly & Dixon, 2014).

Carter-Francique, Hart, and Steward (2013) conducted a qualitative study with nine African American student-athletes at a primarily Caucasian university using narrative interviews. The nine African American college athletes discussed that they were successful in their academics and in their sport due to their support system on the college campus and off the college campus (Carter-Francique et al., 2013). Supports on campus included tutors, teammates, coaches, instructors, and academic advisors. Whereas off campus supports for these African American student-athletes included their family members, friends off campus, their team, and faith (Carter-Francique et al., 2013). The study revealed that each athlete believed that their on campus and off campus supports played a major role in their success in their academics and sport (Carter-Francique et al., 2013). According to Carter-Francique et al. (2013) the athlete's support system provided them with rules, direction, and assistance while attending a primarily white college. Carter-Francique et al. (2013) said that it is likely that comprehending how student-athletes see academic success and value of social support can assist in attaining educational success not only for African American student participating in the NCAA but for all student-athletes.

Carter-Francique, Hart, and Cheeks (2015) found in narrative interviews of nine African American athletes at a primarily Caucasian college campus that their success in the classroom and athletics depended on positive interactions with faculty members. Also, African American student-athletes used their parents and family as a means of support through their college journey (Carter-Francique et al., 2015). Bimper Jr., Harrison Jr., and Clark (2013) found through interviews with seven African American

male student-athletes that they used their education as a way of being enlightened. Furthermore, they used other African American student-athletes as a support system to assist them with their school work and issues on campus (Bimper Jr. et al, 2013). Bimper Jr. et al. (2013) said in this case study that counselors, coaches, and professors should look at racial identity and the best way to support African American male athletes is to ensure they can be successful socially and in their athletics.

Comeaux (2016) explored through a survey the relationship of 739 African American male student-athletes that participated in basketball and football at a primarily Caucasian college campus. The study revealed that African American male student-athletes had improved their grades and did well socially on campus when their instructors encouraged them to do well in the classroom and graduate school (Comeaux, 2016). Comeaux (2016) said that many African American male student-athletes have a preference to interact with their mentors and other support systems off college grounds where they stress feelings of inspiration and acceptance rather than the faculty that comprises of 89% of the faculty on primarily Caucasian campuses (Comeaux, 2016). Similarly, Walters (2013) used a study of first-year student-athletes through observation and interviews during structured study time at Legacy University to gain a better understanding of how collaborative peer tutoring could have a positive effect on their overall experience on campus. Walters (2013) found that tutors assisted scholar-athletes in their academics and socially, as well as, connect them with campus life. As a result, the tutors helped improve the retention rate of first-year college student-athletes at this Division 1 College (Walters, 2013). Walters (2013) suggested that future studies

qualitatively explore student-athlete integration to various populations such as Division II and III level schools could improve the college experiences for student-athletes. Walters (2013) suggested that future studies should qualitatively explore student athlete integration to various populations such Division II and III level schools could improve the college experience for student-athletes.

Faculty support.

Cooper (2016) said that colleges and the NCAA has been responsible for ensuring that students succeed when they enter college. However, many colleges around the United States and the NCAA have struggled with retaining and graduating African American male athletes (Cooper, 2016). Cooper (2016) said that research has shown that African American male athletes struggle with unfriendly campus environments, a lack of support with their academics, and an overemphasis on athletics that has caused poor performance in the classroom and adverse experiences at these colleges (Cooper, 2016). Cooper (2016) found the best way to help these athletes become successful is by using the Excellence Beyond Athletics Approach (EBA). The EBA six principles includes being aware of the students' self-identity, having positive social consciousness, engaging in mentoring the student, focusing on the students' academic success and professional goals, as well as, assisting them with managing their time (Cooper, 2016).

Travonwicz, Harrison, Mcpherson-Botts, Bukstein, and Lawrence (2016) conducted a study on 78 Division 1 NCAA first generation football players. The first-generation student-athletes completed a 58-item Life After Sports Scale questionnaire

(Travonwicz et al., 2016). Travnowicz et al. (2016) found that the first-generation minority football players were more comfortable interacting and learning from faculty compared to Caucasian middle-class football players. The study revealed that first-generation college student-athletes were the main group that looked at the school officials as individuals that pushed them to look at life after sports (Travonwicz, et al., 2016).

A study by Fuller, Harrison, Bukstein, Martin, Lawrence, and Gadsby (2016) used interviews to explore the lives of 27 African American male student-athletes. The study revealed that the student-athletes looked at themselves as more than an athlete (Fuller et al. 2016). Furthermore, the student-athletes saw themselves as scholars and members of the campus community (Fuller et al., 2016). The student-athletes felt this way due to their positive experiences with faculty, peers, and teammates (Fuller et al., 2016). Whereas, a study of 190 Caucasian football athletes' perceptions of their college experience revealed that they were a privileged college athlete, worked very hard, and was extremely smart and successful (Lawrence, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2016).

Parental support.

According to Rubin (2016) on the NCAA Division I level many of African American male athletes are recruited due to their athletic ability. Therefore, there is a lack of focus on their academic ability (Rubin, 2016). Many of these students come from disadvantaged household and lack the support of their parents (Rubin, 2016). However, they are recruited to participate in athletics on college campuses (Rubin, 2016). Rubin (2016) said these students are isolated from the rest of the campus and ultimately struggle

to graduate on time. McCulloh (2016) conducted a qualitative study of 12 students at a small private Midwestern faith-based university to explore what role parents play in improving retention for first-generation students. The study revealed that the support of parents played a key role in first-generation students remaining in college (McCulloh, 2016).

A study of African American male student-athletes at a primarily Caucasian institution revealed that parents play a vital role in these students doing well in college (Carter-Francique, Hart, & Cheeks, 2015). Carter-Francique et al. (2015) said that African American student-athletes utilized parents and family members to provide social support while they were in college. Whereas, Clark, Harrison Jr., and Bimper (2015) study revealed that two sons of the first African American male athlete that followed their father's lead and attended a primarily Caucasian college in the South dealt with racism just as their father did when he attended the school. Ortagus and Merson (2015) said that disadvantaged first generation student-athletes deal with several of challenges related to academic achievement due to increased financial and family obligations. The college experience of these students can decide if they will have academic success. (Ortagus & Merson, 2015).

Summary and Conclusions

The literature mentioned above focused on first-generation African American male student-athletes experiences on the NJCAA of first-generation, NCAA I and NCAA II level. NCAA (2016) reported that only 47% of first-generation student-athletes

strongly agreed they would have enrolled in a four-year institution had they not participated in a sport. The scholarly journals researched found that first-generation African American male student-athletes faced barriers while attending primarily Caucasian institutions. Furthermore, to work through those barriers I found that faculty, parental, and student support is needed at the NJCAA, NCAA I, and NCAA II level. However, I failed to find research on how first generation African American male student-athletes work through barriers at a NCAA III primarily Caucasian college.

While the research mentioned above presents some key findings, I have not found research exploring through the lens of first-generation African American male student-athletes on how they navigate college and through barriers they face while attending primarily Caucasian NCAA Division III colleges. In my review of literature across 4 databases, I found only 6 articles addressing how first generation African American male student-athletes navigate college at NCAA Division I and II colleges. However, I found no literature that looked at how these individuals navigate at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution. Research is needed that explores through the lens of first generation African American male college student-athletes how they navigate college at a primarily Caucasian NCAA Division III institution.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the experiences of first generation African American student-athletes on a predominately Caucasian campus in the Midwest. Due to the nature of the research questions and problem statement, I determined qualitative research was the best method of inquiry. A qualitative multiple case study allows a researcher to further develop and understand each case, formed by context and emerging data (Stake, 2003). The central research question explored in this study was: How do first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution? What is known from previous literature is that parents may fail to support their child while the child may experience guilt and fear of being away from home. Also, the student may feel guilt that they are improving their lives while leaving their family and peers behind. Supports such as mentors, staff, and programs can assist with this transition.

What is not known, however, is specifically on a NCAA Division III primarily Caucasian campus through the lens of first generation African American male student-athletes navigate college. This chapter describes the qualitative method used to assist in understanding these experiences. Furthermore, this chapter delineates the reasoning for the approach, an explanation of the research design, selection of participants and site, and methods used to gather data. Also, this chapter discusses ethical considerations,

procedures for data analysis, the role of the researcher in this investigation, and trustworthiness of the results.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative case study design can include a single case or multiple cases (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) discussed that a case study design could include only a single case, such as an individual, a room in a school, or a place of learning such as a school; a multiple case design is constructed around at least two or more cases. Moreover, multiple case studies are frequently more informative, allowing for replication of results from the information gathered from participants (Yin, 2014). I sought for this study to be replicated in future studies and provide in-depth information on how first generation African American male student-athletes navigate college at a NCAA Division III institution in the Midwest; therefore the design selected was a multiple case study with purposeful sampling (Yin, 2014). A multiple case study with purposeful sampling allowed me to explore and understand how first generation African American male student-athletes navigate college at a NCAA Division III institution in the Midwest. Purposeful sampling permits an individual to make assessments on what is going to be sampled, what shape the sampling will take, and how many individuals and locations must be sampled (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Prior to conducting the study, I went through the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. I received approval for this study (09-10-18-0366157) from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research. By using a

multiple case study approach with purposeful sampling, I gathered data from three first-generation African American male college student athletes attending a primarily Caucasian college in the Midwest. Yin (2014) expressed that the information gathered for multiple case study can come from sources such as archival records, documents, structured or open interviews, various types of observation in which the researcher may take part in, or not, in some events, and physical artifacts to provide triangulation. I conducted three interviews with the same questions and collected archival records such as awards and achievements at the interviewing site from each participant to provide triangulation. The data collection section will discuss this in more detail.

Role of the Researcher.

Fusch and Ness (2015) discussed that the role of the researcher is a key part of an investigation. A challenge in reaching data saturation is due to the use of a person's own lens mainly due to novice investigators, such as scholar-practitioners, believing they have no bias in gathering information from participants and may fail to know when the data have reached saturated (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The individual reading this study needs to know the investigator's position in regards to this area of focus (Morse, 2015). I was the investigator in this current study as a former African American male student-athlete who competed in basketball at a junior college in the Midwest and four-year colleges in the South and Midwest. I was the first person in my family to become a student-athlete. However, my mother was the first person to attend college in my family.

During my time as an African American male student-athlete in college, I experienced homesickness and wondering if I belonged on a college campus. I was conscious of my past experiences and put aside preconceptions regarding what I may believe based on personal experiences. Also, I used rich, thick description by providing individuals who read this research an opportunity to transfer information to other sites and decide if the findings can be transferred, constructed on shared characteristics (Morse, 2015). Verbatim quotes and transcripts with themes were used to provide contextual and descriptive information of each participant's experience. Moreover, all the approaches mentioned for data verification were essential in offering a rich, thick description.

Methodology

The list of procedures below functioned as a guide to recruit and notify participants, gather and explore information articulated in the study, as well as verify findings.

Individuals participating in this study were recruited by word of mouth and by a flyer detailing the nature of the study, as well as my contact information. Access to First-Generation African American student-athletes could have been difficult. A flyer was placed between two colleges in public places detailing the nature of the study and my information.

After three first-generation African American male student-athletes contacted me via phone, the flyer was removed and each participant set up a time to be interviewed.

Interviews took place in a public setting of the participant's choice such as library in a private room to ensure confidentiality.

Each interviewee was given the interview protocol and was free to stop the interview at any time they may have felt uncomfortable. Also, each interviewee was given a copy of the letter describing the proposed study and signed the Consent Form.

The interview consisted of eight questions that were explored: How do first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college, accept success, describe barriers they face, as well as, experiences at a primarily White Division III institution?

After the interview I thanked the interviewee for participating in the interview and gave them my email if they wanted to add anything to their interview.

I recorded, took notes, and coded the interviewee's responses to the questions to acquire information for the multiple case study. The Livescribe pen was used to ensure I centered my attention on the participant and interview (Livescribe, Inc., 2013). The pen allowed the interviewer to write less and listen more while the pen gathered all the information (Livescribe, Inc., 2016). Furthermore, the pen allowed me to record words, diagrams, scribbles, symbols, and audio while syncing everything that was heard to what was transcribed.

I gathered archival reports and awards from participants that were willing to disclose.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Participants in this qualitative multiple case study were adult African American male student-athletes who had the right to choose to volunteer for this study. The study carried few risks. I informed each individual participating in the study that their association with their school or place of business will not be affected by participating in this study. Furthermore, if any of the individuals participating in the study went through any harm or difficulty while participating in the study, a phone number to the contact person at Walden University was provided. Moreover, each participant in the study completed a consent form and their confidentiality was protected. Transcripts, audiotapes, files, copy of awards were stored and secured in my home office for 5 years. Aliases were used to describe the participants and school.

Summary

A multiple case study method of inquiry was selected since it offered a way for the students in this study to voice and provide information on how they navigated college as a first-generation African American male on a primarily White college campus. The individuals chosen for this study were adult African American male student-athletes. Data were gathered by conducting an interview. The verification strategies included providing a rich, thick description, peer review, and clarifying researcher bias. Also, Chapter 4 provides findings that emerge from the data.

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4 presents the findings and themes that emerged from the data gathered on first-generation African American male student-athletes at a primarily Caucasian Division III Institution. Artifacts and archival records were brought to the interviews by two of the participants. The artifacts and archival records were analyzed and explored. Participants' backgrounds were discussed to gain a better understanding of how they navigated college on a primarily Caucasian campus in the Midwest.

Rationale for Sample Size

Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2016) discussed information power as a way to guide ample sample size for qualitative studies. Information power suggests that the more data the sample has, applicable for one's study, the smaller the sample can be (Malterud et al., 2016). Malterud et al. (2016) proposed that the size of a sample with adequate information power is contingent on the purpose of the study, sample specificity, the usage of a sound theory, quality of discussion, and analysis approach. According to Malterud et al. (2016) qualitative inquiry can benefit from sampling techniques by shifting focus from the number of interviewees to the contribution of new information gathered from the investigation.

Burmeister and Aitken (2012) said that data saturation is not about the numbers per se, but about the depth of the information gathered. Thus, a scholar-practitioner should decide on the sample size that has the best opportunity for the investigator to reach data saturation (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). According to Burmeister and Aitken

(2012) a large sample size does not ensure an investigator will reach data saturation, and neither does a small sample size; rather, it is what constitutes the sample size (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). Fusch and Ness (2015) said another way of reaching data saturation from information gathered from participants is conducting interviews. Furthermore, interview questions must be structured to ask a number of people similar questions. According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012) investigators gather participant's life stories to understand a number of aspects of the persons experience and the fundamental way we collect stories is by interviewing the general public. Furthermore, experienced investigators can gain knowledge into lived experiences, understand the views of participants contributing to research, and find out the nuances in people's narrative (Jason & Furgerson, 2012). I interviewed three first- generation African American male college student-athletes attending a predominately Caucasian Division III college in the Midwest to understand how first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution. Furthermore, the sample size did reach data saturation and I provided the richness of the information gathered from the three participants. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) expressed that first-time researchers should understand that data triangulation can at times bring about differing and inconsistent results; yet, it is the investigator's responsibility to make sense of the results for the reader and display the richness of the information collected from the data.

Scarcella (2016) discussed that additional research should be conducted on upper class first-generation college student-athletes, such as juniors and seniors, at Division III institutions. The sample of his study did not contain participants in their senior year

(Scarcella, 2016). Six current Division III first-generation student-athletes participated in his study with each participant comprising a subcase (Scarcella, 2016). Scarcella's (2016) study consisted of three men and three women in a single case study. My multiple case study explored upperclassmen including senior men at a predominately Caucasian Division III college in the Midwest. Thus, I believed interviewing three first- generation African American male college student-athletes attending a predominately Caucasian Division III college in the Midwest allowed for an understanding of how first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution in the Midwest. I reached data saturation through participant interviews.

Participants of the Study

The individuals selected for this study were first-generation African American male college student-athletes in their sophomore, junior, or senior year. Although the first year of college is important, I studied individuals who persisted in school more than one year of college and how they navigated college at a predominately Caucasian Division III institution in a Midwestern town.

The individuals participating in this study was recruited by word of mouth and by a flyer detailing the nature of the study that included my contact information. The flyer were placed in public places in neighborhoods between two colleges. Once three first-generation African American male college student-athletes notified me that they wanted to participate in the study I removed the flyer and began the interview process. The three first-generation African American male college student-athletes were interviewed at a

place of their choice. The interview was tape recorded and consisted of nine questions (Appendix B). I gave each participant my email if they wanted to contact me to add anything to the interview.

Participant 1

Participant 1 grew up in a single parent household. He was raised by his mother in a low-income urban area of the Midwest. Participant 1 learned at an early age that he would have to use sports and good grades to attend college. Although the odds were stacked against him, as a basketball athlete in high school he believed basketball would be his way out of the inner city and his crime-ridden community. Participant 1 was a senior in college at the time of the interview and was looking forward to being the first in his family to graduate from college as well as playing basketball professionally.

Participant 2

Participant 2 was an African American male student-athlete in his senior year at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution. He grew up in a single parent household for his adolescent years in a low-income urban city in the Midwest. During his teenage years, Participant 2 lived with his grandmother in a Midwest urban low-income city. Participant 2 learned that he was good at wrestling when he moved with his aunt to a rural town. He felt the move allowed him to focus on his academics and football. He used wrestling and football as a way to enroll in college and he became the first in his family to attend college. Participant 2 wanted to receive his degree so he could be a role model to his siblings and to pursue a professional football career.

Participant 3

Participant 3 was an African American male student-athlete in his junior year at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution at the time of the interview. He grew up in a single-parent household for his adolescent years in a low-income urban area. He was raised by his single mother. As an adolescent, Participant 3 knew that football could be his way out of the inner city. He used football and positive role models in his life as a way to enroll in college and become the first in his family to attend college and become a student-athlete. Participant 3 wanted to receive his degree so he could be a role model to his peers and community and to demonstrate that anything is possible if you work hard at achieving your goals.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to understand the experience of first-generation African American male college student-athletes in higher education. The research question below framed the emergence of these themes:

How do first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution?

Data Collection

Fusch and Ness (2015) discussed that collecting rich and thick data from interviews are one method by which an investigator's study results can reach data saturation. Moreover, during an interview the interviewee needs to provide interview questions that are well-thought-out to facilitate asking multiple contributors to the study the same questions, if not a novice researcher would not reach data saturation (Fusch &

Ness, 2015). For this study, I conducted interviews with open-ended questions to attain rich descriptions from three first-generation African American student-athletes on how they navigated college. The multiple case study research question is the focus and basis for constructing the interview questions (see Appendix B). The purpose of the interview was to allow one to explore the views of homogenous as well as diverse group of individuals and help unpack their perspectives within a community (Choy, 2014). The three first-generation African American student-athletes are the homogenous and diverse group and their community is the primarily Caucasian Division III institution in the Midwest. The interview questions were open-ended. Jason and Furgerson (2012) expressed that open ended questions allows the inquirer to reason more information than just yes or no. A person conducting a qualitative interview should plan to interview participants in a quiet place that is private and they feel comfortable (Jason & Furgerson, 2012). The interview entailed the participants and interviewee going over the interview protocol, receiving their consent form, and then asking the interview questions. I gathered archival records such as reports, achievements, and awards from participants if they were willing to disclose. The interview allowed for me to explore with each interviewee and have a better understanding of: How do first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college, accept success, describe barriers they face, as well as, experiences at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution? According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012) researchers should know that when using a recorder, they should make sure that the tape-recorder is in working fully and that they have a plan if the device fails.

During the interview I used a tape recorder, the Livescribe pen to transcribe, and took notes of nonverbal cues. The records of this study were kept private.

I, the researcher did not include any information that made it possible to identify a participant. Details that might have identified participants, such as the location of the study, also were not shared. I did not use the participants' information for any purpose outside of this research project. Research records were kept in a locked file; only I have had access to the records. Interviews were audio recorded for purposes of providing accurate description of the participants' experience. Data have been stored and will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. The information provided during the interview were put in individual files. Moreover, files and recording from the three interviewees were stored in a safe in my home office. After the data were transcribed, the analysis of data gathered was initiated.

The interview protocol was discussed with each participant. Furthermore, at the start of each interview I begin with introductions and exchange of contact details (Kasunic, 2010). Also, I went over the description of the study and the interview procedures. After the introductions I asked the eight interview questions (Appendix A) and recorded the interview with a livescribe pen and audio recorder. Also, I took written notes during each interview to record any expressive reactions or noteworthy information (Jamshed, 2014). Furthermore, I analyzed and looked at archival records such as awards, as well as, certificates of achievements that the first-generation African American student-athletes may receive while attending the college to gain a better understanding of how they navigated college on a primarily Caucasian campus in the Midwest. Thus,

open-ended interviews and the review of archival documents were used to reach

triangulation and inform how three first-generation African American student-athletes

navigated college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution in the Midwest. Yin

(2014) expressed that the information gathered for the multiple case study can come from

sources such as archival records, documents, structured or open interviews, various types

of observation in which the researcher may take part in, or not, in some events, and

physical artifacts to provide triangulation. Furthermore, to achieve triangulation I looked

at awards and archival records provided by each participant to substantiate what was

being expressed during each individual interview and to provide triangulation.

At the conclusion of the interview, I thanked the interviewee, asked them if they

had anything to add to the study, and informed them that their interview is confidential.

Also, I gave them my email if they wanted to add anything later to the study. Kasunic

(2010) expressed that an investigator needs to review the main points, any issues, and

check for accuracy of their interpretations from the answers given from the respondent.

Lastly, the interviewer thanked the participant and sought consent for any future contact

if needed (Kasunic, 2010). Pilot interviews took place with volunteer nonparticipants

before the participant interviews. According to Turner (2010), conducting pilot

interviews can assist with rectifying confusing language that may be in interview

questions. The interviews were not included in the study's data, but utilized to polish the

interview questions.

Data Analysis

Creswell and Miller (2000) said a lens to decide the credibility of a study is the specific lens of the researcher. The investigator decides the time they will stay in the field, whether the information provided are saturated to bring about good themes or categories, and how the analysis of the information given emerges into a credible narrative (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Creswell and Miller (2000) expressed the importance of the interpretations accurately represent the participant in the study. Therefore, the researcher should give each participant an opportunity to review what they have articulated accurately represents them (Creswell and Miller, 2000). I gave each participant an opportunity to look over their transcript to verify what they articulated during the interview.

Basit (2003) discussed that qualitative data analysis is not a distinct process completed at the final stages of a study rather data analysis is carried out for the duration of the investigation. According to Basit (2003) even if the researcher is not engrossed in a formal analysis of the information gathered at the early stages of inquiry, they could be thinking how to make sense of the data and what codes, categories or themes may be employed to describe what is occurring.(Basit, 2003). Codes are tags for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information collected throughout research (Basit, 2003). Basit (2003) discussed that codes generally are assigned to portions of varying-sized words, sayings, sentences or entire paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific location. Stake (1978) expressed that in case studies one of the constructive ways to adding to the understanding of each reader is by approximating through the

words and illustrations of our accounts, the natural experiences attained by being personally involved. The ensuing section will outline the data analysis and interpretation of information gathered for this research project.

Credibility

I recorded each interview with a livescribe pen and audio recorder. Also, I took written notes during each interview to record any expressive reactions or noteworthy information (Jamshed, 2014). The audio recordings of each interview were exported from the livescribe pen to Microsoft word where they were transcribed. Transcriptions were then copied to a Microsoft Word document and edited. The audio recording was played several of times to catch mistakes that may have occurred while taking notes. Furthermore, I analyzed and looked at archival records such as awards, as well as, certificates of achievements that the first-generation African American student-athletes received while attending the college to gain a better understanding of how they navigated college on a primarily Caucasian campus in the Midwest.

Participants were offered the opportunity to check over their answers for accuracy. I gave each interviewee my e-mail if they wanted to contact me to add anything to their interview**.** Furthermore, there were no discrepancies in their interviews. Thus, there was not a need to set up a time with participants to clarify the information gathered. Harper and Cole (2012) expressed that individuals participating in a study should have the opportunity to look over their declarations for accuracy and as a result they may feel comfort knowing what they expressed was reflected in the interviewer's interpretation.

Confirmability

After each participant confirmed the information collected, transcriptions from

each first-generation African American male student-athlete were numbered by line and

read multiple times. Furthermore, I manually coded the information given from each

participant. According to Ajagbe, Sholanke, Isiavwe, and Oke (2015) manually coding

allows the researcher to be immersed into the interview text. I wanted to be close to

information gathered and have a hands on feel without using software. According to

Ajagbe et al. (2015) a major disadvantage of using a computer software for coding is it

puts a distance between the investigator and raw data, as well as, they will fail to have the

opportunity of being engrossed into the raw data transcription. Stake (1978) expressed

that in case studies one of the constructive ways to adding to the understanding of each

reader is by approximating through the words and illustrations of our accounts, the

natural experiences attained by being personally involved. After reviewing the tapes I

looked for short phrases, themes, and emerging themes from each participant. I

developed codes off the information gathered from the participants in relation to the

interview questions. Also, I used in vivo coding for my coding strategy. Onwuegbuzie,

Frels, and Hwang (2016) discussed that in vivo coding allows the researcher to use the

participant's actual words or short phases for codes. On Microsoft Word I put the

pseudonyms of each participant at the top of the page and underneath I had the nine

questions asked during the interview. Also, on the right side of the questions I provided

in vivo codes to their answers. In vivo coding is allocating a label to a piece of

information gathered from an interview transcript, using a word or short phrase put in

quotations, taken from the answers given by each participant (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2016). Furthermore, I made memos after coding each interviewees' transcript to provide a deeper analysis. Moreover, I compared and contrasted in vivo codes for each interview question answered by participants. After comparing and contrasting I looked for emerging themes from each interview transcript, put them in categories and used them and archival documents to depict to the reader how first-generation African American male student-athletes navigate college at a predominately Caucasian college. Lee (2014) said scholar-practitioners should discuss how the analysis was conducted, how themes, concepts, and categories were produced from the information gathered, as well as, if analysis was assisted by a computer software or done manually.

Dependability

Basit (2003) said that qualitative researchers should focus on providing the quality and richness of the response of participants to a social situation. Coding allows for a scholar-practitioner to convey and connect with the information gathered and to facilitate the understanding of the emerging phenomena (Basit, 2003). The final step of this research project was to provide a summary of findings. Interview questions approved by the Walden IRB were used to interview participants. I provided from the conducted interviews, transcription and coding of interviews, as well as archival documents collected, to gain a better understanding from participants of how they navigated college at a predominately Caucasian institution.

Transferability

I conducted in-depth interviews, transcribed and coded interviews, as well as collected artifacts. Each participant were asked if they wanted to add anything after their interview for accuracy. Yin (2012) said any person that attempts transferability of qualitative findings need to assess the context of the investigation and decide if the findings are transferable to another context. I did not intend to shed light on the experience on an entire population; rather focus on and understand how First-Generation African American male student-athletes navigated college on a primarily Caucasian Division III campus.

Credibility

The findings in this study were verified. Morse (2015) discussed several verification strategies that can be used in qualitative research. I used peer review of interview, clarifying research bias, as well as providing a rich and thick description. I had a colleague that was knowledgeable in qualitative inquiry perform the peer review. Copies of the original transcript were provided along with copies of the findings that contain the individual and group descriptions.

Clarifying researcher was key in this study. Creswell and Miller (2000) discussed the importance of researcher reflexivity. According to Creswell and Miller (2000) investigators should reveal their assumptions, beliefs, and biases. During this process individuals conducting the study discussed their personal beliefs, values, and biases that could form their analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000). According to Creswell and Miller

(2000) it is key for investigators to recognize and articulate their beliefs and biases initially in the research process to allow people to understand their positions, and then to suspend those biases as the study progresses. Below is the role of the researcher in this study.

According to Yin (2014) information gathered for a multiple case study can come from several of sources including archival records, documents, structured or open interviews, various types of observation in which the researcher may take part in, or not, in some events, and physical artifacts to provide triangulation. Artifacts and archival records were brought to the interviews by two of the participants to analyze and explore archival records such as awards to gain a better understanding of how they navigated college on a primarily Caucasian campus in the Midwest.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Participants in this qualitative multiple case study were adult African American male student-athletes who had the right to choose to volunteer for this study. The study carried minimal risks. Each participant chose the place where they wanted to be interviewed. Interviews were conducted in a public place with a secure room to ensure confidentiality. The study carried minimal risks. I informed each participant that their association with their school or place of business will not be affected by participating in this research. Furthermore, if any of the individuals participating in the study went through any harm or difficulty while participating in the study, a phone number to the contact person at Walden University was provided. Moreover, each individual

participating in the research completed a consent form and their confidentiality was protected. Transcripts, audiotapes, files, copy of awards were stored and secured in my home office for 5 years. Participants were offered the opportunity to check over their answers for accuracy. I gave each interviewee my e-mail if they wanted to contact me to add anything to their interview. Furthermore, there were no discrepancies in their interviews.

Results

This section divides the analysis into eight themes that emerged from the data collected. Archival documents were collected to provide an understanding of how first-generation African American student-athletes navigated college at a predominately Caucasian institution. The results of this analysis uncover the lived experiences of three first-generation African American male student-athletes navigating college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution. The themes emerged from the data gathered:

(a) key factors for enrolling in a four-year college,

(b) tapping into athletics to attend and navigate the college campus,

(c) personal circumstances faced in college,

(d) navigating course load,

(e) sense of community,

(f) key challenges facing African American male student-athletes,

(g) navigational strategies of first-generation African American
male student-athletes,

and (h) lessons learned from the overall college experience.

The following results represent the analysis of face to face interviews conducted
on three first-generation African American student-athletes at a primarily Caucasian
Division III institution. I used In Vivo coding for my coding strategy. In vivo coding
allowed for verbatim quotes and transcripts to provide contextual and descriptive
information of each interviewee experience being part of a specific culture such as a first-
generation African American student-athlete. Archival documents were collected from
Participant 1 and 2 to provide an understanding of how first-generation African American
student-athletes navigated college at a predominately Caucasian institution.

Theme 1: Key Factors for Enrolling in a Four-Year College

Participants described various factors for enrolling in a four-year college. Each
participant saw college as a way to improve their current living situations.

Participant 1 stated,

"I needed to get away from my living environment because it wasn't good."

"I wanted to better for myself."

Participant 2 stated,

At first I didn't try to go to college in the beginning. I had trouble with the law
and my family members were locked up. I moved to another city with my

grandma in a rural area and learned that I was good at wrestling and then the college I'm attending now recruited me. I would have been homeless if I didn't attend college. I felt guilty leaving my siblings behind but I had to leave so I could be a role-model for them. I always received good grades regardless of my situation so I knew I could do the work in college.

Participant 3 stated,

I wanted to play football and get away from my environment. I was seeing too many people my age go to jail or being killed so I felt college would a safe place for me even though I felt guilty leaving my single mother alone. I felt the college I attended was the best fit for me.

Theme 2: Tapping Into Athletics

Athletics played a key role in these first-generation African American student-athletes attending a primarily White Division III institution. Sports was used as a way to get them recruited by the college coaches. Also, sports served as a way for them to leave their environment and a motivator for them to do well in the classroom.

Participant 1 stated,

"I loved basketball."

"I knew basketball could motivate me to do well in the classroom and prove that I belong on a college campus."

Participant 2 stated,

"Football helped me stay out of trouble."

"It kept me out of the streets."

"It saved my life".

 "Playing football motivated me to work hard toward earning a degree."

Participant 3 stated,

My intent was to play football, instead of thinking about how much it may cost

since the college was Division 3 and they didn't give out athletic scholarships.

I was young and wanted to be a football player and do something with my life.

Theme 3: Personal Circumstances

Personal circumstances included several of barriers that were faced by the

participants. Barriers included lack of family support, financial burdens, and adapting to

being away from home.

Participant 1 stated,

"Being on my own."

"Attending class regularly."

"No family to go to during holidays or if I needed money."

"Not having a parent send me money so I had to get a job on campus."

Participant 2 stated:

I saw other student's family supporting them and I wished I had that support.

I lacked the support needed to do well in college.

How to deal with different relationships on campus and fit in.

I got to see how family should be.

Participant 3 stated:

I wasn't ready.

Hidden fees that the college didn't tell you about.

I didn't fully grasp the resources that the college had to offer when I started

school.

I started school one week late because I was sick.

I was focused on football.

I had no car to get around the college town.

Theme 4: Navigating Course Load

Academic needs were present for each participant. Participant 1 and Participant 2 expressed that there were resources available to them to succeed in their academics. Participant 3 was overwhelmed and expressed he would have benefited from having a mentor.

Participant 1 stated,

"Needed help with writing."

"I received tutoring for my papers."

"I felt supported in my academics."

"The tutoring center was helpful for me keeping my grades up."

Participant 2 stated,

"I needed a support system."

"I kept my grades up to play football."

"I received help at the tutoring center if I was struggling with a class."

Participant 3 stated,

"I was in a hole."

"I was overwhelmed."

"I couldn't play football until grades was better."

"I needed a mentor."

Theme 5: Sense of Community

Each participant acknowledged that they had to adapt to the new environment. They all expressed that being in a new environment, adapting, and meeting new people

was a challenge. However, each participant discussed that playing a sport allowed them to meet more students on campus and become part of the campus community.

Participant 1 stated,

"At first I wasn't an open person."

"Once students knew I was on the basketball team they started coming up to me to talk."

"Being part of the basketball team helped me meet new people."

Participant 2 stated,

"The first day I met a basketball player that looked like me that didn't have family there."

"Through football I started meeting more students on campus and that helped me adapt."

Participant 3 stated:

"Knowing the football team helped me meet new people."

"My team was my family and they helped me navigate college."

"I met a lot of people."

Theme 6: Key Challenges

Each participant faced various challenges. Challenges included lack of extra spending money. Adapting to the rigors of being a student-athlete, time management, and lacking food at night due to the cafeteria closing at 6:30 and lacking money to buy snacks.

Participant 1 stated,

"I struggled with the basketball work-outs and getting in shape."

"I struggled with going to class because I was tired."

"The dining hall closed early and I didn't have money to eat until the next morning."

Participant 2 stated,

I felt no one on campus cared about my situation.

I made a decision to do what was best for me.

I kept thinking when times were hard that I have to make a better life for myself by receiving this education.

Participant 3 stated,

"I struggled with time management and balancing practice with academics."

"I didn't know how to ask people on campus for help to improve my grades."

Theme 7: Navigational Strategies

All participants in this study found unique ways to navigate college. Each participant had something or someone that played a key role in them navigating a primarily White Division III institution.

Participant 1 stated,

Looking at the environment I came from made me motivated to keep going even though I felt guilty leaving my single mother and friends behind.

The tutoring center helped me in my classes.

I had study partners on the team that made sure I was doing my work and studying for test.

Participant 2 stated,

"I navigated the college by focusing on football."

"The professors like me so I didn't have a hard time in the classroom."

"Financial aid helped me by books and have some extra spending money."

Participant 3 stated:

"Teammates helped me navigate college."

"Over time I absorbed from my peers how school worked and I started to do better in my course work."

Theme 8. Lessons Learned

Each participant adapted to the college life. They became leaders on campus and served the community through service. They had professors that were there to hold them accountable and assist them with being a student-athlete.

Participant 1 stated:

I learned a lot about myself.

I learned how to be a better man.

I learned a lot from being at this college.

The college prepared me for the real world.

I won several of basketball awards and was part of a winning team.

Participant 2 stated:

"I overcame my challenges."

"Overcame being poor and homeless."

"My GPA improved over a 3.0."

"I didn't miss any school days and was a leader on a winning football team."

Participant 3 stated:

"I improved my attendance."

"My coaches held me accountable for my grades."

"I was active in the community through service and on campus."

Artifacts

Participant 1 brought a championship ring and documents showing his team record as well as his individual achievements on the basketball court. He discussed how he had worked hard in the classroom and on the court so he could reap the benefits of being a successful student-athlete. When he showed his championship ring he described how the grind and hard work on and off the court was worth the sacrifice. He was proud of his achievements and I observed the joy he had as he described how his teammates worked as a family on the court and off the court to be great.

Participant 2 discussed his acceptance letter into college and showed a document that had his football team winning record. He was proud of the letter and expressed that the letter symbolized that his life was going to change for the better. Participant 2 knew that he was going to have an opportunity to improve his environment and not be homeless. I could see the jubilation when he discussed the document showing one of the best records in school history for football. Participant 2 talked about how far the team had come and how he felt part of a family on campus although he wasn't use to being around a stable family.

Summary

The first-generation African American student-athletes interviewed navigated the environment they were in by using the resources that were afforded to them on their college campus. Resources including study table which allowed each participant to improve their grades. College staff encouraged the participants to do well in their sport and classroom. Teammates helped each participant meet new people and adapt to

campus. Coaches provided the participants with a structure and family atmosphere within their sports which allowed them to improve their grades and have good seasons. As a result of the structure and family atmosphere, Participant 1 won a championship in basketball and was proud of his championship ring at the time of his interview. Participant 2 improved his grades and was part of a team that had one of the best records in school history. Participant 3 improved his grades and was looking forward to next year.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Chapter 5 will provide a summary and interpretation of the findings, implications, limitations of the study, and future research. Also, the research uncovered that the first-generation African American student-athletes struggled with a lack of support from home, socializing on a college campus, and feeling like an impostor. The findings provided eight major themes relating to how first-generation African American student-athletes navigated college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution:

(a) key factors for enrolling in a four-year college,

(b) tapping into athletics to attend and navigate the college campus,

(c) personal circumstances faced in college,

(d) navigating course load,

(e) sense of community,

(f) key challenges facing African American male student-athletes,

(g) navigational strategies of first-generation African American male student-athletes,

and (h) lessons learned from the overall college experience.

Theme 1: Key Factors for Enrolling in College

Each participant was enrolled at a Division III NCAA college in the Midwest. According to NCAA (2016), 16% of students participating in a sport were first-generation college students, meaning neither of their parents attended college. NCAA (2016) found that 15% of the students participating in college sports at the Division III level were first-generation college student-athletes. Merely 47% of first-generation student-athletes said they would not have attended a four-year college if they did not have the opportunity to compete in athletics, compared to their counterparts, 62% of student-athletes who are not first-generation students (NCAA, 2016).

Each participant enrolled in higher education due to seeing college as an opportunity to improve their current situation. As a result of being exceptional athletes in their sport at the high school level, they used athletics as a way to be first in their families to attend college. For example, Participant 1 knew from an early age that basketball could help him enroll in college and help him escape his crime-ridden environment. Thus, he focused on basketball and grades to put himself in a situation to be recruited by several colleges in the Midwest. Participant 2 grew up in a single-parent household in a crime-ridden city in the Midwest. He was a given an opportunity to live with his grandmother and that moved helped him realize he could be the first in his family to attend college due to being a talented wrestler. Participant 3 grew up in a low-income area in the Midwest with a single mother. He strived in football the majority of his childhood and high school years to ensure he could be the first in his family to attend college as a first-generation African American student-athlete.

Theme 3: Personal Circumstances

Division III schools provide their student-athletes with grants and educational scholarships, whereas Division I and II institutions provide scholarships. Thus, many Division III first-generation student-athletes may have to work a job while maintaining their studies, which can be a barrier for them in being successful as a student-athlete. The research uncovered that each participant had barriers on their journey of being a first-generation African American student-athlete at a predominately Caucasian college, including academic and social needs. Participant 1 struggled with guilt due to being away from family and being on his own. Also, he struggled with adhering to his class schedule and being present daily to learn the material. Participant 1 had to work a job on campus while being a student-athlete due to lack of financial support from his mother who was struggling financially.

Participant 2's barrier was having a sense of belonging on the campus and having a lack of family support. Furthermore, Participant 2 struggled with his peers on campus having parental support that he lacked. When Participant 2 first arrived on campus, he felt that he lacked the support and resources to be successful in college. He did not know how to socialize and interact with his peers and professors on campus. Participant 2 discussed seeing firsthand how family should support their children when they attend college.

Participant 3 discussed several key barriers he experienced being an African American student-athlete trying to navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution. He expressed that he was not prepared for being on a college campus; he did not know what being a student-athlete entailed. Participant 3 discussed that he did not

know about the hidden fees, such as lab fees and fees for sport physicals. He said that he failed to take advantage of the resources provided on campus. Participant 3 discussed another barrier was that he had not been prepared by his high school coaches, mother, or peers for how to be a successful student-athlete. He was focused on playing football rather than focusing on being a student-athlete.

Theme 6: Key Challenges Faced

Each of the participants had challenges with balancing being a student and athlete on campus. Warner (2016) discussed that although all scholars face difficulties going from high school to college, collegiate athletes have the burden of balancing being a student and an athlete, paired with other interpersonal relationships, including making friends, maintaining relationships with family. College athletes have the responsibility of making connections with their teammates and coaches (Warner, 2016).

Participant 1 found challenges with making the transition from high school workouts to college workouts, as well as having money to buy snacks to ensure he did not go hungry at night. Also, he struggled with balancing his classes while attending basketball-related activities. Participant 2 felt that the staff, coaches, and peers did not care about his situation as a first-generation student-athlete. Although Participant 1 felt no one cared, he took the initiative to do well in his classes and on the field to ensure he received his education and improved his overall life. Participant 3 discussed that his challenges were in balancing being a student and an athlete. In the beginning, Participant 3 struggled with connecting with the right people on campus who could help him

succeed. Despite the needs, each participant found a way to overcome barriers as they became accustomed to the college environment.

Theme 7: Navigational Strategies

Navigating college for a first-generation college student-athlete can be overwhelming: being the first in the family to attend college paired with financial responsibilities and the responsibility of being a student and an athlete in a new environment (NCAA, 2016). Despite being the first in their family to attend a four-year college as a student-athlete, each participant found ways to navigate college. Participant 1 used the way he grew up in a low-income neighborhood as a motivator to adapt to his new environment. He benefited from his teammates and tutors who held him accountable with his coursework. Furthermore, being part of an athletic team on a college campus allowed him to meet new people.

Participant 2's focus on football helped him navigate college and meet new people. Financial aid helped Participant 2 ease the burden of failing to have money to buy necessities on and off campus. Also, he had professors he had a good relationship with, which helped him do well in the classroom. In the beginning, Participant 3 struggled to navigate the college campus. He struggled with time management, attending classes regularly, and being effective in his sport. As time went on, Participant 3 learned to navigate the campus by looking at how his teammates had success on and off the field. Participant 3 modeled himself after his teammates and began to improve as a student and an athlete.

Theme 8: Lessons Learned from College Experience

The participants were first-generation African American college student-athletes who overcame barriers, challenges, and learned to navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution. Each participant experienced impostor feelings and guilt as if they did not belong on campus even though their achievements in the classroom and sport in high school helped them enroll and stay at a four-year college. Participants felt guilty leaving their family behind, but they knew to improve their lives they needed to enroll in college. Despite their impostor feelings, each individual found ways to navigate college and be successful at a predominantly Caucasian Division III institution. The participants used the resources on their college campus to assist them in being successful on a college campus. Resources included participating in study groups, studying with teammates, meeting other students from various backgrounds through social functions on campus, and having good interactions with professors and school staff. Coaches played a key part in these participants' lives; they held them accountable on their school work and in their sport. Each participant was responsible for attending all classes, practices, games, and study sessions in order to remain a student-athlete on the campus. Lastly, all participants navigated the college and found success as a first-generation African American college student-athlete.

Interpretation of the Findings

The following discussion section will go over relevant findings and possible future research opportunities before the conclusion of the study. These findings serve to shed light on how first-generation African American student-athletes navigate college at

a primarily Caucasian Division III institution. The current information gathered demonstrates how first-generation African American student-athletes at times felt like an impostor and guilty for enrolling in college and leaving their family behind. Likewise, the current information gathered demonstrates how academics, sports, college staff, and their peers played a key part in these three participants' achievements and navigating college.

Participants had to push through their self-doubt and guilt that they were an impostor and did not belong on a college campus. People live in continuous fear of the reality of their abilities being exposed by their peers, leaders, and scholars; thus, they work hard to be successful and receive acknowledgment while putting on a façade of being confident (University of Houston, 2017). Each participant experienced impostor feelings or and guilt as if they didn't belong on campus even though their achievements in the classroom and sport in high school helped them enroll and stay at a four-year college. For example, Participant 1 attended college and while he was having success in the classroom and on the court, he felt guilty leaving his single mother and peers behind. He attributed his success in the classroom to being motivated by the environment he came from rather than the hard work he put in by studying and being tutored.

Participant 2 experienced impostor feelings and guilt by leaving his siblings behind to become first in his family to attend college. Also, Participant 2 expressed that he always received good grades "regardless of my situation so I knew I could do the work in college". Rather than attribute his success in the classroom to his study habits and abilities, Participant 2 expressed that he received good grades to be eligible for football.

Moreover, he did not feel he belonged on campus until he saw someone like him on campus.

Participant 3 saw individuals in his neighborhood dying and going to jail, so he attended college leaving his peers and single mother behind. He expressed that he felt guilty leaving his environment; however, it was best for him. Participant 3 displayed impostor feelings when he failed to give himself credit for the hard work he put in to improve his grades. Participant 3 stated: "Over time I absorbed from my peers how school worked and I started to do better in my course work". Despite the challenges, each first-generation African American student-athlete found a way to push through their self-doubt and guilt, as well as they were an impostor, and did not belong on a college campus to navigate college at a primarily Caucasian Division III institution.

Falcon (2015) expressed that first-generation students may feel uncomfortable in a college environment. Participant 1, 2, and 3 begin their journey at a primarily Caucasian Division III college without knowing anyone. Participant 1 discussed that he was not outgoing and sociable. Participant 2 said he was uncomfortable on campus until he saw a basketball player the first day that looked like him, so they started being friends. Participant 3 said that his teammates took him in and made him feel like family.

Theme 1: Key Factors.

The participants in this study wanted to make a transition from high school to college to improve their situation lives. Each first-generation African American male student-athlete that participated in this study discussed key factors for enrolling in a four-

year college. Key factors included wanting to leave their dangerous environment for a safe community and wanting to grow as a person. Participant 3 articulated that: I was seeing to many people my age go to jail or being killed so I felt college would be a safe place for me even though I felt guilty leaving my single mother alone.

Theme 2: Tapping Into Athletics.

According to NCAA (2016) 47% of first-generation students strongly agreed they would have enrolled a four-year institution had they not been an athlete. Participants in this study tapped into their athletics to be recruited by coaches in their individual sports which ultimately landed them on a four-year Division III NCAA campus. Also, the participants used sports as a way to meet new people on campus. Participant 1 articulated that: I knew basketball could motivate me to do well in the classroom and prove that I belong on a college campus. Participant 2 expressed that: Playing football on the collegiate level helped him stay out of the streets and motivated him to receive a degree.

Theme 3: Personal Circumstances Faced.

Warner's study (2016) of 19 first-generation student athletes found that one participant struggled with the identity of being a student and athlete. Furthermore, each participant was a student-athlete on a NCAA Division III college campus. NCAA Division III schools unlike NCAA Division I and II fail to give athletic scholarships to their student-athletes. NCAA Division III athletes receive grants and non-athletic aid. Thus, some athletes have to work to ensure they have extra spending money (NCAA, 2016). Gibbons and Woodside (2014) said that financial burden experienced by first-

generation student-athletes could cause high student loan debt, working a job while in college, or going to college part time.

Each participant in this study faced barriers with being a first-generation African American male student-athlete on a predominantly Caucasian Campus. Participant 1 struggled with managing being a student, athlete, and working a job as a first-year student. He saw other students receiving money from their family and knew that the support was not there for him as a result he needed to work. Participant 2 articulated that when he arrived on campus he felt as if he did not fit in with the college community. He expressed that seeing his peer's parents on campus made him realize how parents should support their child in higher education. Participant 3 struggled in the classroom. He felt a barrier to his learning was failing to know what resources were out there to help him succeed in his academics. Also, he expressed he was not mature enough to know what it took to be a student and athlete.

Theme 4: Navigating Course Load.

Wang (2014) found that first-generation students had a difficult time adapting to the college course load due to having a lack of a relationship with the teacher, resources, and failing to have a person in their life that attended college previously to assist them through the process. Each participant in this study expressed that they needed assistance with their course work to remain eligible for their sport. As a first-year student, Participant 1 struggled with navigating his course work. However, he began to use the campus resources and tutors when he struggled in writing. He acknowledged that the resources were there and he had to make up his mind that he needed to use them to be

successful in the classroom and eligible to participate in his sport. Participant 2 recognized that he needed a support system to navigate his course work. Although, he kept his grades up to stay eligible and participate in his sport, Participant 2 recognized that he needed tutoring. He went to tutoring when he felt that he may have been struggling in a class. Participating 3 struggled to navigate his course work and recognized that he needed a mentor to show him how to navigate his course work and be a student-athlete.

Theme 8: Lesson Learned.

Chavez (2019) said that first-generation college students are disproportionately low income, minorities, and less prepared for their academic case load than continuing-generation students, making it difficult for college admittance. Despite the odds being against them to enroll in college and have success, each participant in this study had unique experiences being the first in their family to attend college as a first-generation African American male student-athlete a primarily white college. As a result, they had an opportunity to tell the lessons that they learned through their journey. Participant 1 learned that college can prepare you for the real world. Also, Participant 1 expressed that he found that college helped him become a better person and man. Participant 2 learned through his experience in college how to use the education he was receiving and the college resources to overcome homelessness and being poor. Participant 3 learned the importance of college and begin attending classes regularly. Furthermore, he learned the importance of being part of the college community. As a result, Participant 3 participated in service learning projects and gave back to the community.

Theme 5: Sense of Community.

A student-athlete may struggle to feel a sense of community due to their rigorous schedule of navigating being a student and athlete. Warner (2016) said that many first-generation college student-athletes struggle with balancing relationships amongst their college community. Once Participant 1 arrived on campus he struggled with meeting people. He recognized that he was not open to meeting new people; however, once students knew he was on the basketball team they started coming up and introducing themselves. As a result, Participant 1 felt part of the college community and met knew people. Participant 2 said that the first day he recognized one student that played a sport that looked like him and did not have family support. He expressed that he felt that the person he met would help him feel part of the campus. Also, he recognized that his teammates played a key role in him adapting to the college and feeling that he belonged. Participant 3 expressed that being part of a team helped him meet new people. He expressed that his team was more than a team, they were family and they assisted him in navigating college and feeling part of the campus community.

Theme 6: Key Challenges.

Each participant faced challenges as a first-generation African American male student-athlete on a primarily college campus. Turner (2017) found in her study of eight first generation student-athletes at a NCAA Division II university that it is key for a student-athlete to be academically and socially comfortable in the transition to higher education. Participant 1 struggled with the transition of being a student-athlete on the

collegiate level. As a first-year student, he struggled in the classroom and on the court. For example, he discussed that he was not in shape for his sport and he struggled with attending class regularly. Also, due to the dining hall closing early and failing to have spending money, there were nights where he went hungry. Participant 2 expressed that his peers and college faculty did not care about his situation; however, he made up his mind that he was going to do what was best for him. Also, he motivated himself when times were hard by reminding himself that receiving a degree could improve his life. Participant 3 struggled when he arrived on campus with making the transition from a high school student-athlete to a college student-athlete. He struggled with balancing his time with academics and the time it took to be an athlete. Also, when Participant 3 begin to struggle in his classes, he did not know the steps to take to receive help to improve his grades.

Theme 7: Navigational Strategies.

Owens (2015) found in her qualitative study of Division I NCAA student-athletes at a predominately Caucasian college that they used their coaches and teammates to assist them with navigating the college. Each participant in this study found various strategic ways to navigate the college. Participant 1 used the college's tutoring services to navigate his classes. Also, his coach formulated study partners for the basketball team to ensure everyone was completing their homework and studying for their tests. Participant 2 focused on his sport of football to navigate college. He used the sport to meet new friends and socialize. Furthermore, he had a good relationship with all of his professors and as a result, he did not have a hard time doing well in his classes. Participant 3 recognized the

importance of forming a relationship with his teammates and learning the ways they navigated the college. Furthermore, Participant 3 over time begin to look at his peers' study habits and how school worked. After Participant 1 took this approach he started to be a better overall student-athlete on the college campus.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation is the findings from this study is limited to the interpretation of the participants. Furthermore, the results are limited to first-generation African American males student-athletes on a primarily Caucasian Division III campus. Moreover, the findings may not be generalized to first-Generation generation African American females student-athletes on a primarily Caucasian Division III campus. The findings from this study is limited to a Division III school and may not be generalized to NCAA Division I and II colleges that offer scholarships to their student-athletes. Furthermore, the findings may not be generalized to National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Division I and II colleges that offer scholarships to their student-athletes.

Recommendations

There are gaps in this study that can be addressed by future research. Participants of this study currently attend NCAA Division III College in the Midwest. Future research could be conducted on first-generation African American men attending a predominately Caucasian college campus in the South and how they navigated college. Also, future research on first-generation African American male student-athletes should broaden the scope to include first-generation African American male student-athletes enrolled at NAIA schools and NJCAA schools in relation to how they navigated college

at predominately Caucasian college campuses. The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), is a governing body of athletics programs that are devoted to small college athletics. NAIA colleges has Division I and II athletic programs for student-athletes to compete. The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) is the governing association for community college, as well as state and junior college sports throughout the United States. NJCAA has Division I, II, and III athletic programs for student-athletes to compete. Also, future research should explore research of first-generation African American female student-athletes experience attending a NCAA Division III college to understand how they navigated college at predominately Caucasian college campus.

I recommend that high school faculty and coaches put together resources for first-generation athletes to ensure they have a positive transition from their environment to their new environment. Resources would include a former first-generation student in their sophomore, junior, or senior of college, accompanying a first-generation student-athlete while they are visiting the campus so they ask questions about how they navigated the college. Also, each college should have a faculty member other than a coach that can address the needs of these students. Furthermore, at orientation of the college there should be a faculty member or student assigned to this population that can address their questions and needs about the campus.

Each participant came from a crime ridden environment and used college and their sport to make a better life for themselves. Emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring that these students have the appropriate resources in college to ensure they are retained

and receive a degree. Each participant discussed having someone on campus that helped them navigate college. I believe that having mentors that serve the first-generation student population on campus could help these students and athletes become successful on campus, in their sport, and on the college campus. Also, coaches should have resources that may assist them in knowing the needs of first-generation African American male student-athletes trying to navigate a primarily Caucasian college campus. Coaches having resources to work with first-generation African American student-athletes could serve as a tool for these individuals to be successful in college and ultimately graduate college.

Implications

The findings from this study was limited to the interpretation of the participants. Furthermore, the results were limited to First-Generation African American male student-athletes on a primarily Caucasian Division III campus. Moreover, a limitation was results may not be generalized to First-Generation African American female student-athletes on a primarily Caucasian Division III campus. I was the researcher in the multiple case study of three first-generation African American male student-athletes at a primarily Caucasian NCAA Division III campus. Furthermore, I am an African-American man that participated in basketball at the collegiate level at a two-year college in the Midwest and four-year college in the South and Midwest. As a young adult, I was the first in my family to attend college as a student-athlete. Although she did not participate in sports, my mother was the first in my family to attend college. Moreover, as a first-year student

in college, I struggled as a student-athlete due to being away from family and friends, experiencing a new environment, and doubting if I belonged in a college environment.

There were no limitations to trustworthiness due to I was conscious of my past experiences and put aside preconceptions regarding what I may believe based on personal experiences when conducting the interviews with each participant. Also, I used rich, thick description by providing individuals that read this research an opportunity to transfer information to other sites and decide if the findings can be transferred, constructed on shared characteristics (Morse, 2015). Verbatim quotes and transcripts with themes were used to provide contextual and descriptive information of each participant's experience. I offered participants the opportunity to check over their answers for accuracy. After the interview I gave each interviewee my email if they wanted to check over their answers or add anything to their interview. Furthermore, there were no discrepancies in their interviews. Moreover, all the approaches mentioned for data verification were essential in offering a rich, thick description.

The study looked through the lens of impostor feelings theory to understand how these participants navigated a primarily White NCAA Division III campus while feeling guilt for leaving their families and siblings behind to improve their overall quality of life. Clance and Imes (1978) used the Impostor Phenomenon to depict the characteristics and actions of a group of high-achieving women that were fighting to internalize their success. The current study had theoretical implications. For example, the participants in this study showed that although they were young men they demonstrated impostor feelings just as the women showed in Clance and Imes (1978) study of high-achieving

women that downplayed their success. The findings presented demonstrate that the participants felt impostor feelings. They felt guilty for improving their life and leaving their family behind. Also, the participants downplayed their achievements in sports and academics as something that just happened rather than giving themselves credit for the hard work they put in to be successful on the college campus. Despite the impostor feelings that were present during this study they did not return home. As an alternative, each participant continued on the path of success in their academics and sport to ensure they stayed in school and was on pace to be the first in their family to graduate college.

The qualitative multiple case study could give potential first-generation African American college student-athletes hope that they can attend college. Also, that they can be successful in the classroom and sports. The study may motivate potential first-generation African American college student-athletes to understand that despite their background they can be first in their family to attend college and improve their life and lives of future generations by taking that next step. Each participant in this study came from a low socioeconomic background and a single-parent household. Despite their background, they used their talent to enroll in college to ensure they could improve their life and be an inspiration to their family.

Moreover, the study could contribute to college administrators understanding athletes' needs from diverse backgrounds. College administrators could learn practical ways to assist first-generation African American student-athletes and provide them with the necessary resources. Resources could include mentoring, tutoring, and service-learning, that could help them excel in the classroom, athletics, and on campus. Also,

college administrators may begin to find new ways to serve this population, such as starting programs and workshops geared toward best practices with working with first-generation African American student-athletes.

High school administrators and coaches can learn from this study that they play an intricate part in the success of first-generation student-athletes. For example, each participant in this study discussed that they did not know how the college process worked. However, they knew that this was their way to improve their overall well-being. High school administrators and coaches around the world can be part of helping more first-generation student-athletes achieve their dream of being first in their family to attend college and participate in sports. The high school coaches and administrators may find ways to assist specifically first-generation student-athletes. Furthermore, ways to assist specifically assist this population consist of having workshops on the expectations of being a student-athlete, the various resources on college campuses for these student-athletes, and the necessary test such as ACT/SAT, and grades to be accepted by colleges. Also, high school coaches and administrators could prepare first-generation student-athletes with understanding the various levels of colleges they can compete at such as the NCAA, NAIA, and NJCAA. As a result, the coaches and administrators can be part of assisting first-generation student-athletes in ultimately going to college, playing a sport, earning a degree, as well as becoming a productive citizen in their community.

First-Generation African American student-athletes could learn from this study that they do not have to feel as if they are an impostor, do not belong on a college campus, or the success they receive in the classroom and athletics is a fluke. They will

understand that there are students like them that believe they belong on a college campus and all the success they have achieved in higher education is due to their individual skills and support they received on their journey. Parents may become aware of what resources are on a college campus such as financial aid, tutors, student success center, and support staff that can help their first-generation student-athlete feel connected to the institution. As a result, parents of first-generation student-athletes may become more supportive of their youth in being the first in their family to pursue an education and earn a degree which could motivate future generations to attend higher education to improve their overall well-being as well as their communities.

Conclusion

The data gathered for this study suggest that first-generation African male student-athletes need services put in place to serve their specific needs. Services that were offered to this group was tutoring, on campus social activities, and mentoring from teammates. College faculty and coaches should look to incorporate future services for all first-generation African American student-athletes. Services would include specific college orientation for this population to understand their concerns and fears. Also, partnering these athletes with a mentor on the team or on the campus that can assist them with navigating the college campus. The coaches and college faculty should have a training or resources in place to ensure they have the tools to assist first-generation African male student-athletes in having an opportunity to be successful on campus. In conclusion it is necessary that we continue to study first-generation African male student-athletes and their lived experiences in college to learn how to best meet their needs as

students and athletes. Furthermore, to ensure they are retained and ultimately graduate

first in their family from college as well as have the opportunity to take what they learned

and become positive contributing citizens in their communities.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Date:_____

Location:_____

Name of
Interviewer:_____

Name of
Interviewee:_____

Interview Number: One

1. Why did you enroll in a four-year college?

2. What role did athletics play in your decision to attend college?

3. What barriers did you face while attending this college?

4. What were your academic needs?

5. What were your social needs?

6. What were your challenges?

7. How did you navigate college?

8. What went well while in college?