California State University,

Fullerton

FACTORS THAT SUPPORT SUCCESSFUL AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENT-ATHLETES AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

In

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Community College Leadership

By

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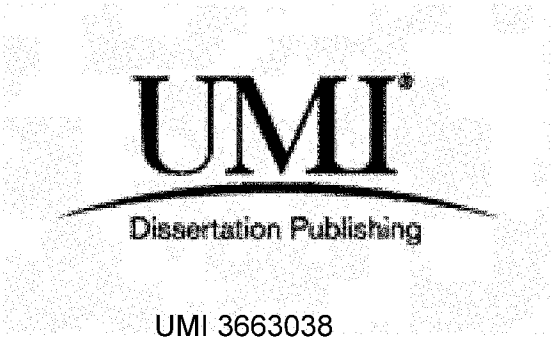
2015



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain a rich understanding of successful African American male student-athletes' perspectives on factors that supported their academic success in California community colleges. Using phenomenological methods, 13 African American male student-athletes from a large suburban single-campus community college were interviewed. Twelve of the 13 student-athletes participated in intercollegiate football, and one played basketball. The interview sample was comprised of students with ages spanning from 19 to 23 and grade point averages varying from 2.12 to 3.57, with most of the students above a 2.5 grade point average. The results of this study provide a unique look into the lives of African American male student-athletes as they describe their individual journeys that have led to their academic success. The young men discussed the effects of family, finances, relationship negotiation, academic resources, academic integration, and racial issues that served as a support to their success rather than as a barrier. This study raises awareness of the struggles Black student-athletes encounter in college and their resiliency in overcoming challenges by utilizing the barriers they face as motivation to succeed in both their athletic and academic endeavors. Additionally, this study provides insights that administrators, program developers, and educational leaders can use to ensure inclusiveness and to enhance programs and academic

pathways that intentionally support first-generation, underrepresented, underserved students.

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To my parents, Rosendo and Maria Veloz, you live in me.

and

To my children, Kymm and Michelle. I will always live in you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank the awesome people that made my dream possible. First, I would like to thank the 13 young men of this study for unselfishly granting me their interviews. I am so grateful for your candid responses and for sharing your personal and sometimes emotional experiences with me. This dissertation would not have been possible without you. I also thank Fullerton College for allowing me access to the college and the participants. Next, I thank my committee members for contributing to my growth during the dissertation process and for helping make this process one of the most amazing experiences of my life. Dr. Meri Beckham, thank you for listening to my many questions and giving me direction and encouragement to continue on my path, particularly during those challenging days when I didn't need feedback but really just needed a friend. Dr. William Franklin, I was fortunate to have you as my instructor. You taught me to "unpack" ideas, barriers, and find solutions to challenges. Dr. Dawn Person—my chair, mentor, support, and conscience—I am a better writer and a better individual because of you. Thank you for challenging me throughout the dissertation process, for believing in me, and for your *magnanimous* contribution to my personal, academic, and professional growth. Next, I would like to thank the CSUF Ed.D. faculty for your love of learning and teaching; you certainly challenged my dendrites to grow exponentially.

To my friends in Cohort 4, thank you for helping me stay with the program. I appreciate your support throughout the program; I learned so much from our late night study groups, classroom debates, and heartfelt conversations about our families, friends, and future. Xiaoyu Lian, the little woman with a big heart, thank you for your friendship and helping me stay grounded. Arnette Edwards, my dearest friend and sister number eight, thank you for being ever present and for your support in and outside of class.

I am most thankful to my family; particularly my parents, Rosendo and Maria Veloz, for raising 11 children and inculcating in us the importance of God, family, friends, and education—Gracias ama querida por su amor y apoyo. I would like to give a special thank you to my sister, Bertha, for her love and support, but most of all for helping fill the void that my mother left in me. A loving thank you goes to my children, Kymm and Michelle Carter, for sharing me with my textbooks, computer, and colleagues and for helping me stay grounded to my studies. Brothers and sisters, thank you for understanding the reasons for my long absence from family night, Karaoke, and *menudo* Sunday—I have a lifetime to catch up on the stories I missed! Most importantly, I would like to thank Danny Varela. You have been the constant in my life. I am so blessed to have you in my life and appreciate your friendship and support.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Nearly 60,000 students from 525 member colleges compete in 28 different sports in the United States each year (National Junior College Athletic Association, 2013b). Although African Americans are the second largest minority group and one of the fastest growing demographics in the United States with a projected population of 65.7 million for July 1, 2050, African Americans continue to be highly underrepresented in college graduations and overrepresented in intercollegiate sports (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Harper, 2009; Haycock, 2001), particularly the most visible sports of football and men's basketball. Given the multiplicity of reports on inequity in the postsecondary graduation rates of African American male student-athletes when compared to their White peers (Associated Press, 2012; Diverse Staff, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics, 2010), the academic performance of African American male student-athletes is a matter of increasing concern to campus leaders and policy makers and is a critical issue for research.

Although there has been an abundance of research on African American male students in education, research on the experiences of African American male students in the community college is limited (Wood, 2010). More specifically, research on engagement as it relates to the intrinsic motivation and

self-determination of successful African American male student-athletes in an academic support program in community colleges is scarce (Horton, 2010).

This chapter introduces the dissertation and begins with the background and statement of the problem. The explanation of the problem provides the context and necessity of this research study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the remainder of the dissertation.

Background of the Problem

The leading challenge facing community colleges today is serving traditionally underserved populations (Cohen & Brawer, 2008), and as Harper and Harris (2012) asserted, the educational challenges confronting this population are vast. These students face significant challenges that are unique to their life circumstances, and they continue to be at risk, underrepresented, and underserved.

The underserved student population includes low-income, underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities and first generation students as well as many others. The racial and ethnic minorities traditionally classified within this group include African American students, Asian Pacific Islander students, Latino(a) students, and Native American students (Academic Pathways to Access and Students Success, 2006). As access to American education has expanded over the past decades, so have the disparities in educational attainment of students from historically underrepresented and underserved populations, particularly males of color (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown, & Bartee 2005; Harris, 2009).

In many educational institutions, data-driven research is used to assist educational leaders in identifying the disparities in attainment for students. Some data have been used to identify high schools that continually produce dropouts or students who do not choose to pursue a college degree. Building a Grad Nation (2010) reported 2,007 dropout factories in 2002 and 1,746 schools in 2008—a reduction of 261. This decline is noteworthy given that these schools represent 50% of the nation's dropout rate. More specifically, between 2002 and 2009, the nation experienced a total reduction of only 373 dropout factories. This is affirmation of the challenges in increasing high school and college readiness rates. In particular, first generation and historically underserved student nationwide are affected by these challenges.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2005) reports that first-generation and historically underserved students enrolled in colleges and universities are experiencing delayed success and graduation. In fact, nearly 75% of first-generation students who attend college have not earned a bachelor's degree eight years out of high school and less than half of the students who attend a community college or four-year institution graduate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

Historically, African Americans were excluded from higher education in America. In spite of the long awaited educational access granted by the Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. Board of Education, events outside the nation's courtrooms overshadowed the long awaited national transformation. As an aftermath of the challenges of segregation, African American students

enrolled at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) wrestled with social and academic integration (Chavous, 2002). Research on African American males in higher education suggests that PWIs may respond differently to this population, particularly African American male student-athletes, primarily because of stereotypes concerning aggression and low academic aptitude (Chavous, 2002).

These racialized gender stereotypes are currently observable in the arena of competitive intercollegiate sports. According to Harper (2009), African American males are overrepresented on intercollegiate sports teams as compared to the racial and gender demographics of student populations of many higher education institutions. For example, African American males represented only 3.6% of undergraduate students in 2009 but represented 55.3% of football and basketball players at public NCAA Division I institutions (Harper, 2009). These percentages support the claim that African American male student-athletes are scouted predominantly for their athletic ability. To counter these claims and to support underserved students, especially students of color, campuses nationwide are exploring new models to support underserved student success and many are adopting a framework of inquiry and inclusiveness. New models of student success must address the diversity of students enrolling in institutions of higher education (Rendon, 2006).

A multitude of research studies have investigated the characteristics of low-income, first-generation students and the challenges they encounter within educational learning environments (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rendon, 2006). Low-income students typically grow up in poverty, often attend schools

with poor educational resources, and may lack the influence of someone who has attended college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rendon, 2006). In addition, low-income, first generation students are frequently placed in less demanding high school courses that do not support preparation for college level courses. Unfortunately, students of color often fall into this category, although a significant number of White students also fit into this group (Rendon, 2006).

Therefore, it is imperative for scholars, policymakers, and administrators who are interested in the success of underserved students to understand how the college world affects the congruity of socioeconomic classes. Cultural congruity is the cultural fit between the student's home culture and the culture of the college, university, or society (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996; Thaker, 2008). According to Rendon (2006), congruity occurs when the college world and the world of students are similar. When this occurs, as with the world of middle-and upper-class students, students face few barriers and academic and social integration are facilitated (see Figure 1):

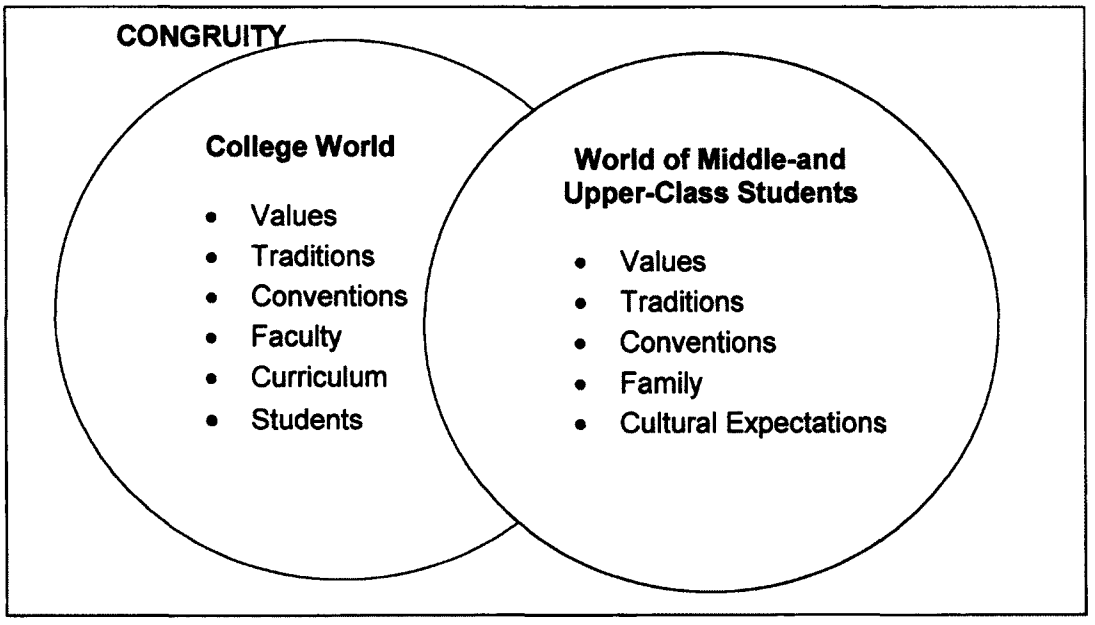

Figure 1. Congruity of the college world and the world of middle- and upper-class students.

Regrettably, it is not uncommon for the college world and the world of low-income, underserved students to be disconnected. When underserved students enter the world of college they often experience cultural incongruity in the forms of alienation, marginalization, stereotyping, and discrimination (see Figure 2).

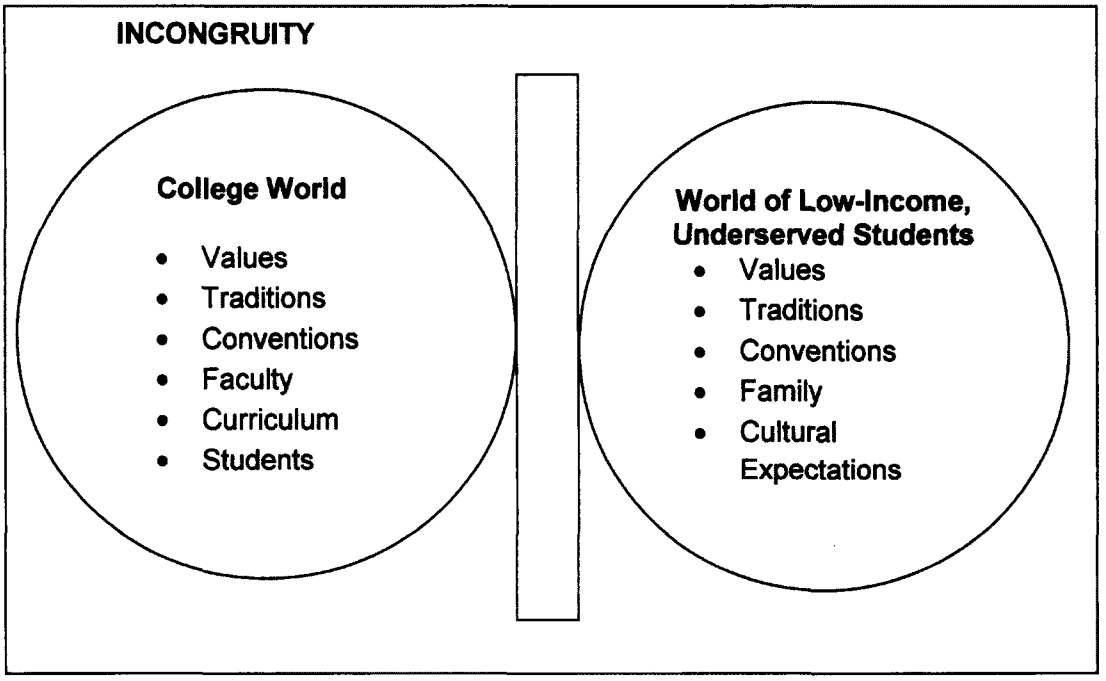

Figure 2. Incongruity of the college world and the world of low-income, underserved students.

Moreover, academic incongruity occurs when the academic environment provides minimal access to faculty role models, a Euro-centered curriculum, and marginalization (Rendon, 2006). Students of color are most often affected by cultural and academic incongruity (Rendon, 2006). Students who connect with social groups that reflect their culture are more likely to be motivated and persist in higher education (Kuh & Love, 2000).

According to Griffin (2006) and Simons and Van Rheenen (2000), (a) there is a strong independent predictive value of athletic academic commitment and achievement motivation, (b) achievement motivation is strongly related to academic performance, and (c) motivation is a central problem facing African American male student-athletes in higher education. However, researchers have

also found that self-efficacy and determination are correlated with the success of African American males in higher education (Bush & Bush, 2010). There has been an abundance of research on African American male students in higher education in the last few decades (Wood & Hilton, 2012), yet we know very little about the academic behaviors of African American male student-athletes as they relate to academic success, intrinsic motivation, and self-determination (Bush & Bush, 2010; Horton, 2010).

Problem Statement

African American male student-athletes are among the most visible at-risk college populations in the United States. According to Jones (2012), more than 50% of African American students do not complete high school or college. Furthermore, the lack of academic preparation for this population is evident in high school. If it were not for their athletic ability, nearly 75% of African American students would not get into college at all. The educational system has not prepared student-athletes for institutions of higher learning, leaving a number of students without the skills to compete academically in college (Dilley-Knoles, Burnett, & Peak, 2010). The numerous challenges African American male students encounter in high school are documented as placement or tracking into low classes, overrepresentation in special education courses, disproportionate disciplinary actions, and underrepresentation in advanced placement courses (Green, 2008). Very few studies, however, have examined the role of athletics in community colleges (London, 1992/1993).

There is a major gap in knowledge about the effectiveness of academic support programs for student-athletes, as well as the completion and success rates of student-athletes in community colleges. On a positive note, current research demonstrates that retention and success rates of student-athletes enrolled in an academic success program are higher than the overall college rates (Carr, Kangas, & Anderson, 1992; Palomar College, 2002). However, relatively little is known about student-athletes' engagement in an academic support program and how this engagement affects retention and success rates. This study addressed the lack of knowledge in this area, using qualitative methods to analyze the responses of a random sample of high-achieving African American male student-athletes to learn about their sources of motivation and perceptions of their contributions to their own academic achievement. The approach of studying this phenomenon from the perspective of successful students complements research exploring the challenges that African American young men encounter (Cargill, 2009; Griffin, 2006; Hernandez, 2000). Research investigating the factors to which African American male student-athletes attribute their academic success could be used by institutions and program developers to make decisions about (a) the impact of programs and services on specific student outcomes, (b) enrollment trends, and (c) student involvement and engagement.

Purpose Statement

This descriptive qualitative study used a phenomenological approach to uncover meaning in the factors that influence the achievement of successful

African American male student-athletes enrolled in an academic support program at Fullerton College, a large suburban community college located in Southern California. A phenomenological reflection was conducted on data elicited from the lived experiences of male students who are approaching graduation from college. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the participants' perspectives on factors that contributed to their academic success.

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this study is: What are the lived experiences of successful African American male student-athletes at Fullerton College specific to athletic and academic achievement? Additionally, the following questions served to guide the study:

1. How do successful African American male student-athletes describe their experiences at the college?
2. What academic challenges do successful African American male student-athletes experience?
3. How do African American male student-athletes describe the effectiveness of the support they receive from participation in academic support programs?

Significance of the Study

It is imperative to investigate the experiences of successful African American male student-athletes for the following reasons: (a) African Americans have historically been identified as an underrepresented group; (b) African American male students are a primary ethnic group experiencing an achievement

gap; (c) persistence, graduation, and academic success rates are low for African American males in the community college; and (d) nearly 25% of the African American male community college student population at Fullerton College is enrolled in intercollegiate sports.

The importance of this study lies in the benefit of identifying variables relevant to the success of African American male student-athletes in California community colleges specific to their athletic and academic achievement. By listening to the voices of African American male student-athletes and allowing participants to express their lived experiences, it is possible to identify themes in purposeful academic activities that help increase academic success. Findings from this study will assist managers and program developers enhance and create academic programs that intentionally support first-generation, underrepresented, and underserved students. Doing so may increase student-athlete rates of retention, success, graduation, and transfer. It may even help to close the achievement gap.

Scope of the Study

Successful African American male student-athletes who are enrolled at Fullerton College participated in face-to-face, semi-structured interviews for this study. The scope of the study encompasses the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations that governed the research process for this study.

Assumptions of the Study

I assumed that grades were an accurate measure of students' academic achievement and that the data I collected from the college network are correct. I

assumed that the student-athletes would (a) respond to the interview questions truthfully, (b) be comfortable enough to give thorough answers, (c) be able to identify factors that contributed to their success, and (d) view GPAs and graduation as measures of success.

Study Delimitations

This study was delimited to only African American male student-athletes who (a) were currently enrolled at Fullerton College, (b) completed at least two consecutive semesters, (c) were currently attending athletic study hall, (d) had a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or better in transferable courses in subjects other than physical education, and (e) had an educational plan on file with the athletic counselor.

Study Limitations

Current enrollment data for the suburban community college selected for this study show a student population of over 26,000 (Student Success Initiative, 2013). The number of African American students at this community college is 837 students or nearly 3.2% of the entire college population. Although more than 400 student-athletes are enrolled in athletic study hall, this study was limited to African American males. Additionally, the sample size for this study was limited to 13 African American male student-athletes, with the understanding that data saturation point determines the sample size. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain saturation as the point when no new data are emerging. They further suggest that researchers should be concerned with reaching a point where new findings do not add to the overall story, model, theory, or framework. Thus, it is

necessary for the researcher to make disciplined decisions to stop collecting data when necessary.

The intercollegiate sports represented in the athletic study hall are men's basketball, women's basketball, football, men's soccer, women's soccer, women's volleyball, men's water polo, and women's water polo. However, the teams participating in this study were limited to men's basketball, football, men's soccer, and men's track and field.

Student-athletes are somewhat unique, having a shortened timeframe at the community college primarily due to copious rules and regulations from the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA), the national governing body for two-year college athletes nationwide (NJCAA, 2013). Since this study includes only academically successful African American male student-athletes at a single public two-year institution, the results of this study cannot be generalized to students who (a) are not athletes, (b) attend private two-year institutions, (c) attend four-year institutions, or (d) identify with a different ethnicity and/or gender.

Definitions of Key Terms

African American. The terms African American and Black will be used interchangeably and refer to persons having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa who are also citizens or residents of the United (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

Academic success. Students will be considered academic successful when they earn grades of C or higher (a grade of A, B, C, or P) and have a GPA of 2.0 or higher in non-physical education classes.

Cumulative GPA. This refers to the running total grade point average (GPA) for all courses achieved.

Unduplicated headcount. This refers to the total number of students enrolled at the college at any given point of time. In contrast, duplicated headcount refers to the total number of seats occupied by students. A single, unduplicated headcount student may be enrolled in four courses in one semester, thus counting as four student enrollments (Fullerton College Institutional Effectiveness Report, 2012).

Ethnicity. Ethnicity refers to individuals belonging to a social group with a common national or cultural tradition (Ethnicity, 2013).

Eligible student-athlete. To be eligible, a student who participates in an intercollegiate sport must (a) be making reasonable progress within an approved college program or course as listed in the college catalog, (b) be enrolled full-time using any combination of terms, (c) maintain enrollment in 12 or more credit hours of college work during each term of athletic participation, and (d) maintain a 2.50 GPA or higher at the college where they participate (NJCAA, 2010).

Incite program. This is a mandatory academic support program for student-athletes that requires students to complete two hours of weekly tutoring only at the following locations: Math Lab, Music Lab, Skills Center, Study Hall, Tutoring Center, or Writing Center. Coaches may select to increase the total number of weekly tutoring hours to be completed. As a result, football coaches only require football players to complete two weekly tutoring hours while basketball players are required to complete six weekly tutoring hours.

Underserved students. This term is most often defined as students who do not receive an equitable share of institutional resources, e.g., low-income, underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities, and first generation students as well as many others (APASS, 2006).

Organization of the Dissertation

Research indicates that African Americans are highly underrepresented in high school and college graduation and overrepresented in college and university sports (Harper, 2009). Research concerning underserved students emphasizes that one of the major challenges significantly affecting the academic success of underrepresented and underserved students, particularly African Americans, is the disconnect between their world and the college world (Rendon, 2006). Little is known about the effectiveness of academic support programs for African American male student-athletes enrolled in the community college (London, 1992/1993). Findings from this study will assist managers and program developers to purposely design programs that support this student population.

Chapter 1 introduced the problem statement and research questions. Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the literature pertaining to the research questions. Chapter 3 contains the research design, including data collection and analysis methods. Chapter 4 introduces and describes the study participants followed by detailed themes and notable quotes that emerged during face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Finally, Chapter 5 defines the implications for practitioners, my recommendations for future research, and a summary of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

African Americans are one of the fastest growing populations in the United States. For the purpose of this research study, the terms African American and Black are used interchangeably to refer to individuals with African ancestry. According to 2011 United States Census Bureau estimates, African Americans composed 14.1% of the total United States population of 43.8 million. An estimated 7% of the nation's total Black population of 6.18 million was reported to reside in the state of California (Black Demographics, 2007-2012). The projected African American population of the United States for July 1, 2050 is 65.7 million. In that year, African Americans will account for 15% of the nation's total population. However, in spite of the growth in the general population, African Americans continue to be highly underrepresented in colleges and universities and overrepresented in intercollegiate sports throughout the nation (Jones, 2012). This population is continually at risk and historically underrepresented and underserved (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

In this review of the literature, I will discuss the historical context of community colleges, examine the achievement gap of underserved students, focus on the influence of intercollegiate sports on academic achievement, and investigate sources of academic motivation.

Historical Framework

To fully understand the role of community colleges in current society, it is essential to revisit their evolution over time. In addition, a review of how the changing population of students and inclusion of intercollegiate sports has influenced this evolution is necessary.

Segregation in Higher Education

Educational exclusion began with slavery, when African Americans were forbidden to read and write (Singer, 2005). Historically, African Americans (i.e., Black individuals whose ancestral lineage could be traced to American slaves) were excluded from higher education in America. During the colonial era, between 1607 and 1776, educational institutions were only accessible to White males for the purpose of training young men to be leaders (Thelin, 2004). The Civil War (1861-1865) provided an opportunity to push through laws for Blacks that had been stalled in the political arena for several years. One such political case was the Morrill Act of 1862, which had been previously vetoed.

The Morrill Act of 1862 was an influential federal law that made funding possible for public higher education. Under the act, states accepting the terms received a total of 30,000 acres of federal land. The proceeds from this land sale funded educational institutions known as land-grant colleges. According to the Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges Subchapter 1 (1862), the purpose of these land-grant colleges was "to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic . . . in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life."

Although the second Morrill Act in 1890 allowed African Americans to be admitted to colleges, segregation was still widely practiced. Black church and community associations such as the American Missionary Association (AMA) displayed great commitment to the education of African Americans. Their support came with an insistence that liberal education was crucial to prepare future Black leadership (Thelin, 2004). Furthermore, W. E. B. DuBois, an American philosopher, sociologist, and historian, stressed this position in his call for higher education for the "talented tenth" of the Black population (as cited in Thelin, 2004, p. 102). DuBois emphasized that the nation should invest in the education of a group of Black leaders whose responsibility would be to educate and lead Blacks in society (DuBois, 1903). He believed that the educational system should swiftly engage Blacks in society by strengthening character, increasing knowledge, and teaching them to earn a living (DuBois, 1903). However, most of America disagreed with DuBois' philosophical position on education because it promoted academics and frowned on a vocational curriculum for the black population. DuBois' fiercest opponent was Booker T. Washington, a well-known supporter of agricultural and vocational education institutions.

Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) was a former slave who became an American educator, author, orator, and political leader (Ozmon, 2012). His philosophical views were widely accepted throughout the United States by Whites and the African American community. Washington believed that if Blacks were educated in areas that were deemed valuable by Whites, they had a better

chance of slowly integrating into White society. Washington's philosophical views were accepted by many influential people, such as Black educators, ministers, editors, and businessmen (as cited in Ozmon, 2012; Washington, 1899). He alleged that because of the recent emancipation of slaves, White Americans were not willing to share their world with a race they saw as inferior (as cited in Ozmon, 2012; Washington, 1899).

Shortly after the Supreme Court decided to eradicate the Civil Rights Act of 1875, Southern states began enacting extensive segregation legislation (Packard, 2002; Tuck, 2007). From 1865 to 1890, racial segregation and disfranchisement provisions such as segregated transportation, use of violence and fraud to control the Black vote, and the banning of interracial marriages were instituted throughout the South to legally bind Southern Blacks to an inferior status (Packard, 2002; Tuck, 2007).

Disenfranchisement of African Americans continued until the Supreme Court case of Brown v. Board of Education (1954) challenged racial segregation and gave African American students educational access equal to White students' (Spring, 2012).

History of Community Colleges

During the twentieth century, the rapid expansion of secondary school enrollments increased the demand for access to higher education (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Students seeking traditional liberal arts education could apply for admission to public and private colleges and universities (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Early development of community colleges. Prominent educators of the nineteenth and early-twentieth-century believed that universities should abandon teaching adolescents and turn over this function to junior colleges. The idea for universities to cease providing general education to adolescents was initiated during the mid 1800s and is credited to Henry Tappan, President of the University of Michigan. Moreover, educators such as William Rainey Harper from the University of Chicago and David Starr Jordan, the Stanford president, suggested emulating the approach followed in European universities and secondary schools (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Harper and Jordan contended that universities should be responsible for the higher-order scholarship, while the lower schools should provide general vocational education to students through age nineteen or twenty (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Later, Harper was involved in the development of the first public two-year college in Joliet, Illinois.

Joliet Junior College was established in 1901 in Joliet, Illinois, and is the oldest public two-year college operating continuously in the United States (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). This institution offered two years of study beyond high school and was comparable to the first two years of college. Joliet Junior College gave access to postsecondary education to students who were not accepted at or could not afford to attend highly competitive universities. The Juliet Junior College model was the foundation for the earliest public and private community colleges, which were typically small and rarely enrolled more than 150 students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014a).

In California, 100 junior colleges opened between 1910 and 1960, an average of nearly two per year. To put this number in perspective, more than 1,000 public community colleges were opened nationwide during the same period (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The percentage of high school graduates grew from 30% in 1924 to 75% by 1960. Corresponding statistics indicate that 45% of eighteen year olds entered college in 1960, up from 5% in 1910 (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). There has been little change in the number of California community colleges built from 1960 to 2014, an increase from 100 to 112. Nationwide statistics show a comparable increase from 1,000 in 1960 to 1,166 in 2014 (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Since the establishment of the first community college, each era has brought forth a new shift in the purpose of community colleges. During the 1920s and 1930s, the massive unemployment rate during the Great Depression influenced community colleges to develop a workforce (Spring, 2012; Thelin, 2004). After World War II during the1940s to 1950s, the G.I. Bill made education affordable to veterans, resulting in more than 1 million student veteran enrollments at community colleges. Veterans nearly doubled the total student enrollment, from under 1.5 million to nearly 2.7 million, an 80% increase in one decade (Thelin, 2004).

From the 1960s to the 1970s, student enrollments more than doubled, from 3.6 million in 1960 to 7.9 million by 1970, due to (a) the "baby boom" generation enrolling into colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Gelb & Palley, 1982), (b) civil rights, (c) the women's rights movement, and (d) legislative reforms such

as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Higher Education Act of 1965, and the War on Poverty. These factors significantly stimulated an increase in the number of women, minorities, and low-income students in college (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Gelb & Palley, 1982). The 1970s to 1980s brought declining support from federal grants, an increase in student loans, a decline in the number of traditional-age high school students, and a decline in educational performance (Kinzie et al., 2004). Subsequently, the era from the 1980s to 2014 is known for national pressure for colleges, universities assessment, accountability, and increased aggressive marketing in a competitive environment. Additionally, this era is known for increases in (a) nontraditional student populations such as nontraditional-age students and part-time students, (b) women attending colleges and surpassing the number of men, and (c) African American student enrollments. Latino students make the biggest gain in minority enrollment during this era (Kinzie et. al., 2004).

Concisely, the driving force in the creation of two-year colleges that offered a combination of liberal arts education and vocational instruction were (a) the call for increased access, (b) the need for trained workers, (c) a lengthened period of adolescence mandating custodial care of the young, (d) the drive for social equality, (e) the growing importance of science and technology, and (f) the societal belief that people could not be legitimately educated unless their instruction was sanctioned by an institution (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Therefore, the simplest reason for the rapid growth of community colleges is that schools were expected to solve a variety of social or

personal problems: drug abuse, alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, and inequitable incomes (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Spring, 2012).

Defining the two-year college. At their second annual meeting in 1922, the American Association of Junior Colleges (ACCJC) defined a junior college as "an institution offering two years of instruction of strictly collegiate grade" (Bogue, 1950 p. xvii). A junior college was usually an extension of a local school district or university (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). The term junior college was used during the 1950s and 1960s to identify lower-divisions at private universities and two-year colleges supported by churches or organized independently, while community college was used for publicly supported institutions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). It was during the 1970s that the term community college became the term that was most often used to describe these institutions. The community college is currently defined as any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or associate in science degrees as its highest degrees (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). However, community colleges also provide studies for students interested in the baccalaureate, as well as career preparation and continuing education.

Recently, community colleges in more than 20 states have offered bachelor's degrees. While not everyone is sold on this idea (Fain, 2013), California, which has one of the largest two-year institution systems, with 112 community colleges and an enrollment of 2.4 million students, may join this trend. Leaders of several community colleges emphasize capacity, student access, and the demand for skilled workers in nursing and technical fields as some of the

reasons why California's two-year colleges are considering offering bachelor's degrees (Fain, 2013).

Mission. The community college has many purposes: providing short-cycle activities for its constituents' personal interests, cultural upgrading for the community, literacy development, economic development, serving as a channel for state development funds and industrial training programs, being a connector between secondary schools and universities, and serving as a career training center assisting students in job entry and job upgrading (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014a). To achieve these goals most community college missions have the following basic commitments:

- serve all segments of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students,
- provide a comprehensive educational program,
- serve its community as a community-based institution of higher education,
- teach, and
- promote lifelong learning. (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014b)

Access to Community Colleges

Community colleges are a major provider of postsecondary education nationwide (Spring, 2012). Many students choose to attend a community college in response to high tuition costs, a weak economy, and increased academic competition at four-year colleges (College Board, 2011). Community colleges

competition at four-year colleges (College Board, 2011). Community colleges enroll more than 7,000,000 students, 44% of all undergraduates in the United States (College Board, 2011). Surveys identify transfer as a popular goal of incoming community college students. In California, the number of students applying to community colleges is greater than the accessible seats.

In the 1972-1973 academic year the rate of two-year college enrollment immediately after high school graduation was 49%, with 1,141 educational institutions accessible to students. Thirty-two years later in the 2004-2005 academic year, the rate of college enrollment had grown to 66% with only 32 more colleges available to support this growth (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Between 2007 and 2009, full-time student enrollment at community colleges continued to grow by 24%, making access a leading challenge facing community colleges.

Another critical challenge facing community colleges today is serving traditionally underserved populations and students who would not attend college if the opportunity to attend a community college were not available to them (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Most often, underserved students include underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities and low-income and first generation students. In addition to the challenge of serving traditionally underserved populations, government mandates require greater transparency of the work being done, identification of best practices, greater access, new policies toward increasing student success, and closing the achievement gap of underrepresented students.

The Achievement Gap

The achievement gap in education refers to the differences in learning among specified groups of students (Achievement Gap, 2011). More specifically, this term refers to differences in academic achievement between socioeconomically advantaged and White and Asian students and socioeconomically disadvantaged students of other minorities (Symonds, 2004). Most often, it is used to describe disturbing performance gaps between African-American and Hispanic students compared to their non-Hispanic White peers, and the disparity in performance between students from low-income families and those who are from middle-to-high-income families (Achievement Gap, 2011).

The term "achievement gap" was first used in the 1960s and 1970s to address the differences in levels of educational achievement between Black and White children (Barton & Coley, 2010). The nation's efforts to close the achievement gap began with the Brown v. Board of Education desegregation decision of 1954 and continued with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which focused on the inequality of school resources. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 increased confidence in educational progress and recently the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) required disaggregation of achievement scores to show the inequality between racial groups (Barton & Coley, 2010).

According to the National Education Association (2002-2013), student groups experiencing achievement gaps are (a) racial and ethnic minorities, (b) English language learners, (c) students with disabilities, (d) boys/girls, and (e) students from low-income families. The four ethnic groups affected by the

achievement gap are American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Blacks and African Americans, and Hispanics.

College Experience of African American Students

There is currently an achievement gap among underrepresented students in higher education that includes African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans (Bauman et al., 2005; Grantham & Ford, 2003). Educators must focus on providing a comprehensive framework for excellence that incorporates diversity and a pathway for students to develop healthy racial identities with their same-race peers (Bauman et al., 2005; Grantham & Ford, 2003).

According to Alexander Astin's student involvement theory, student involvement is necessary to succeed in college (Astin, 1984; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Astin stressed that for student learning and growth to occur, students need to actively engage in their educational environment and educators must create opportunities for this involvement to occur, both in and out of the classroom (Astin, 1984; Evans et al., 2010). Therefore, by actively engaging in athletics, academic support programs, and out of classroom activities, students may increase their success in college.

Moreover, researchers suggest a positive effect in the academic success of students attending colleges with a significant number of students from their ethnic background. For example, according to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), African American students who attend mostly Black institutions increase their academic success above what may be possible at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Thus, community colleges with a predominantly White

population may choose to help close the achievement gap by increasing access to African Americans and supporting programs that strengthen academic success. Similarly, African American students in institutions of higher education that are not predominantly white experience struggles that complicate their educational success.

Student Struggles in Educational Institutions

Research on African Americans in higher education suggests that educational institutions may respond differently to African American males, particularly student-athletes, due to their higher visibility and stereotypes concerning aggression and low academic aptitude (Chavous, 2002; Davis, 1994). Chavous (2002) emphasized that this racialized gender stereotype is readily observed in discussions of academics and African American college student-athletes in revenue-producing competitive intercollegiate sports.

Furthermore, most of the research on African American students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) suggests that African American students struggle with social and academic integration (Chavous, 2002). Fleming (1984) examined gender challenges in college outcomes for African American students in higher education and gender differences in the social and academic adjustment of students in PWIs and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Fleming posited that Black females perform better at PWIs than Black males, while males do better at HBCUs. These findings are attributed to the idea that PWIs encourage independence and assertiveness in females but not in African American males.

In addition to struggles with social and academic integration, African American males are overrepresented on intercollegiate teams (Harper, 2009). In 2009, African American males represented only 3.6% of undergraduate students; however, they represented 55.3% of football and basketball players at public National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I institutions (Harper, 2009; NCAA 2010). The overrepresentation of African Americans on intercollegiate sport teams is dramatic, considering that in 2009 the national population of African Americans was 12.6% and Whites 65.4% (USCB, 2012b).

Moreover, African American male students are underrepresented in high school and college graduation (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Harper, 2009; Haycock, 2001; NCES, 2006). However, the lack of preparedness of African American high school graduates for postsecondary education is exceptionally alarming (Adelman, 1999). According to Adelman, African Americans who are higher achievers in high school also are more likely to enroll in college and to complete postsecondary education.

Graduation Rates

On July 14, 2009, President Barak Obama called for 5 million more community college graduates by the year 2020 (The White House, 2009). To achieve this goal, President Obama "outlined new initiatives to increase the effectiveness and impact of community colleges, raise graduation rates, modernize facilities, and create new online learning opportunities" (The White House, 2009, para 8). Because of the inequities in graduation rates among underrepresented minorities, one of the objectives under President Obama's plan

includes aligning graduation and entrance requirements of high schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities. Not only will this be an overwhelming challenge for the nation, but it will also be a more complicated objective to achieve for first-generation college goers.

High school. According to Haycock (2001) and the National Center for Education Statistics (2006), there is an inequity in high school graduation rates of African American students compared to White students. In 1999, national data reported significant differences in the rates at which African American and White students complete high school and go directly to college (Haycock, 2001). In the 18 to 24 year-old group, about 90% of White students completed high school or earned a GED; among African Americans, the rate was 81%. Additionally, approximately 76% of White high school graduates proceed directly to college, compared to 71% of African American graduates (Haycock, 2001).

The National Center for Education Statistics (2006) found that in 2004 African American students made up nearly 16% of the national public school population. In the 2005-2006 academic year, only 55% of all African American students graduated from high school on time, compared to 78% of Whites (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). In the 2006-2007 academic year, approximately 1.3 million students failed to graduate from high school nationwide; nearly 54% of these were African American students. (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010; Jones, 2012). Two years later in 2009-2010 academic year the national high school graduation rate was slightly worse for males in this population; Black male students had a graduation rate of 52%,

compared to 78% for White males (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012). During the same period, the high school graduation rate in California for Black male students was 56%, compared to 83% for White males (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012).

Recent reports on the educational attainment and college readiness of adolescents provide troubling national statistics regarding African American students (Radcliffe & Bos, 2011). National high school graduate rates indicate that nearly 71% of all students graduate from high school, compared to nearly 50% of African American graduates (Haycock, 2001; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011).

Furthermore, high school dropout rates are bleak and nearly epidemic. In yet another daunting study, current data indicates that nearly seven thousand students drop out of school each day nationwide; this is a total of approximately 1.3 million students who are failing to graduate from high school and nearly half of these students are of color (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). In 2012, high school dropout statistics estimate an annual total of 3,030,000 and a daily total of 8,300 (Statistic, 2012). In the largest 50 cities in the United States only 59% of students graduate from high school. Disaggregated national data shows that 5.2% of all dropouts are White; 9.6% are Black; and 17.6% are Hispanic (Statistic, 2012). The California dropout rate is even more ominous.

According to 2009 estimates, the California high school dropout rate was 21.5%; nearly 114,826 students or about one in every five students dropped out of a California high school. Disaggregated data by race and ethnicity estimates national high school dropout rates as 36.8% for African American/Black; 26.7%

for Hispanic/Latino; and 14.1% for Caucasian/White (David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 2011). Although the 2011 average freshman graduation rate for California public high school students was 76.3% (Torlakson, 2012); this was a mere 2.2% improvement from the 2002-2003 average rate of 74.1% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

Postsecondary. There is an inequity in the postsecondary graduation rates of African American students when compared to White students. Between 1990 and 2000, enrollments in postsecondary degree-granting institutions increased by 11% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). The next decade between 2000 and 2010 enrollment increased a dramatic 37% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Likewise, the nationwide percentage of African American college students enrolled in postsecondary degree-granting institutions has continued to increase (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). From 1976 to 2010 the percentage of African American student enrollment rose from 9% to 14%, while the percentage of White students fell from 83% to 61% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). However, enrollment in educational institutions does not indicate completion.

Although nationwide enrollment rates of African American college students continue to rise, disaggregation of data collected by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) shows that African American male student-athletes have weak graduation rates (Associated Press, 2012; Diverse, 2012). The Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education (Associated Press, 2012) reported data from a four-year study of athletes attending schools in the NCAA

six major sports conferences. Findings show that 50.2% of African American male student-athletes graduated within six years. Moreover, findings in the same study indicated that participating schools graduated African American male student-athletes at lower rates than non-student-athletes. Scholars who study race and ethnicity in intercollegiate athletics are not surprised that findings report racial inequities in graduation rates; however, they are astounded by the pervasiveness and depth of the inequalities and question why institutional leaders, NCAA, and athletics conference commissioners have not responded responsibly (Associated Press, 2012; Harper, Williams & Blackman, 2013).

Also of great concern are the associate degree graduation rates of African American male students attending community colleges. In a study conducted by Esters and Mosby (2007), findings show that African American male students have the lowest graduation rate among all males, with only 16% of these students graduating within three years.

Influence of Intercollegiate Sports on Academic Achievement

For many student-athletes, the decision to begin their academic studies at community college is often based solely on the opportunity to play a sport (Horton, 2010). Student-athletes are often first generation college students, are academically underprepared, have an undeclared major, are learning disabled, and are often from an underrepresented ethnic group (Hall, 2007). Research supports the likelihood that these characteristics (first generation, underprepared, undeclared, learning disabled, and from an ethnic group) will minimize the

probability that students will receive an associate's degree and/or transfer to a four-year institution (Hall, 2007; Horton 2010).

The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education recently released a report indicating that most schools in the NCAA's six major sports conferences report dismal graduation rates for African American male student-athletes (Associated Press, 2012). According to a four-year study of athletes enrolled in 76 colleges and universities, African American male student-athletes continued to graduate at a rate substantially lower than the overall undergraduate rate of athletes (Diverse, 2012). This study reported 50.2% of African American male student-athletes graduated within six years, compared to 72.8% for the overall rate of male student-athletes, regardless of race (Diverse, 2012).

In another study, Harper et al. (2013) compared the Black male student-athletes' six-year graduation rates to student-athletes' overall in schools that regularly win the NCAA's Division I football and basketball championships. This study revealed that from 2007 to 2010 African American men were only 2.8 % of full-time, degree-seeking undergraduate students; however, they were 57.1% of football teams and 64.3% of basketball teams. Far too often, African American student-athletes are accepted to college because of their athletic ability and without the academic preparation needed to succeed and graduate (Harper et al., 2013; Jones, 2012); furthermore, their pathways are redirected from academics towards athletics.

Regardless of why society directs African Americans and their communities towards pursuing athletic pathways, the tragedy is that African

American students and their communities may believe that success is predominately based on athletics (Njororai, 2012). The difference in graduation rates of African American and White athletes raises fundamental questions regarding student priorities and institutional commitment (Njororai, 2012).

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

Competitive football entered the arena of intercollegiate sports during the 1880s (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Thelin, 2004). In May 1901, the first intercollegiate basketball league was formed, the New England Inter-collegiate Basketball League. Teams on this league included Yale and Harvard Universities and Williams College. Most likely, African Americans did not play on this league as only eight African Americans were recorded to have played basketball for a collegiate team from 1904-to 1919 (Basketball, 2010). Since 1906, one of the missions of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is to protect young athletes from being exploited by athletic practices (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2013).

NCAA purpose. The NCAA is a nonprofit organization with over 1,200 members throughout the country that governs many intercollegiate sports (NCAA, 2013). Colleges governed by the NCAA must abide by established rules on eligibility, recruiting, and financial aid, and are classified as Division I, II or III. The purpose of the NCAA is to administer 23 sports and championships to over 430,000 student-athletes; give advice and support to its members; enforce NCAA rules; and oversee the distribution of money to its members (NCAA, 2013).

Financial exploitation. Although the NCAA is a nonprofit organization and asserts college sports are amateur, perhaps using this argument to justify nonpayment of student-athletes, college sports have become a highly commercialized revenue-generating enterprise (McCormick & McCormick, 2009). Researchers affirm that revenue-generating educational institutions have an unequal impact on African Americans, particularly those playing college football and men's basketball because students who benefit most from these lucrative college sports are predominantly White (Harper et al., 2013; McCormick & McCormick 2009). A recent study by McCormick and McCormick (2009) looked at the racial composition of student-athletes in 25 football and men's basketball teams from 2004 to 2005 and again from 2009 to 2010. The data revealed that from 2004 to 2005, nearly 68% of football student-athletes were African American, while the African American male student population at those schools was only 6%. During the same period, 78% of basketball male student-athletes were African American, while the African American male student population at those schools was only 8.5%. Analogous findings were reported from 2009 to 2010 at these institutions.

Academic exploitation. In addition to financial exploitation, researchers continue to investigate issues of academic exploitation. Studies reveal appalling low graduation rates among student-athletes, with the lowest GPAs attributed to African American male student athletes. Student-athletes are often caught between being underprepared and the demand for academic success in order to remain eligible to compete in their sport (Gurney & Weber, 2010). Moreover,

African American student-athletes are recruited from high schools with insufficient resources, increasing the likelihood of their being underprepared for the demands of college-level work (Harper et al., 2013). In summary, exploitation of African American student-athletes has helped create the common perspective that athletic programs should be an extension of the community college open access policy and develop student-athletes lifelong learning skills through academic study and athletic participation (Horton, 2009).

Community College Athletic Programs

The primary focus of academic support for student-athletes programs on college campuses is to provide student-athletes with the academic, personal, and professional support needed to succeed in college. Researchers have long discussed what a student-athlete program should include. Stuart (1985) compared the performance of male intercollegiate football male student-athletes during the first two years of college with male non-athletic students. Findings suggest that academically weaker student athletes were helped by team support and the individual desire to maintain eligibility. Carodine, Almond, and Gratto (2001) argued that student-athlete programs should include academic support, counseling, and life skills development. Bell (2009) posited that the degree of student-faculty interaction and faculty-involvement is one of the greatest predictors of whether students will graduate on time. However, when faculty influence on the experiences of African American students, particularly student-athletes is examined, studies most often discussed the negative perceptions of faculty towards student-athletes. Although the worth placed on academic student

support programs is substantial, the worth of academic support programs for student-athletes continues to be measured by their funding cost.

The financial value of athletic programs at community colleges has been an important topic across campuses. Consensus is that little research has been done on the relationship of athletics and community college education (Chen, 2008). One study examined the knowledge and understanding of presidents and chairpersons of boards of trustees in six states in regard to athletics at their colleges (Chen, 2008). Those surveyed revealed having little knowledge about the funding of athletic programs (Chen, 2008).

According to the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA), during July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011, approximately 41% (14) of the 34 California Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) member institutions with undergraduate enrollments between 5,000 and 10,000 reported either a financial loss or no financial gain (total revenue for teams minus total expenses for teams) (Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act, 2010). Of the remaining 20 institutions surveyed, 60% (12) earned revenues at or above $25,000, while only 10% (2) earned revenues above $84,000. The totals for the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) are nominal when compared to four-year institutions. For example, according to the 2010 EADA survey, during the 2010 academic year the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of California at Berkeley reported net revenues of $39-42 million from athletic programs. These findings clearly bring to the forefront discussions concerning the financial value of

community college athletic programs that do not generate revenue for their institutions.

Horton (2009) examined the value of athletic programs and student participation at the community college through a qualitative study. Horton gave voice to student-athletes, their perspectives, and their interpretations of their experience at a community college through reflective commentaries within a phenomenological framework. He found that it was critical for coaches and institutional leaders to collaborate to help student-athletes become successful athletes and successful academically. Horton emphasized that athletic success and academic success must be integrated so that the student and the athlete are merged. He made the following recommendations to accomplish this: (a) invest in athletic and academic support staff; (b) make funds available for resources to help accomplish goals, including tutoring, and (c) encourage faculty to participate in the student-athlete's lives by tutoring, advocating, and mentoring.

Student Development Models

As researchers continue to study the multiplicity of challenges stemming from the lower academic success of student-athletes, the relationship between student-athletes and their instructors is often examined (Comeaux, 2011). Scholars agree that faculty, students, and their community would benefit from understanding student development models such as Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of identity (1969), Alexander Astin's (1984) student involvement theory, and Vincent Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure.

Chickering's original 1969 work, *Education and Identity*, focused on traditional-aged students in small liberal-arts colleges and proposed seven vectors of development. Chickering's theory posited that students could progress through vectors at different rates or they could progress through multiple vectors at a time to build greater complexity, stability and integration; progression may not be linear (Pascrella & Terenzini, 2005). Chickering's seven vectors of identity development theory suggests that if a campus offers a balanced mix of institutional support and if students are influenced by these services, students will be more apt to accomplish the following: (a) develop competence, (b) manage emotions, (c) move through autonomy toward interdependence, (d) develop mature interpersonal relationships, (5) establish identity, (e) develop purpose, and (f) develop integrity (Chickering, 1969).

However, Chickering's original theory was seen as explaining White, middle-class students. Therefore, in 1993, Chickering adapted his theory to explain the development of more diverse student populations (Evans et al., 2010). Subsequently, basing their work on Astin's 1984 student involvement theory, Comeaux & Harrison (2007) shed light on the African American athletes' experience in colleges by postulating that African American college athletes who are encouraged to further their education by faculty tend to get higher GPAs. In another recent study of 464 faculty members at the University of Kentucky, Comeaux (2011) provided evidence that student-athletes face tenuous relationships with their faculty. Findings from this study indicated that African American faculty have more positive interactions with student-athletes than non-

African American faculty. African American faculty also reported stronger support for academic services such as tutoring for student-athletes facing academic challenges.

Unfortunately, only a few researchers have explored the impact of the college environment on the African American student development. These researchers contend that isolation and loneliness affect the interpersonal relationships of African American students on White campuses, with African American men being especially at risk (Chavous, 2002; Kincey, 2007). Gender differences have also been found in the academic psychosocial development among African American students at historically Black institutions, with women being more motivated than men (Cokley, 2001).

According to Alexander Astin's (1984) student involvement theory, students play a vital role in determining their academic growth depending on their level of effort or their involvement with the resources provided by their educational institution (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Ultimately, what matters in student success are student behaviors (student involvement) and institutional conditions (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). Student behaviors include elements of effective study habits, interaction with faculty, and peer involvement. Institutional conditions include first year experience, academic support, campus environment, and teaching and learning approaches (Kuh et al., 2006). Scholars postulate that at the intersection of student behavior and institutional conditions is student engagement. Moreover, high levels of student engagement are associated with educational practices and conditions that

include purposeful student-faculty contact and active collaborative learning. After synthesizing thousands of research studies related to student development, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded that:

> If, as it appears, individual effort or engagement is the critical determinant of the impact of college, then it is important to focus on the ways in which an institution can shape its academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage *student engagement.* (p. 602)

In an effort to increase student-faculty engagement, an awareness of developmental issues can help faculty in their interactions with students on an individual basis. For example, by understanding that students are concerned with competency issues, faculty can be better prepared to recommend activities and academic support that can "facilitate intellectual, physical, and social competence" thereby strengthening student and faculty relationships (Evans et al., 2010, p. 79). Given the intense demands on student-athletes and to counteract the *dumb jock* stereotype, researchers recommended that faculty advocate counseling interventions, academic advising, mentoring, and tutoring to these students. Moreover, the better the interactions students have with faculty and the more involved students are with academic resources, the more likely they are to benefit intellectually and personally (Njororai, 2012).

Mentoring and Tutoring

Mentoring is described as the process by which a student is positively socialized into an institution or profession by a mentor. A mentor may serve multiple roles, such as role model, teacher, advisor, guide, and resource person. Minority students attending institutions of higher education may find it difficult to succeed without a role model. Mentoring has been reported to encourage

minority students to continue in higher education and become professionals (Blackwell, 1989). Researchers emphasize that interaction with faculty is a critical factor in student retention and persistence (Astin, 1993). Therefore, underrepresented and at-risk students may adjust to college more readily through faculty-student mentoring programs (Strayhorn & Cleveland, 2007).

Mentoring and tutoring generally involves matching an inexperienced person with an experienced person who will provide guidance and support, thereby increasing self-esteem and confidence (Reglin, 1997). Mentoring and tutoring provide students with immediate feedback. Studies show that while activities that incorporated immediate feedback and generative activities increased motivation and improved outcomes, immediate feedback was more effective in motivating students (Mahle, 2011).

One mentoring study conducted by Radcliffe and Bos (2011) used a longitudinal research method to study the effects of mentoring on 50 academically and economically at risk students while they were in the sixth grade. Among the findings were that improvements in students' college perceptions and high school perseverance may be associated with mentoring, tutoring, and role model presentations.

Questions often arise as to whether the ethnicity of the mentor or tutor matters. In addition, researchers have called for innovative culturally responsive mentoring and tutoring programs to enhance the academic success of African American students (Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, & Boyd, 2009). One such study conducted by the Benjamin E. Mays Institute researched the effects of

mentoring adolescent African American male students by a model that is Afro-centric, with an emphasis on cultural strengths and pride. Sixty-one middle-school African American male participants enrolled in the study. The results indicated that students in the program had significantly higher academic scores and academic success than students who were not mentored (Gordon et al., 2009).

In a qualitative study by Cargill (2009), a majority of the participants expressed the need for role models or mentors. Cargill explored perceptions and opinions of African American male student-athletes regarding influences on their athletic and academic success. The findings revealed that African American male students participating in sports attribute familial influences, environments of origin, and experiences with African American males as being fundamental to their academic and athletic success. Additionally, participants emphasized that African American coaches, academic advisors, and other athletic department professionals serving as mentors largely contributed to their success. When asked to compare and contrast their relationships with Black and White coaches, 81% (21) indicated having positive relationships with Black coaches and 72% (19) discussed the inability of White coaches to relate to the players (Cargill, 2009). Participants expressed as primary the need of role models and mentors that would provide student-athletes with academic guidance and instill in them the importance of their education.

A study by Himelhoch, Nichols, Ball, and Black (1997) examined factors of persistence for African American students at historically Black colleges (HBCUs)

and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). The sample included 295 African American students enrolled at both types of institutions. Of the 295 sampled, 217 were enrolled at four-year HBCUs and 78 were enrolled at four-year PWIs. Findings of this study revealed that faculty mentoring was a significant predictor of persistence for African American students at both HBCUs and PWIs; whereas, faculty mentoring at PWIs was the only predictor for African American persistence.

To understand mentoring relationships of students, Faison (1996) conducted a qualitative study of African American graduate students and their mentors consisting of interactions and interviews of eleven recorded telephone responses. Participants consistently reported that mentoring was crucial to their academic success. Findings indicated that African American students perceived mentoring to be critical to their success and persistence at PWIs. However, finding racial diversity in mentors was considered challenging. Although enrollment for African Americans has increased, colleges and universities still lack significant numbers of African American administrators and faculty. This increases the complexity of finding mentors for African American students (Williams, 1999).

Theoretical Framework

Academic Motivation

Motivation is essential for academic success (Sternberg, 2005). In the classroom, engagement and motivation are very important for successful learning outcomes (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012). Ryan and Deci (2000) defined

motivation as "moved to do something" (p. 54). Furthermore, "A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated" (p. 54). Researchers posit that higher athletic identity is related to low academic motivation (Ryska, 2002). In one quantitative study, Ryska (2002) investigated the impact of athletic identification and motivational goals on the self-perception of 258 (134 males and 124 females) high school student-athletes. The results indicated a positive relationship between athletic identity and academic, social, vocational, and behavioral competence among athletes.

Intrinsic Motivation

Researchers posit that people may engage in activities for various reasons, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Weiss & Ferrer Caja, 2002). However, when extrinsic rewards are not made available, intrinsically motivated individuals tend to work harder, experience lower levels of performance-related anxiety, and exhibit greater levels of learning when compared to extrinsically motivated people (Hollembeak & Amorose, 2005; Weiss & Ferrer Caja, 2002).

Fries-Britt and Turner (2001) conducted one-on-one and group semi-structured interviews with 15 academically successful African American college students at a predominantly white institution concerning the student's academic and social experiences concerning race issues. The study revealed that high-achieving African Americans encounter countless stereotypes in and out of the classroom from peers and faculty alike. African Americans are often judged on the bases of their physical characteristics, such as hair, color, and athletic ability,

and they feel they must continually prove their intellectual ability (Strayhorn, 2009). Researchers posit that some peers and faculty members believe African Americans are lazy, dangerous, and uneducable. In addition, peers and faculty members may hold beliefs that minorities are most often not gifted or high-achieving (Freeman, 1999). One of the greatest affects of stereotypes is that some African American students may internalize these beliefs and become self-defeating and self-threatening (Steele, 2000).

Various researchers have explored the differences between high-achieving and underachieving students (Fisher, 2005). The results indicate the lack of investment in education and the system of meritocracy may decrease a student's intrinsic motivation to succeed academically. In a meritocratic system, individuals who do well are rewarded (given a merit) and all others are not. For example, in education, some sociologist and fundamentalist posit that due to the socioeconomic class and difference in culture values of students, at the of an academic year students in the highest social classes do better than those in the lowest social classes (Marked by Teacher, 2015; McNamee & Miller, 2004).

A study by Fisher (2005) found that high achievers are self-motivated to succeed academically, while underachievers succeed to please their parents. These results indicated that underachievers need proper support networks to increase their intrinsic motivation in order to pursue academic success for their own gratification (Fisher, 2005).

A study by Simons and Van Rheenen (2000) examined the relationship between achievement motivation and the athletic-academic relationship of

student-athletes' academic performance. The researchers used regression analysis to study the relationship between university GPAs and motivation variables. The outcome was that achievement motivation variables, academic self-worth, and self-handicapping excuses, are statistically significant predictors of university GPA, accounting for 28.8% of the variance in university GPA (Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000). Hence, as the student-athletes' academic self-worth increased their university GPA also increased. The researchers also emphasized that strong, independent predictive value of athletic-academic commitment and achievement motivation is strongly related to academic performance and is perhaps the central problem facing African American student-athletes at a university. Given the increasing presence of African Americans in the general population, in higher education, and particularly in intercollegiate sports (Chavous, 2002; Davis, 1994; Haycock, 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, 2010; NCAA, 2013), intrinsic motivation and self-determination as it relates to academic success for this population is a critical issue for research (Fisher, 2005; Ryan, 2000; Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000).

Intrinsic motivation is particularly important to educators because it results in high-quality learning and creativity. Griffin (2006) examined academic motivation patterns of nine Black high-achievers attending a large public university. The research focus was primarily on students who experience academic difficulty. The results indicated that rather than relying only on internal forces, African American high achievers drew on both internal and external sources to fuel their academic motivation. Participants also described

themselves as self-motivated, goal-oriented learners. Nearly all participants identified their parents as an external motivator.

Some researchers have proposed that academic motivation, regardless of athletic motivation, is pertinent in determining future academic success (Harrison et al., 2009). Gaston-Gayles (2004) affirms there is growing evidence that supports the use of non-cognitive variables (self-esteem, self-confidence, locus of control, and motivation) and traditional measures (high school GPAs and achievement test scores) to predict the academic performance of all students; although, predictability is greater for minority students based on other variables such as socioeconomic background, or education levels of parents. However, only a few studies have researched academic and athletic motivation as non-cognitive variables or studied the effectiveness of non-cognitive variables in predicting academic success for student-athletes (Gaston-Gayles, 2004). Simons, Van Rheenen, and Covington (as cited in Gaston-Gayles, 2004) emphasized that African American student-athletes have a greater desire to play professional sports than White athletes. In another study, Simons and Van Rheenen (2000) reported that student-athletes' commitment to athletics is negatively correlated with GPA and that highly committed athletes have low college GPAs.

Self-Determination

Self-determination is defined as a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable an individual to become goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior (Pacer Center, 2012; Wehmeyer, 2002). Believing that

one is capable and effective is essential to self-determination. Ryan and Deci (2000) affirmed that self-determination theory (SDT) is an integral part of motivational theory, and is the process of taking an individual through the pursuit of goals. Since the early 1990s, promoting self-determination has been recognized as a best practice in education (Wehmeyer, 2002).

Self-determination is important in the development of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-determination theory denotes that self-determined approaches of motivation correspond to greater levels of performance and persistence (Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2006). Self-determined individuals believe they can control their own destiny.

Self-determination emphasizes the importance of choice and other self-related concepts, an essential concept in education (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In discussing Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943), Huitt (2007) defined self-determination as self-actualization and suggested that this theory emphasized that individuals, such as student-athletes, seek to actualize their potentials to become autonomous and capable.

The self-determined motivation of student-athletes is examined by Sullivan and Strode (2010). This study emphasized that self-efficacy or conceptions of ability, is a related to motivational theories and that individuals must feel reasonably sure they can accomplish particular activities to feel competent. This study asserts that coaches can influence student-athletes by fostering three psychological needs: autonomy (feeling free and volitional), relatedness (to care and be cared for), and competence (feeling effective and having the opportunity

to express that effectiveness). Researches posit that humans will gravitate towards environments that provide these needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Gaps in the Literature

Few research studies have examined the intrinsic motivation and self-determination of successful African American male student-athletes in the community college. Many studies on African American males in the community college are doctoral dissertations. In 2010, a meta-synthesis of literature on African American males in the community college revealed that 50 total studies on African males in the community college were published: 38 doctoral dissertations, 8 journal articles, and 4 book chapters (Wood & Turner, 2010). Though much has been written about African American male student participation in intercollegiate athletics, most of the literature is related to revenue-generating sports teams (Harper et al., 2013).

There is currently an abundance of literature on African American males at four-year institutions (Harper, 2004). Although similarities may exist among African American males in two- and four-year institutions, Wood and Turner (2010) caution researchers in assuming homogeneity in their experiences.

Chapter Summary

African Americans continue to be highly underrepresented in colleges and universities and overrepresented in intercollegiate sports. This population has an increasing presence in the general population, in higher education, and particularly in intercollegiate sports. Throughout history, African Americans were flagrantly excluded from higher education in America.

Though community colleges are a major provider of postsecondary education, there currently is a nationwide inconsistency in the postsecondary graduation rates of African American students when compared to White students. This situation makes closing the achievement gap among underrepresented students in higher education a daunting task. To help close the achievement gap, scholars and researchers postulate that students may increase their academic success by attending colleges with a significant number of students from their ethnic background. Thus, educational institutions with a predominantly White population may close the achievement gap by increasing access to African Americans and supporting academic support programs. The primary goal of academic support programs for student-athletes on college campuses is to provide student-athletes with a holistic approach to academic, personal, and professional support needed to succeed in college.

Researchers continue to study the challenges stemming from lower academic success and the relationship between-athletes and their instructors. Studies provide evidence that student-athletes face fragile relationships with their faculty and that African American faculty are more positive toward student-athletes that non-African American faculty. Hence, scholars agree that the college community in general would benefit from understanding student development issues.

Scholars agree that mentoring and tutoring programs successfully foster intrinsic motivation and promote academic success (Reglin, 1997). Researchers emphasize that African American male student-athletes express role models,

mentors, and tutoring programs as being fundamental to their academic and athletic success.

In contrast, studies show that the lack of investment in education and the system of meritocracy may decrease a student's intrinsic motivation to succeed academically. Intrinsic motivation and self-determination are directly related to high-achieving students; high-achieving students are motivated on their own to succeed academically (Fisher, 2005). As a result, underachievers need strong networks to increase their intrinsic motivation and to persist and to be academically successful. Some researchers report a relationship between intrinsic motivation, self-determination, and GPAs.

Multiple systematic reviews of existing literature show a link between academic success, intrinsic motivation, and self-determination for students attending four-year institutions. However, very few studies have attempted to understand successful African American student-athletes' perceptions of variables leading to their success in two-year colleges. Most importantly, there is a need for qualitative studies that will enable researchers to bring forth the voices of these individuals to the forefront. Ryska (2004) stated, "A main goal in education should be the development of learners who will find learning to be an enjoyable experience and who will be motivated to learn" (p. 213). It is important to focus on the primary reason individuals choose to go to college—to obtain an education and develop life skills for a successful future career (Stansbury, 2003).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to the California Community Colleges System Strategic Plan (2013), the vision is to "provide upward social and economic mobility through a commitment to open access and student success by delivering high quality, affordable and comprehensive higher education." Both the mission and vision of California colleges have evolved over time in response to the changing needs of its diverse student population (California Community Colleges System Strategic Plan Steering Committee, 2013). Achieving the mission and vision is a difficult task, as the vast majority of students who attend community colleges are low-and middle-income, African-American and Latino, older, working, second-career, and non-English-speaking higher education students (Bauman et al., 2003).

Research indicates that mentoring and tutoring programs successfully promote intrinsic motivation and support academic success. However, a small number of studies have attempted to understand successful African American male student-athletes and their perceptions of factors leading to their success in two-year colleges.

Few studies have examined the role of athletics in community colleges. In addition, there is a major gap in our understanding of the effectiveness of academic support programs for African American males student-athletes attending community colleges. Insight into the factors these students identify as

supporting their academic success will assist managers and program developers to intentionally design programs to support underrepresented and underserved students. For this reason, the primary research question I posed for this study is: What are the lived experiences of successful African American male student-athletes at Fullerton College specific to athletic and academic achievement? Additionally, the following questions served to guide the study:

1. How do successful African American male student-athletes describe their experiences at the college?
2. What academic challenges do successful African American male student-athletes experience?
3. How do African American male student-athletes describe the effectiveness of support they receive from participation in academic support programs?

Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of the context of the research, including the location and characteristics of the site. The research design, research questions, participants, role of the researcher, instrumentation and data collection procedures, data analysis and interpretation follow. Finally, the conclusion and the summary of the research methods are discussed. The chapter concludes with the interview tools: a recruitment flyer, a consent form, and the interview protocol.

Qualitative Research

When answering the research questions, my ultimate goal is to get a complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Most importantly, I

must decide which research design will work best to give meaning to the data and its relevance to the research problem. For this study, I selected qualitative research.

Qualitative research is broadly defined as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). This method is used to increase the understanding of a phenomenon, to gain new perspectives about things we know much about, or to increase our knowledge about something that is difficult to explain quantitatively (Hoepfl, 1997). Thus, qualitative researchers pursue illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to situations.

A synthesis of the key characteristics of qualitative researchers that are considered important when conducting research have been identified by Creswell (2009), Creswell (2012), Eisner (1991) (as outlined in Hoepfl, 1997), Glaser and Strauss (1967), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Patton (1990). Key characteristics include: (a) collecting data in the natural setting where participants feel most comfortable; (b) collecting data by examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants; (c) gathering multiple forms of data, such as interviews observations, and documents; (d) reviewing and organizing the data into categories or themes; (e) paying attention to the idiosyncratic, the pervasive, and seeking the uniqueness of each case; (f) building on patterns, categories, and themes; (g) using a theoretical lens to view the study, such as culture, ethnography, gendered, racial, or class differences; (h) making interpretations of what is seen, heard, and understood; (i) attempting to develop a complex picture

of the problem by reporting multiple perspectives, factors, and identifying multiple factors; and (j) using reports that are descriptive and incorporate expressive language, including verbatim quotations of rich accounts of experiences.

Although qualitative research, by its very nature, is emotionally challenging and extremely time consuming, I used qualitative methodologies as it yielded rich information, not obtainable through quantitative techniques.

Research Design

The qualitative research design best suited for this study was the qualitative descriptive research design purported by Sullivan-Bolyai, Bova, and Harper (2005). Qualitative description is a distinct method of naturalistic inquiry to present the facts using everyday language. Unlike other traditional qualitative designs, the goal of qualitative descriptive research is a rich description of experiences, events, and processes explained in easily understood language.

A descriptive approach offered the opportunity to gather rich descriptions about the African American male student-athlete experiences in an academic support program at a community college. I worked hard to "stay close to the data and to the surface of words and events" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336) where participants described their experiences. The goal of this qualitative descriptive study was to search for an accurate account of events that most people observing the same event would agree is accurate (Sandelowski, 2000). The focus of this research was on eliciting rich description about the phenomenon from the participants through direct communication.

Qualitative descriptive design was a particularly useful approach because it enhanced the trustworthiness of the study; thereby decreasing the likelihood that competing explanations were responsible for the relationship between the phenomenon and outcome (Sullivan-Bolyai et al., 2005). Qualitative description method is typically utilized when research is particularly relevant to practitioners and policy makers (Sandelowski, 2000).

Furthermore, the general ideas represented in a social constructivist worldview offered a framework for the questions guiding this research study. Social constructivists hold assumption that individuals seek understanding of their world through engagement. (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). The goal of the research was to strongly rely on the participants' views of the phenomenon being studied while accepting Creswell's (2009) identified social constructivist assumptions: (a) Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world; (b) humans engage with their world and make sense of it; and (c) meaning is always social and is largely inductive.

This qualitative descriptive study used face-to-face semi-structured interviews to collect reliable information. The interviews were somewhat conversational, allowing me to explore deeply into the topic (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

The strength of qualitative descriptive research is that it unveils much about an individual's experiences. In addition, this method was used to focus on a small group of 13 participants; thereby, it was less expensive than quantitative research which may have required many more participants or expensive

measurement tools. By combining qualitative descriptive research with face-to-face semi-structured interviews, I took advantage of social cues, such as voice, intonation, and body language; thereby, adding more information to verbal answers (Opdenakker, 2006). Face-to-face interviews enabled the interviewee and me to immediately react to each other, allowing for more spontaneity. Finally, by recording an interview, the interview report was more accurate than writing out notes.

Weaknesses in qualitative descriptive research methods include collecting large sums of data about what a particular group feels, thinks, or behaves and not being able to use the data to make assumptions beyond the particular group of participants. Another weakness of combining qualitative research with the face-to-face interview technique is that my behavior may guide the interviewee in a special direction. An additional weakness is that although a recorder was used during the interview, taking notes was important in case the recorder malfunctioned. Finally, face-to face interviews can become time consuming and costly (i.e., length of interviews and transcribing costs).

Most importantly, this design matched the goal of my study as it was of special relevance to learn more from successful African American male student-athletes in a community college in light of (a) the highly underrepresentation of this population in colleges and universities and their overrepresentation in intercollegiate sports, (b) nationwide inconsistency in the postsecondary graduation rates of African American students when compared to White students, and (c) the current racial/gender achievement gap.

With the current state and federal emphasis on accountability for evidence based outcomes and the need for objective evaluation of efficacy of interventions, researchers must determine the research method that best fits their study and provide the accountability needed to sustain their programs. After methodically analyzing available research methods, I determined that qualitative descriptive research, using a social constructivist worldview, was the best fit for my study.

Research Methods

This section outlines the details of this descriptive qualitative study. More specifically, this section provides the setting, sample, and instrumentation used in the study. An explanation of the data collection procedures, analysis, reliability, validity, and role of the research are also included.

Setting

The location of the study was Fullerton College, a large suburban community college located in Southern California. The purpose for this selection was that I am the current director of Academic Support Programs and Services. In 2010, as the director of support programs at Fullerton College, I was instrumental in the development of the Incite Program, an academic support program for student-athletes. Thus, this college was the natural setting for my study. All face-to-face semi-structured interviews were carried out in the Academic Support Center. All the students in this study were enrolled in the Incite Program were familiar with this location and its staff.

In 2013, statistics for Fullerton College included the following: 83.0 campus acres; 22,014 students per academic year; and 315 full-time faculty. The composition of the student population at Fullerton College, however, is continually changing (see Table 1). In 2005, the student composition was White or non-Hispanic students, 42%; Hispanic students, 31%; Asian or Asian American students, 15%; African American students, 3%; Filipinos, 3%; American Indian/Native Americans, 1%; and Pacific Islanders, less than 1% (Matsuda et al., 2011). By fall 2010, the student population was reported as Hispanic students, 42.6%; White or non-Hispanic students, 30.9%; Asian or Asian American students, 13.1%; Unknown, 4.3%; African American students, 3.5%; Filipino, 2.8%; Multi-Ethnicity, 1.9%; American Indian, .5 %; Pacific Islander, .4% (Meehan, 2010). When comparing the student racial population during 2005 and 2010, White or non-Hispanic students decreased from 42% to 30.9%; Hispanic students increased from 31% to 42.6%; and African American students increased from 3% to 3.5%. In 2010, the total number of unduplicated Fullerton College students per semester was 22,354; the number of African American students during this period was approximately 790 (Fullerton College Institutional Effectiveness Report, 2012).

Table 1

Fullerton College Student Composition – 2005 and 2010

	Percent	
Ethnicity	2005	2010
Race		
White or non-Hispanic	42%	30.9%
Hispanic	31%	42.6%
Asian or Asian American	15%	13.1%
African American	3%	3.5%
Filipino	3%	2.8%
American Indian/Native American	1%	5.0%
Pacific Islander	Less than 1%	.4%
Multi-Ethnicity		1.9%
Unknown		4.3%

Sample

At the time of this study, over 20 team sports participated in intercollegiate competition at Fullerton College; nine of these teams were enrolled in the Incite Program. This study was delimited to only African American male student-athletes meeting all of the following criteria:

1. Must be currently enrolled at Fullerton College.
2. Must have completed at least three consecutive semesters of college.

3. Must be continuously and actively enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit units during the season of participation.
4. Must currently attend the Incite Program.
5. Must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 or better.
6. Must have an educational plan on file with the athletic counselor.
7. Must be participating in at least one of the following sports: football, cross country, soccer, water polo, basketball, baseball, tennis, swimming, and track & field (these sports currently participate in the Incite Program).

Once the Institutional Review Board at California State University Fullerton College approved this study, I utilized the current college database and the participant selection criteria to generate a report identifying the student-athletes eligible to participate in this study. In spring 2013, athletic squad rosters at the community college indicated the population of student-athletes within each sport were approximately 10% baseball, 7% basketball, 8% cross country, 45% football, 10% soccer, 4% swimming, 5% tennis, 9% track & field, and 2% water polo.

Because of unavoidable academic and athletic obligations of the initial group of selected student-athletes, it was anticipated that not all of those who completed and returned the consent form (see Appendix A) would participate in the interview. Within four weeks of initial contact with coaches, it was anticipated that no fewer than 10 and no more than 20 self-identified African American male student-athletes would return the recruitment flyer (Appendix B) and accept to

participate in a face-to-face interview. Although invitations to participate in this study were emailed to eligible participants in various sports, only student-athletes from two sports agreed to participate. Hence, the sample size for this study was 13,(twelve students from football and one from basketball). Saturation occurred when no new information emerged from interviews.

Although the questions were relevant to the study, interviewees may not be able to answer them; therefore, emphasis was placed on the selection of the proper respondents. Thus, purposeful sampling was used. In purposeful sampling, individuals and sites are intentionally selected to learn or understand the central phenomenon. The selection of participants and sites were based on whether participants were "information rich" (Creswell, 2009). One purposive sampling technique that was used was homogeneous sampling. The aim in homogeneous sampling was to select student-athletes who shared the same characteristics or traits (Creswell, 2009). Stratified sampling of GPAs was also used to identify the same or equal amount of participants with the same characteristics within each grouping; in this case, by GPAs. Stratification means that specific characteristics (in this case the strata are GPAs) were represented in the sample and the sample reflected the true proportion in the population of individuals with these characteristics (Creswell, 2009). The strata for this study were (a) 2.0 to 2.49; (b) 2.5 to 2.99; and (c) 3.0 and above.

Data Collection and Management

For this study, the types of data I collected were consent forms, recordings of each interview, interview notes, and transcripts. Initially, the dean of Physical

Education was contacted to discuss the best method of contacting potential participants. The dean of the Physical Education Department granted me access to discuss this study with coaches and potential participants. In appreciation for their participation, results of the findings of this study will be distributed to the coaches.

Instrumentation. Interviews ranged from forty to sixty minutes in length and were conducted within a three-week period. To protect participants and their interview responses, the identity of the interviewees were known only to me.

During interviews, an interview protocol was used and notes were recorded. The interview protocol included instructions for the interview process and the interview questions (see Appendix B) (Creswell, 2012). Specifically, the protocol included an introduction, the purpose of the research, ground rules, time to complete, trustworthiness of the interview, safeguard of information, and the open-ended questions with probes.

The interview questions selected were directly related to the purpose of the study and designed to yield the desired data. Figure 3 shows the research questions and corresponding interview questions.

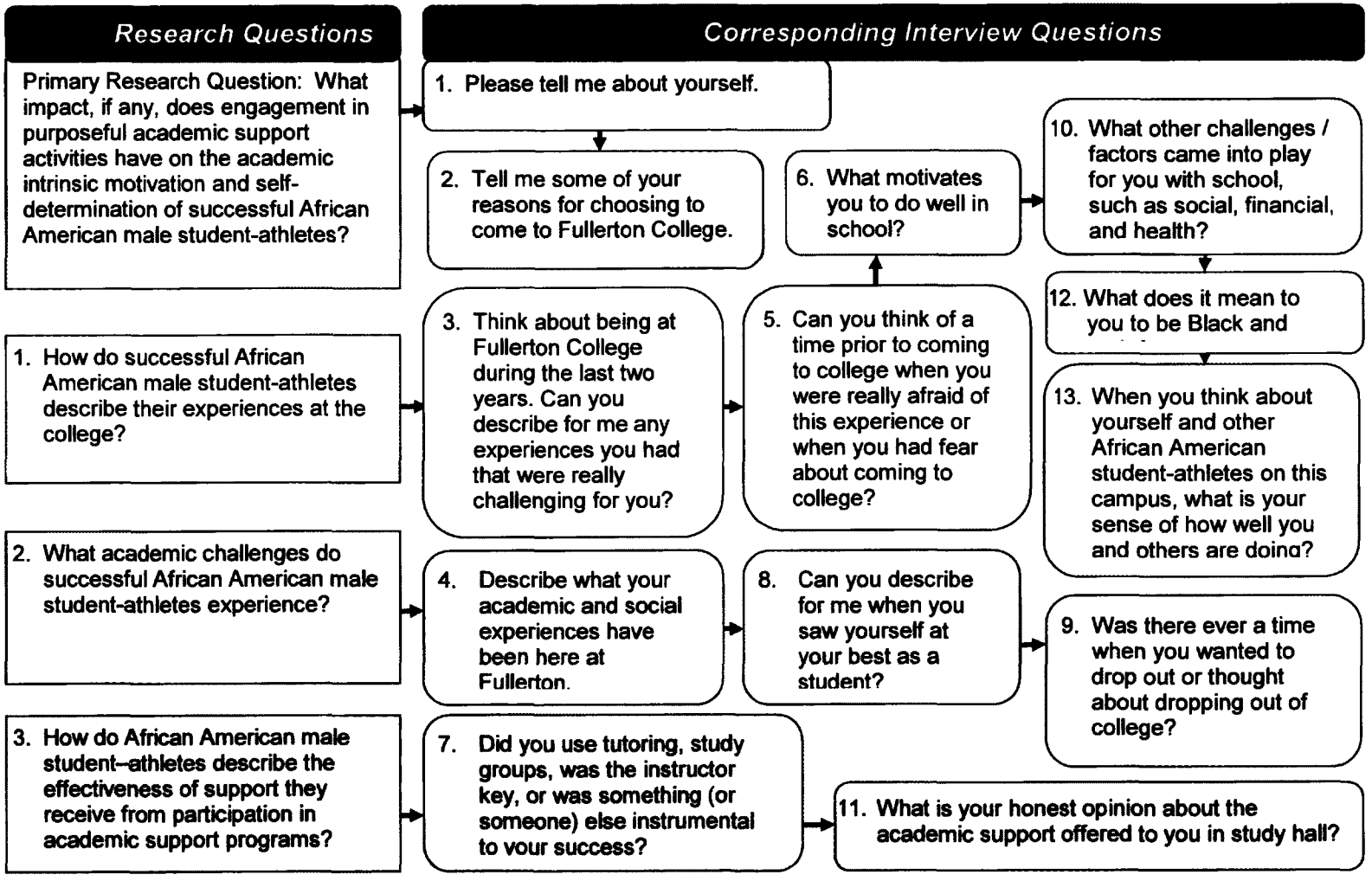

Figure 3: Research questions and corresponding interview questions.

Once the California State University Fullerton Institutional Research Board (IRB) approved my request for research and I received approval to begin research from the Fullerton College IRB, two pilot interviews were conducted. Piloting the interview questions helped me determine if the participants selected for this study would understand the questions (Creswell, 2012). Based on the feedback I received from these pilot interviews, the protocol was not changed. Because the pilot group was privy to the questions, these participants were excluded from the final sample for the study.

Human subjects. All interviewees received an electronic copy of the consent form prior to the interviews. Additionally, before each interview, I verified that each participant signed the form (in alignment with IRB requirements; see Appendix B). The consent form explained the purpose of the research, the time required, the risks and the benefits, the compensation provided, a description of participants' confidentiality rights, and a statement of assurance that the interviewees could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I interviewed each of the participants.

As the researcher, I am obligated to protect the confidentiality rights of research participants and take precautions that do not allow information gained in confidence to be used in a way that will compromise research participants (American Sociological Association, 1999; Creswell, 2009). Moreover, I must anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies (Hesse-Bier & Leavey, 2006). I gained insights into solutions of any potential ethical problems through codes of ethics on the web sites of national associations, such as the

Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct and The American Sociological Association Code of Ethics (Creswell, 2009).

Moreover, I have an obligation to protect the confidentiality of student records and personal information. To ensure that access to confidential information was restricted, audio recordings sent for transcription had pseudonyms rather than names and all field notes and interview transcripts were kept in a locked file cabinet in my home. Digital files have been stored on my personal password-protected computer. In reporting of the findings, no identifying information was connected with participant responses. Study data will be kept indefinitely for future educational use, presentations, and publications. The only purpose for identifying individual data sources will be for contact purposes in case of a follow-up interview. Participants will have access to their interviews through the use of a pseudonym and number; only I have access to these files and identifiable information.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The software I used in data analysis was Atlas.ti, a qualitative descriptive data analysis and research software recommended by the California State University Fullerton Doctoral in Educational Leadership Program. The strengths of Atlas.ti included its flexibility and functionality. This software allowed me to manage, extract, compare, explore, and reassemble meaningful segments of large amounts of data.

Analysis of the data followed the major tenets of qualitative descriptive method of inquiry for research that is outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994),

Sandelowski (2000), and Sullivan-Bolyai et al. (2005): (a) I sought understanding of complex experiences and events; (b) I used data from in depth interviews to describe the experiences from the viewpoint of the participants sharing their lived experiences; and (c) I used the analytic strategies outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). My first step in coding was to determine the essence of the lived experience that the participant described, line-by-line. The second step was to cluster the lived experiences into descriptive labels. The third step was to cluster descriptive labels into one central theme. The final step was to present the findings in a manner relevant to the research questions.

Procedures to ensure trustworthiness. During the data collection and analysis process, I validated the trustworthiness of the findings and interpretations. To determine if the findings that I provided were accurate, the focus was on trustworthiness rather than reliability (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The trustworthiness of the study was critical to evaluating its value. This study followed the four elements to a trustworthy qualitative study emphasized by Lincoln and Guba (1985): (a) Truth value—establishing confidence in the accuracy of the findings; (b) applicability—showing that the findings have relevance in other contexts; (c) consistency—showing that the findings, if replicated with the same subjects, could be repeated; and (d) neutrality--extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not by the biases, motivations, or interest of the researcher.

As researcher I avoided interpreting the data through my own lens and worked hard to stay close to the rich descriptions provided by the participants.

(Sullivan-Bolyai et al., 2005). To validate trustworthiness of the information obtained in this study, an outside professional transcriber was used to transcribe the audio recordings. Once I received the transcripts from the transcriber, I meticulously reviewed the transcripts against the recorded interviews for discrepancies. Additionally, I used peer examination, also known as peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is based on the same principles as member-checking and entails seeking assistance of an impartial colleague with qualitative research. This is one method recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to uncover biases on the researcher's part and to provide an opportunity to analyze the data more deeply. Two colleagues familiar with my study served as peer debriefers. One peer debriefer assisted by analyzing the codes and based on the recommendations made by the peer debriefer, adjustments were made. The second peer debriefer assisted with the themes and based on the recommendations of the second debriefer, no adjustments were necessary. By checking codes and themes developed out of the data, the peer debriefers increased the credibility of the data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Role of the researcher. A qualitative descriptive study is interpretative research providing inference interpretation to present the facts using everyday language. Additionally, this type of study gives an accurate portrayal of characteristics of a particular key practice and offers a method of discovering new meanings of the phenomenon (Sandelowski, 2000). The principles I considered when conducting this study were in accordance with recommendations that have been made by experts in the field concerning

qualitative descriptive studies (Creswell, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000; Sullivan-Bolyai, Boya, & Harper, 2005).

In this qualitative descriptive study, my role as a human instrument emphasized capturing the complexity of the human experience, while adapting and responding to the environment (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). Thus, I captured rich experiences of participants by talking with them in their natural setting and recording the information (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010).

At the inception of the qualitative study, my role as the primary data collection instrument was to identify any biases, values, and personal background, such as history, culture, and socioeconomic status that I held that could taint the study (Creswell 2009). I used the practice of bracketing to reduce bias in my research by suspending preconceptions, prejudices, and beliefs that may have tainted or directed the research. To bracket, Creswell (2009) recommends that, researchers identify what they already know about the experience being studied and suspend or set it aside. Mehra (2002) posits that who the researcher is determines largely what they want to study. Researchers select a topic to study because they have a personal connection to a topic and they must remember that they are the sole author of their study; therefore, it should reflect their values.

Numerous empirical studies have examined whether the ethnic differences between interviewers and participants explain variations in answers to survey questions (Davis, Couper, Janz, Caldwell, & Resnicow, 2010; Hyman, 1954; Schuman & Converse, 1968). Schuman and Hatchett (1974) posit that

researchers are influenced by their own race, gender, religion, and that these interact and influence our knowledge. Other findings have shown that Black responses to questions about threatening or controversial topics, such as militant protest and hostility to whites, tend to vary according to whether interviewers belonged to the same racial group as participants, while answers about discrimination, living conditions, and personal background did not (Schuman & Hatchett, 1974). However, findings suggest that Blacks give more valid responses to Black interviewers. Therefore, race is one interviewer characteristic that exerts a systematic and significant biasing effect, particularly on answers to race-related questions (Reese, Danielson, Shoemaker, Chang, & Hsu, 2011).

On the basis of previous research, I anticipated that interviewer effects would affect responses as my ethnicity and gender is Hispanic female, while all interviewees were African American males. Subsequently, to reduce the race-of-interviewer effect and bring to light my empathy of challenges facing African American student-athletes, at the beginning of each interview in an informal conversation, I assured interviewees that I understood they might feel uncomfortable responding to some of the questions. I also shared my reasons for selecting the dissertation topic, such as having two college-age, Black/Hispanic children that currently attended Fullerton College. I emphasized that my daughter was also a successful female student-athlete enrolled in the Incite Program. At the end of this short introduction, I pointed to a picture on my desk of my children and received smiles from participants.

As the researcher and developer of the Incite Program at Fullerton College for over four years, a first generation community college student, a Hispanic woman, a naturalized American citizen, and having also prevailed over a myriad of academic and social barriers, it was difficult for me to remain unbiased about the program or the experiences being studied. However, I strongly felt that my emotional connection to the setting was positive.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative research study offers practical guidance to Fullerton College administrators, athletic directors, and coaches on the effects that engagement in purposeful academic activities had on the retention and success of African American male student-athletes. This study will help community colleges understand the role that academic support programs for student-athlete play at their institution. It will also help community colleges identify strategic or tactical goals for their athletic programs and gain insight on successful strategies for the enhancement of programs.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This phenomenological study was conducted at Fullerton College, a large, suburban community college in Southern California. The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a rich understanding of successful African American male student-athletes' perspectives on factors that supported their academic success by using the following research questions: What are the lived experiences of successful African American male student-athletes at Fullerton College specific to athletic and academic achievement?

I examined this research question in depth through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 13 successful African American male student-athletes. Data was then analyzed using open coding for reoccurring themes.

The organization of this chapter begins with an initial introduction and description of the participants. Then I detail the themes that emerged based on students' reported experiences, the impact of their engagement with the campus community, and the factors that supported or barriers that challenged their success at Fullerton College. Throughout this chapter, I include notable participants' quotes shared during the semi-structured interviews that add depth and rich description to amplify the themes presented.

Snapshots of Participants

During each of the semi-structured interviews, I asked 13 primary interview questions with follow-up probes, and, as a result, participant answers to these questions were intricate, detailed, and rich. The first interview question asked student-athletes to describe their families, where they grew up and their interests. This interview question enabled me to better acquaint myself personally with each of the participants. What follows is a description of the study participants and their individual backgrounds.

Twelve of the 13 student-athletes interviewed participated in intercollegiate football, and one played basketball. Seven of the student-athletes lived in a single parent home and were raised by their mothers. Five of the student-athletes were raised by both parents, and one was raised by his grandmother. Additionally, three of the 13 student-athletes indicated they were raised in an abusive family environment, while four said they were raised in an environment of drugs and alcohol. Of the 13 participants interviewed, seven were recruited from out-of-state. The interview sample was comprised of students with varying GPAs from 2.12 to 3.57, with most of the students above a 2.5 and with ages spanning from 19 to 23 (see Table 2). Below I provide a snapshot of each of the student-athletes who participated in the study. Pseudonyms are used in describing each participant:

Table 2

Interview Sample

Pseudo Name	Sport	Age	Raised By	In State	Units Earned	GPA
Maxwell	Basketball	22	Mother	Yes	52	3.0-above
Maurice	Football	22	Mother	Yes	55	2.5-2.99
Gerard	Football	22	Both Parents	No	96	3.0-above
Michael	Football	21	Mother	No	58	2.5-2.99
Gabriel	Football	21	Grandmother	Yes	70	2.5-2.99
Aaron	Football	19	Both Parents	No	69	3.0-above
Ezequiel	Football	22	Mother	Yes	45	2.5-2.99
Ethan	Football	20	Both Parents	No	61	2.0-2.49
Eron	Football	23	Both Parents	Yes	41	2.5-2.99
Alex	Football	19	Both Parents	Yes	24	2.5-2.99
Leo	Football	21	Mother	Yes	55	2.0-2.49
Brian	Football	23	Mother	Yes	93	2.5-2.99
Bernard	Football	20	Mother	Yes	63	2.0-2.49

Maxwell is an out-of-state student-athlete and is a basketball player. He has completed four semesters, earned 52 units, and has a 3.03 GPA. Maxwell was raised by his mother in a single parent home and has three siblings. Although the family moved various times, they mostly lived with his grandmother. He stressed that, "Through the hard times, basketball was the only thing that was there. I was happy, and I could express myself on the court, and it shows your character."

Maurice is also an out-of state student-athlete and is a football player. He has completed eight semesters, earned 55 units, and has a 2.91 GPA. Maurice was raised by his mother in a single parent home and has one brother. He shared that his parents were in an abusive relationship. His interests are all sports related.

Gerard grew up in California and is a football player and a transfer student. He has completed three semesters at Fullerton College, earned a total of 96 units (27 units completed at Fullerton College and 69 units at another institution). He has a 3.18 GPA. He was raised in a blended-family home, sharing time between his father and mother. He shared that "I have four siblings who I deeply, really love and care about the most." He shared how he felt about academics:

> It makes me feel good when I do good in school because school is a struggle for me. Even when I was in high school, middle school, it was always a struggle, so when I do real good and get A's and B's, it makes me feel proud of my work.

Michael grew up in California and is a football player. He has completed four semesters, earned 58 units, and has a 2.87 GPA. He is an only child and was raised by his mother and grandmother in a single parent home. He loves sports and shared that besides football, he is most interested "in trying to get back into church and stuff and God and that's become a big interest of mine and getting closer to Him."

Gabriel is an out-of-state student-athlete, a transfer student, and a football player. He has completed eight semesters at Fullerton College, earned 70 units, (55 units completed at Fullerton College and 15 transferred from another

institution). He has a 2.96 GPA. He shared that his mother died when he was four years old. Subsequently, he lived for a short time in a blended family household with his father, stepmother, and step-siblings. His stepmother was physically abusive, "There was a lot of abusiveness, burning my neck . . . or slap[ping] me in the face." Gabriel shared that, "My aunt took me in, and she tried to give me as much of a normal life, though I was a little scarred at the time." He shared that he has been homeless and hungry for most of his two-years at Fullerton College.

Aaron lives in California and is a football player. He has completed seven semesters, earned 69 units, and has a 3.57 GPA. Aron was raised in a two-parent household with two siblings. He is interested in all sports and likes learning and reading. He is also a peer tutor for the Incite Program and works in study hall.

Ezequiel grew up in Los Angeles County and is a football player. He has completed seven semesters, earned 45 units, and has a 2.87 GPA. Ezequiel was raised by his mother in a single parent home. His interests are sports and filming: "I want to be a major film director one day. That's one of my big dreams beyond collegiate sports and possibly the NFL."

Ethan is an out-of-state student-athlete, a transfer student, and a football player. He has completed four semesters at Fullerton College, earned a total of 61 units (38 units completed at Fullerton College and 23 units at another institution). He has a 2.20 GPA. Ethan was raised in a blended family household with four siblings. Three of his siblings were outstanding athletes but

stopped playing due to life issues. His youngest sibling attained a cosmetology certificate and is a hairstylist.

Eron grew up in California; he is a transfer student, and a football player. He has completed five semesters at Fullerton College, earned a total of 41 units, and has a 2.77 GPA. His interests are "football, family, God, singing, and writing poems."

Alex is an out-of-state student-athlete and a football player. He has completed two semesters, earned a total of 24 units, and has a 2.75 GPA. He was raised in a two-parent household. He shared that he is a very strong Christian: "My faith is really strong." He has "been playing football all my life since I can remember." He is very ambitious and "wants to make it to each and every level I can, that my body will take me, and my faith will take me."

Leonard grew up in California. He and his sibling were raised by his mother in a single parent household. He has completed two semesters, earned a total of 55 units, and has a 2.19 GPA. His interest are "playing any sport, just hanging with my family, having a good time and trying to better myself." He shared that his challenge was not having funds to buy food and studying on an empty stomach.

Brian is an out-of-state student-athlete. He has completed six semesters, earned a total of 93 units, and has a 2.69 GPA. He was raised by his grandmother because his mother was on drugs and could not take care of him. When he was about 11 or 12, he "moved with his mother, and we just really started our relationship."

Bernard is an out-of-state student-athlete and football player. He was raised by his mother in a single parent household. He has completed six semesters, earned a total of 63 units, and has a 2.12 GPA. During his formative years, he and his mother stayed in a homeless shelter while his siblings stayed with his grandparents.

In summary, all 13 African American young men were academically successful with varied familial backgrounds ranging from home environments with at least one supportive adult to two-parent households to extended family units. While many experienced community environments with many social ills such as abuse, drugs and violence, some students had rather tranquil upbringings both in and outside of their homes. Only a few of the men availed themselves of high school academic offerings that prepared them for college, while many had high school preparation that was limited in scope and depth. Twelve of the participants played football and one played basketball. All of these men were academically successful with GPAs above a 2.0.

An in-depth description of their lived experiences at the college will be provided in this chapter, including the factors that affected their engagement in the college both in and outside of the classroom as well as barriers and motivators in their athletic and academic worlds.

Emergent themes identified from the interviews were described as academic challenges, academic support resources, negotiating relationships, impact of family variables, impact of financial factors, resiliency: an outcome of racism, and supporting black students. These themes will be explained.

Impact of Engagement in Athletics and Academics

Examining the individual experiences of the 13 student-athletes in this study was valuable in answering the research question of this study. A synthesis of the participants' lived experiences brought forth seven major unifying themes specific to their athletic and academic achievement. These include: (a) academic challenges, (b) academic support resources, (c) negotiating relationships, (d) impact of family variables, (e) impact of financial factors, (f) resiliency: an outcome of racism, and (g) supporting black students.

Academic Challenges

Community colleges appeal to diverse student populations because of their low tuition rates, flexible course scheduling, extensive offerings, and proximity to a student's home or place of employment (Jacobson, 2005). Participants shared that although team sports were the primary reason for selecting Fullerton College, their decisions were also based on the physical environment of the college, atmosphere, academics, and convenience.

Student-athletes are primarily valued in high school and college for their athletic ability. Understanding the pre-collegiate experiences of these men shed some light on whom they were as Fullerton College student-athletes of color. Study participants experienced a myriad of challenges in high school and in college. Examples of these challenges were described as being underprepared for college and lacking the necessary skills to succeed.

Underprepared for College

Participants discussed ways in which their underpreparedness affected both their high school performance and their college performance. They clearly described the disconnect between high school and college expectations.

High school performance. Eight participants indicated they did not do well in high school; they gave a number of reasons for their low achievement, including not attending classes, low academic performance, lack of focus, and lack of support. Brian indicated that his high school placed more emphasis on athletics than academics:

> The high school I went to it wasn't really structured to where like—I mean, it was wrong that it was athletics before academics. I never been a dummy, but if I could not do the work sometimes, I wouldn't do the work. . . . And she [the teacher] would let me out of class and I would go get some lunch or whatever, like in the middle of the class.

Brian also emphasized that while in high school, he did not think about enrolling in college because he lacked knowledge of the enrollment process. Ethan shared that "It just wasn't something that was a necessity, like you didn't need to go to school. You go to high school, you graduate, and you start working, 'cause that's just how it is in. . . ."

Other participants discussed being underprepared for college because of their low academic performance. Six participants indicated having enrolled in a remedial class; most of these participants indicated they took remedial math in high school. One participant, Eron, was placed in remedial math from kindergarten through high school. While Maurice emphasized having failed math twice in high school: "I failed it. Me and math, don't mix."

In addition, Alex indicated that although he felt he had the potential of passing his classes, he failed, "My high school performance was very poor for the potential that I had, . . . but I just didn't handle it the right way, and things got the best of me. I let myself fail."

Gabriel indicated that he took remedial classes in high school and felt that he did not perform well in high school because his instructors did not take an interest in him:

> In high school, I was smart, but when no one cares and nobody pushes you. . . . What do I care for?. . . Nobody's not pushing me. . . . So now you're like, nobody cares, why do I need to go hard? I don't need no discipline, like, what does it matter, you know, and you bring that same kind of attitude from high school to college in the beginning stages of being here.

Some participants did not think about attending college or establishing academic goals during high school, which led them to enter college without specific academic goals. For example, Maurice shared:

> My senior year. . . . You know, hearing the stories, the parties, playing football. I was really excited, but I really didn't know what I was going to do. Like, I know I want to have an education, but what exactly, I can't put my finger on it.

College performance. While all participants stated that their high school performance impacted their college performance, participants also emphasized they were underprepared for college because they were unfamiliar with college expectations. The course demands were more rigorous, and college was more structured than high school. Leonard shared that in high school grades were given to him because he was an athlete, and he carried that expectation with him into college. He stated:

> Once I got to college, I thought I was going to get the grades because I'm an athlete. I thought they were going just hand me the easy grades, which wasn't [the case]. I had to probably work twice as hard to get even a "C" to pass the class.

Alex explained that upon enrolling in college, he had to work harder than he expected. He also stated, "High school, it doesn't really teach you anything." Gerard also shared that high school did not prepare him for college

> When I got to college, it was like I had to hit the ground running full speed. Teachers were asking me to do things that I don't know what it was, and I never heard of it. I was like, "What are you talking about?" A lot of students knew things that I didn't know. Like in math class, I didn't know you needed a scientific calculator for algebra. So when I see this calculator and all these different keys on them, I'm like, what does this mean? In English, I didn't understand writing a paper in history. I didn't know there were different types of formats: MLA, Chicago, APA, so that was complicated.

In addition, participants described feeling lost and not sure what to expect in college. Maurice said, "it [college] was a little difficult because in my high school there was more emphasis on football then class." Therefore, he did not attend class often; he just verified he was at football practice. Other participants, such as Brian did not know what to expect in college because high school "didn't really share with you how important it was to be on top of your grades and stuff."

While most participants reported that their high school performance negatively impacted their college performance, a few students described themselves in ways that fit a student athlete scholar indicating that high school has a positive impact on college preparation and performance. Gerard reported no academic challenges and was college ready when he enrolled at Fullerton College. College for him was an extension of being well prepared in high school

and managing sports and athletics successfully once he started his collegiate journey:

> At my high school they make sure we worked. And just like here, they wanted to see the kids go off to college. They wasn't one of those schools that just said, "Oh, well, we don't want to see them succeed," or whatever. They actually helped you and made sure you did your work. They was on top of you, and they had the same thing here. They had disability services over there, too, and I was in that, and they made sure you got your work done. They was on top of you and my coach was, too. Both of my coaches up there were.

Michael reflected on his high school experience and reported that while in high school, he was young, immature, and unaware of what he needed to do once he started college. However, he stated that his high school performance had a positive effect on his college performance:

> My high school performance was very low and poor. Going to high school, it is tough, academically, but it's not something that I couldn't handle. I could handle it, but I just didn't handle it the right way and things got the best of me. I let myself fall. When I got to college, that's when I realized, even though I still had some . . . growing up to do. . . . I definitely learned from that high school experience in turning a negative into a positive.

Because the majority of them were unprepared for college, these men knew it was important to maintain a sense of focus and make good use of time management as their academic skills were lacking. They never thought of dropping out, because they wanted to be a positive role model for siblings and others. They did not see themselves as quitters, and they knew they needed to have an education to procure a job. When the men talked about others who had left the school, they said most of these men left because of inadequate campus support resources, such as mentors, counselors, a peer support system, and faculty support. They also indicated personal factors such as motivation, lack of

family support, and work responsibilities as reasons for high dropout rates among African Americans.

Other reasons participants felt many African Americans were dropping out of college was associated with college readiness, setting priorities, and mindset. Maurice stated that students were dropped from class by their instructors because they lacked college readiness:

> I know a lot of people—they get dropped from class from not going [or] go to class and not do homework [or] go to class and sleep. . . . When I first came here, I came here to play football. Class can be second. And some people, like, they never get over that mindset.

In essence, a few participants entered college prepared but most entered underprepared for the demands of higher education. Regardless of their academic preparation, participants felt that support resources were important to their athletic and academic success.

Academic Support Resources

Academic support resources were valued by student-athletes. Nearly half of the study participants stated that they chose Fullerton College because of its academic support resources. At Fullerton College, all student-athletes competing in an intercollegiate sport must enroll in the Incite Program, an academic support program for student-athletes. Among the various requirements of the program, student-athletes must complete a total of two-hours of weekly tutoring. However, coaches can select the total number of weekly tutoring hours their student-athletes must complete. As a result, athletes competing in football are required to complete two-weekly tutoring hours while athletes competing in men's basketball are required to complete six-weekly

tutoring hours. All student-athletes enrolled in the Incite Program must complete their required tutoring hours in one or more of the following locations: Math Lab, Music Lab, Skills Center, Study Hall, Tutoring Center, or Writing Center.

To gauge opinions of these participants about the support offered in study hall, I asked two questions: (a) What is your honest opinion about the academic support offered to you in study hall? and (b) Which academic support programs do you feel have helped you the most in becoming a better college student and why? In response, participants reported using the following academic resources: Library, Study Hall, Math Lab, Skills Center, Tutoring Center, and Writing Center. Participants also identified having used coaches, instructors, and teammates as support resources. Although all participants stated having used tutoring, most participants used a combination of support resources.

Incite study hall. Academic resources, such as Incite study hall for student-athletes, were a primary reason participants selected to attend Fullerton College. Alex shared that his high school coach recommended the academic support at Fullerton College, "The tutors, the Incite Program, that's the first thing [my] coach told me about."

Participants discussed how their teammates tutoring in the Incite study hall helped them settle into college life. Similarly, Gabriel stressed the importance of having peer tutors in study hall that could relate to student-athletes:

> You have to surround yourself with people that are like you, who only get to places like you, so that way you can do what you got to do. . . . Probably the most notable person that I surrounded myself with is Aaron [an Incite African American student-athlete and tutor] 'cause he's a really

> good student, a really good athlete, and he's just like me. Actually, he's a better person than me, so he kind of set my standard to be a higher person.

Ethan expressed the importance of attending study hall, "[In] study hall you meet people there that may not be in your sport, and you find new friends. Not necessarily friends to just go hang out with, but friends that are trying to succeed just as you are."

Maurice shared that he attended Incite study hall to offset his lack of family support:

> Just because I was hurting, I mean, life still goes on. My paper is still due; tests are still going to come up, and I still have to do the outlines for stuff. I mean, really the Incite program. Because when I go home, I'm not doing homework when I go home, so I just come here for a couple hours, and then I can actually focus and keep my head clear and not think about it, on the situations that was going on back home, because I'm so far away.

Library. Participants reported visiting the library to review chapters and outline. One participant stated that he most often goes to the library "because they have the cubicles upstairs and it's just quiet. . . . I have the study guides, the outlines, and course outlook. I can just help myself through a lot of things, and I can get ahead in classes." Maurice indicated that he and friends most often choose to study in the library. The library is where they listen to music, study, and prepare for classes. Similarly, Ezequiel expressed feeling "pretty good" about his academics because he felt the college provided everything he needed to succeed: "I would say as far as everything being in place for me to succeed, the library and all the materials and tutors, everything is good."

Writing Center. The Writing Center promotes student success and independence as writers by helping writers make their own choices about a text

and counseling students about their choices as writers (Fullerton College Writing Center, 2012). Writing tutors are available for students in half-hour sessions.

Participants taking remedial classes in college attributed their success to the Writing Center, instructors, Disabled Student Services (DSS), and teammates. Participants also felt that resources for students with disabilities were important to their academic success. Gerard affirmed that his selection of Fullerton College was driven by its resources for students with disabilities because "I learn different; I learn slower than the norm, so they helped me."

Maurice described how the Writing Center, instructors, and study hall made it easy for him to succeed,

> The Writing Center helped me a lot 'cause I was behind the ball, and they taught me a lot of stuff. My teachers helped me out with everything; my teammates, the program, 'cause there are tutors in there all the time. . . . They're tutors and they're athletes, so I knew them, and they just made it really easy.

Tutoring Center. The Tutoring Center assists students in successfully completing their courses and improving their learning skills by providing tutoring through walk-in and by appointment for most academic subjects (Fullerton College Tutoring Center, 2012). Tutors are available for students during one-hour sessions.

Skills Center. The Skills Center assists students in improving their academic skills through self-paced work with computer programs, print, audio, video, and Internet-based materials (Fullerton College Skills Center, 2012). Self-paced learning materials include writing, grammar, and basic math and science.

Math Lab. The Math Lab promotes student success in math courses by providing students with academic support and services. Qualified tutors provide assistance in solving mathematical problems or in understanding mathematical concepts (Fullerton College Mathematics & Computer Science, 2012).

All participants reported having utilized at least one student support resources on campus. Most participants reported using two or more support resources (Table 3). Review of this table reveals that many participants used Incite study hall, the Writing Center, and instructors; less than one-half used the Tutoring Center and Math Lab; few used the Library or Skills Center; and only one participant used a teammate or coach. Table 3 also shows that one participant, identified as a basketball player, used a total of six support resources and his GPA was 3.0 or above; five participants identified as football players used a total of three support resources and four of the five had a GPA between 2.5 and 2.99. Regardless of GPA, almost all participants used at least two or more support resources.

Table 3

Support Resources Most Utilized by Participants

Pseudo Name	In State	GPA	Total of Support Resources Used	Coach	Instructor	Library	Incite Study Hall	Math Lab	Skills Center	Team-mates	Tutoring Center	Writing Center
Maxwell	Yes	3.0-above	6		X		X	X	X		X	X
Maurice	Yes	2.5-2.99	3			X	X					X
Aaron	No	2.5-2.99	3			X		X			X	
Ezequiel	Yes	2.5-2.99	3					X	X		X	
Eron	Yes	2.5-2.99	3		X		X					X
Bernard	Yes	2.0-2.49	3	X	X							X
Gerard	No	3.0-above	2				X				X	
Michael	No	2.5-2.99	2				X	X				
Alex	Yes	2.5-2.99	2				X			X		
Leonard	Yes	2.0-2.49	2		X		X					
Brian	Yes	2.5-2.99	2		X							X
Gabriel	Yes	2.5-2.99	1									X
Ethan	No	2.0-2.49	1		X							
			Total:	1	6	2	7	4	2	1	4	6

Negotiating Relationships

Half of all participants stated they had not encountered challenges with relationships while in college. Aaron indicated that, "I haven't really experienced too many challenges or difficulties in those areas. I try to get along with everybody." Similarly, Ethan stated that "I don't have a really good or really bad relationship; I'm kind of in the middle of everybody." Brian reported that he resolved his problems quickly by "settle[ing] this outside of school. I'll even sit down and talk to you, and we figure out a time and a place where we can handle that."

Several participants had positive relationships with tutors, faculty, and counselors. Gerard stated, "I think my relationship with faculty and counselors, they're pretty good, and coach is good, too, 'cause I'm pretty much a respectful kid." Michael summarizes his experiences with campus constituents this way: "It's just been a great road trip from the first day. I met the coaches and the teachers and all the staff here, and it's just a wonderful thing."

Coaches

Half of the participants experienced positive relationships with their coaches and considered them mentors and inspiring. Other participants considered coaches a barrier to their athletic and academic success. Regardless of their experiences, participants negotiated relationships with their coaches to support their goal of playing their sport, graduating, or transferring from college.

Eron shared that although he initially had a challenging relationship with his coach, "at the end of the day, as much as I couldn't stand that coach at the

time, I ended up growing and learning to bond with him. I have a good relationship with him." Bernard emphasized that coaches were like mentors: "They're just inspiring. I really go to my coaches a lot." He went on to share how coaches support their education: "Coaches basically are like, you know, football is not always going to be here, but you will. . . . And, you know, if you don't do your school work, you won't be playing the next season."

Some participants described their coaches as disrespectful and indifferent. They indicated that race mattered to coaches; and that White coaches did not treat Black athletes with respect. Brian stated that, "the coaching staff is an all-White coaching staff so they feel like a lot of times they can talk to you any way." Michael described a challenging relationship with his coaches because he disagreed with the coaches' decisions: "I would say that as far as coaches go, I've had my challenges with coaches. You know, you don't always agree with your coaches and where you stand as a player and what string you should be." Gabriel, an out-of-state student-athlete, asserted that his coaches only cared about athletic performance not the student's needs:

> Coaches only care about what you can do for them. They don't care what's going on with you at home. They don't care about you as a person. I went to a coach and told him, "Coach, I'm homeless. I have nowhere to go." He gave me some bread and peanut butter and told me to go find a homeless shelter. I went from 290 to 220 pounds, and I was playing defensive tackle.

Classroom

Study participants pointed to challenges as a motivator to success in the classroom as well as barriers to classroom success. Challenges made them determined to do the right thing and make wiser choices. Gerard stated, "I think

that [it] was good because when things are challenging, you change, and it makes you do the right thing." Alex shared that he overcame challenges in the classroom by practicing, "over and over and over."

Nearly all participants described their most challenging experiences during their first two years of college as successfully completing math classes, communicating with instructors, maintaining the required grades to compete in intercollegiate sports, and having accessibility to classes. Aaron described math as "really challenging" and reported having difficulty understanding his instructor because he had "teachers I can't like comprehend fully." Additionally, Maxwell discussed the challenge of not having access to classes: "You['ve] got to get classes before anybody else gets them and make sure you get the right classes so you can graduate and move on and transfer."

Participants described having problems in the classroom as a result of challenging teachers and teaching styles. Ethan indicated that only one or two students in one particular class passed the class and that "it wasn't that we couldn't do the work, but the way it was taught. We couldn't learn it that easy." Leonard discussed the importance of having faculty support student-athletes: "I would say to have more support from all of the faculty and the instructors to understand what it's like for male student-athletes, or just student-athletes, period."

Team Sports

Team sports presented study participants with challenges they considered motivators as well as barriers to classroom success. Only two participants

believed they had been motivated to do well in school by their sport. Alex explained with certainty that "I am going to go to the NFL. . . . That motivates me in school." Similarly, Maxwell expressed being motivated by the NCAA rules for student-athletes: "I'm playing basketball so I have to maintain a certain GPA and I want to push myself because I think it's a 2.5 you have to have now." He emphasized that he knew what he had to do to get to the NBA, "I know I have to have that plan A, plan B, plan C, and plan D, through it all."

Participants described their athletic barriers as recruitment issues, competing against teammates, missing practice, and injuries. Ethan described the challenges student-athletes face, particularly football players. Student-athletes worried if they did not attend practice they ran the risk of not playing in a game. "And then there's [the] abundance of athletes here too. It's not easy to get that starting spot. Here at the community colleges you find like 160 and everyone is trying to get a scholarship, everyone is trying to start." Additionally, Maxwell shared that his injuries coupled with the inaccessibility of classes resulted in his having to sit out his entire second semester while he recovered.

Student Success

Participants stated that their student achievement motivated them to do well in the classroom; however, the lack of academic skills was a barrier to their classroom success. Most of the participants identified their passion to become role models as a strong motivator to do well in school. All of the participants discussed the importance of being a role model, primarily to their siblings. Maurice described the expectations of a role model as "people depending on

me, . . . like to show all my nephews, nieces, cousins, my little brother, everybody who's younger than me, that we can do it." Maxwell concurred as he spoke of his goals for the future: "If I have kids or a family around me, I can motivate them from what I achieved in college or what I achieved in life. They can look at me as a role model." In addition, most participants shared that their future goals included a profession helping others, such as coaching children, being a role model, becoming a motivational speaker, serving in the ministry, and becoming a firefighter, policeman, or a personal trainer.

Most participants indicated when they and other African American student-athletes did not do well at Fullerton College, it was for the following reasons: they lacked academic skills; they lacked funds to purchase food, books, and class material; their parents were uneducated and could not help them with their homework; coaches directed them towards physical education classes; and they were unaware of the opportunities and resources on campus.

Brian emphasized that their academic success was affected by their families, but primarily by their coaches, who "help[ed] them get stuck in this path" of taking excessive P.E. courses because many student-athletes will do anything to play football. Brian reported that coaches are aware of this mindset and use it to their advantage, "So they're going to throw you in P.E. classes; they'll get you enough credits to play, and after they're done with you, it's like, whatever, you're on your own." Brian concluded, "That's how they [student-athletes] end up in P.E. classes for a whole year and no academic classes, and it might be two years where it's just P.E. classes." Leonard stated that student-athletes are not

taking advantage of the opportunities available to become successful. He emphasized the importance of having mentors to follow rather than having people explain how to improve.

Impact of Family Variables

Without exception, all participants emphasized the important role their family had on their academic engagement. However, they gave meaning to this variable by describing the ways in which family variables were seen as both motivators and barriers to their academic success.

Family as motivator. Twelve of the 13 participants discussed that family motivated them to complete their homework and do well in school. Over half of all participants identified their mothers as their motivators; almost one-half of all participants mentioned having been motivated by siblings, grandparents, other family members, or by friends. Michael emphasized that:

> My mom is someone that motivates me. And I motivate myself to do well for her, for myself and for her, because, you know, she's done a good job and has done what she can to raise me and raise me a certain way, and, you know, she definitely motivates me.

Similarly, Leonard stated that his family motivated him to succeed:

> My family. But most importantly, my little brother because I know he looks up to me so I want to be that positive role model he has. His dad is absent from the picture so I want to be that one who graduates college and tells him, like, "Yo, you can do this. I've done it so why not you?"

In a response similar to that of other participants who were motivated by their mothers, Ezequiel shared that his mother was "struggling right now, so if I don't succeed, then it's like, who am I really helping?" Like most participants who were motivated by siblings, Gerard stated that, "My four siblings, that motivates

me. I want them to see that, if my brother can go to college, then I know we can."

Participants also stated that family living circumstances motivated them to do well in school. Brian never thought he was going to leave, but he decided to go to college in California rather than "go to school [in his home state], get married, have kids, die there, and that was going to be it." Finally, Leonard revealed that his family motivated him "because I know if I don't do my homework, I'm letting my family down, and I don't want that to happen."

Family as a barrier. Nearly half of all participants shared that family issues affected their academic and emotional state. These family issues included a death of a family member or friend, family problems, and changes in their living situations. Out of state student-athletes shared that they saw themselves at their worst when a family member or friend passed away. They could not readily take a plane home. In relating his experience with this issue, Maurice said, "And that's when depression started hitting me really bad. . . . Like when that happened, I wasn't going to study hall or anything, I was just walking around in a daze." Additionally, Bernard felt that males are expected to watch after their families; therefore, when Black male student-athletes learned of family hardships, many of them choose to drop out of college and return home to protect their mothers and families. And Ethan felt that a problem for many athletes was being independent and on their own without a family support group to call on in an emergency.

Family and college departure. Participants described family issues as reasons for wanting to drop out or thinking about dropping out of college. The family issues discussed were missing their families, placing a financial burden on their families, and being homeless. Leonard stated that his primary reason for wanting to drop out during his second year of college was due to the financial burden he believed attending college placed on his family.

Maurice shared an experience familiar among the participants who were out-of-state students. He indicated that there were many times he wanted to quit college and go home because he really missed home and "just anytime something really bad happens back home, like my mom or my brothers just need help, I want to go back home and help them." Maurice described experiences related to not being able to be with family and friends when they needed him that still affected him:

> So I didn't go home a lot and a lot of people passed and there was a lot of situations that I said, "Maybe if I was home, maybe that person would still be alive." I didn't get to say goodbye to them. . . . I lost a lot of sleep over that for a while. That's probably the hardest thing I've dealt with.

Many participants felt that lack of family support was a large contributor to African American student-athletes dropping out of college. Lack of family support was identified as the lack of family network, lack of a father figure, hunger, needing to remain at home to protect the family, and challenges in their neighborhoods.

Gabriel described family support and hunger as two major challenges experienced by student-athletes at Fullerton College:

> So when these athletes come to this school and they get sold these dreams, and they take away the help [family] that they need—they don't give them food; they don't help them out. . . . You [the college] have them go to practice and slave them, but you're not even feeding them. Actually, it's worse than slavery, because [in] slavery, they actually fed them.

In addition, Bernard stated that the home environment affected the academic success of Black males: "Depending if they're with their mom and their dad or whoever it is, a lot of people are struggling because [of] what's going on at home." Michael's experiences supported the effect of absentee parents on college dropout rates: "In my case . . . if it wasn't for my support system, it would have been the absence of a parent in the home."

Impact of Financial Factors

The lack of financial support played a significant role on how participants saw themselves and had an impact on their persistence in college. Many participants viewed themselves at their worst when they struggled financially. It was during these difficult times that they reported being homeless, hungry, and unfocused. Additionally, many of the students did not do their homework and dropped classes as a result. The themes that emerged were homelessness, hunger, and the cost of being educated.

Participants discussed ways in which their parent's financial challenges affected their academic success both negatively and positively. Eron stated that his challenge was "mostly financial because my parents have two other younger children that they have to look after." Leonard shared that his parents incurred his college financial obligations because he was not approved for financial aid.

Financial barriers had the greatest effect on out-of-state student-athletes. The top three financial challenges discussed were family, homelessness and hunger, and out-of-state-tuition. However, participants also discussed how high tuition cost actually motivated them to stay in college because they did not want the tuition costs to be wasted money.

Homelessness and Hunger

Participants, particularly out-of-state student-athletes, emphasized that homelessness and hunger were real challenges for them. Leonard shared how difficult it was to have to study and not have the funds to eat: "Some days I would come to study hall, and I didn't eat [because of] finances, and stuff like that." Similarly, Gabriel, an out-of-state student-athlete, described having lost his financial aid and becoming homeless:

> I didn't have help from home at all, so I went homeless. I've been homeless four or five times. Most of my years at Fullerton, I've been homeless. And the challenge for me was, you know, I had to withdraw from classes because I wasn't eating. . . . The biggest challenge was bouncing back from that, being homeless. Knowing that I wasn't going home to eat, knowing I wasn't going home to a bed, but I knew I had a test that next morning and I had to study.

Gabriel further shared that similar to his circumstances, most Black players do not eat; yet, they must perform on the field. As a result, many of these students lose hope and return home.

Cost of Being Educated

Participants discussed the challenges of paying out-of-state tuition. Ezequiel stated that he had to actually drop a class because "I didn't have the $50 to renew the book code." He felt that he could not ask his father for money

because his father had his own obligations. Several participants emphasized that the cost of living in California, combined with out-of-state tuition, was too expensive, causing financial hardships. One participant stated that, "Prices continue to rise while financial aid remains the same"; therefore, "You're trying to pay for something that's a dollar and you only have 75 cents for it."

Participants agreed that student-athletes on financial aid must work to meet their basic needs; however, they also agreed that stressed-out working students were in greater jeopardy of dropping out of college. Bernard stated that working may create other problems: "You're telling us to get a job. Okay, we get a job, we get distracted, next thing you know, we drop out of school because we couldn't pay for the rest of our schooling."

Participants discussed how tuition costs played a role in their motivation to do their homework. Maurice, an-out-of-state student-athlete, emphasized the importance of passing his classes "because I pay to go to school. It's not free like high school. High school I didn't care because it was free." However, two participants discussed how working hard at this level for a free education for the future motivated them to do their homework. Maurice stated, "I just want to do my homework now and just make sure I have the grades so I can put myself in the position to get a free education." Gabriel stressed that, "I want my football scholarship." He explained that receiving a scholarship at a Division I institution would mean having everything he needed, because now he was hungry and had very little.

Resiliency: An Outcome of Racism

During interviews, the men shared conflicting and contrasting views of their experiences as African American men at Fullerton College. While all did not have the same response, most spoke fervently about the role of race and racism on their daily lives. As is true in our society, race and racism were inexplicably tied to these men and their lived experiences both on and off campus.

Most participants felt there were people on campus who did not believe in them and expected them to fail. In response, participants felt strongly about the need to prove everyone wrong by succeeding. They were resilient!

Racism as a motivator. Seven participants stated that there was an inequity in the classroom and that Black males at Fullerton College must work harder to succeed, although the odds of succeeding were slim. For example, Ethan stated that, "I would say it means that my odds of succeeding are pretty slim, and that you have to work harder to get to a certain position to succeed, 'cause more people are counting on you to fail."

Another example is Bernard's description of an experience with his instructor in the classroom:

> I felt that she [the instructor] was just throwing everything at me and then giving other people an easy way out. So I felt like me and the Black kid in the class were being challenged a lot more than the other people in class, and I didn't think that was fair at all.

Michael also shared a similar experience:

> It was me and this other Black kid in the class, and I felt like she wasn't actually trying to help us, she was actually trying to bring us down, because me and him were the only ones that are athletes. So I don't know if it was really race or just athletes.

It was this inequity that motivated participants to prove that although they loved the sports they played, they also wanted an education. Participants felt strongly about continually proving instructors wrong by succeeding. For example, Aaron stated that:

> It makes me want to go further and prove to everybody that although I am Black and a male, I'm not a statistic or anything, I can be one of the few to make it all the way to become successful.

Maxwell explained his challenge and motivation:

> I'm just trying to raise the statistics of young Black men going to college and changing the minds of others who doubted us, culturally. But academically, being a Black male, I think I'm equal to any race. Socially, equal to any race. Emotionally, equal to any race, because you know, being Black, it's just my skin tone, and I feel like my mind and my intelligence doesn't make anyone different from me.

Maxwell further stated that stereotypes about Black males increased his desire to succeed and emphasized that, ultimately, he "just want[ed] to prove them wrong."

Racism as a barrier. Most participants felt there was prevailing racism at this college. A few felt there was an overarching assumption that Black males were lazy and that Black males enrolled in school only to play sports.

Ezequiel stated that, "You have to work harder to . . . succeed, 'cause more people are counting on you to fail." Maurice, an out-of-state student-athlete, said he was being looked at differently because he looked different than blacks from California. Although these barriers influenced some participants to improve their academic success, participants felt these barriers also introduced inequitable hardships, such as having to be careful how they conducted

themselves in public, having to prove they wanted an education, and having more responsibilities than other students.

Participants also reported challenges associated with limited diversity in the student body and faculty, including having a small number of African Americans on campus, having instructor inequity in the classroom, treating African American differently than other students, and out-of-state student-athletes feeling they did not belong. Leonard shared his initial campus observation:

> I saw there were not too many African Americans here. So I was thinking, oh, maybe it's going to be hard for me. Maybe the teachers are not going to like me or treat me different than any other students.

Subsequently, his fears were confirmed, "Some teachers treated me harder than other students. I overcame it by dropping their classes and picked up another teacher."

Racism on campus. Most of the participants felt that racism existed at Fullerton College and half of all participants believed that African Americans were dropping out of college because of racism. Participants stated they felt unwelcomed on campus, segregated, disconnected from other people on campus, and that they were under a microscope, and often felt lonely.

Brian discussed feeling unwelcomed on campus and stated that:

> If you go in a campus where don't nobody responds to you, don't nobody want to talk to you, you the minority then. I mean everybody not strong enough to fight that fight. So that's why I feel like they [Black males] drop out.

He further discussed being shunned by people on campus and being purposely "bumped." Ultimately, the overall feeling was that the college

environment was not geared towards Black people. Alex explained this concept further:

> I'm not saying they should gear the environment toward Black people, but the environment is not really geared to diversity. . . . Like even right now in the quad, what kind of music is that? Nobody really listens to that, so it's just they need to catch up on urban era, so to speak. They're dumbing it down and trying to make it good for everyone, but nobody listens to it.

Some participants spoke to the need for a critical mass to reduce the frequency of feeling isolated or lonely. For example, Brian discussed the present disconnect between Blacks and campus. He also discussed feeling lonely, not fitting into any campus group, and mostly spending time by himself: "Usually in my classes, I'm one of two Black people in the whole class. And a lot of people never really had to deal with Black people, so it's not easy trying to talk to them or trying to work with them." Similarly, Alex shared that he would feel more comfortable having more Blacks on campus: "Wow, there's not a lot of Black people here." I mean, not to sound racist or anything, but sometimes a Black person feels kind of comfortable when there's more than 15, 20 Black people around you."

Although most participants felt that stereotypes were prevalent, some believed they could persuade instructors to embrace Black student-athletes. Michael indicated that, "Once they start doing the work and interacting with their classmates and their teacher and showing them that they're serious about the class, they warm up to you, definitely. They'll embrace you." Maurice stated that student-athletes could help by showing "you actually want to learn and you care

about your grade and stuff; they'll embrace you like a regular student and you'll no longer have that football player tag, I guess."

Other participants proposed that Black males work towards changing stereotypes. Specifically, Gerard emphasized that:

> [Black males must] be smart on things we do around campus. We can't just act the fool and do all that stuff. If one person do[es] it, they're going to say that's how all football players are. And that's how [Black] football players everywhere get a bad reputation.

Michael described feeling powerless to change the negative stereotypes of student-athletes: "I'm sure that athletes are perceived a certain way, they always have been, they always probably will be, and that's unfortunate.

Racism in the classroom. Some participants stated that teachers lacked cultural competencies to teach African American student-athletes. They did not like athletes, had low expectations of Black student-athletes, were prejudiced against these students, and were inequitable in the classroom.

Brian felt some teachers did not like Black athletes because of the color of their skin. Michael also felt that if a student was African American, especially if he was a football player, instructors had low academic expectations of him. Gabriel agreed and stated that African Americans were not expected to succeed, "You know, some people expect you to do, I guess you could say, what an African American would do, mess up."

Additionally, participants stated that racial variables were creating social barriers for African American students and further isolating them from the campus. To avoid feeling stereotyped by others, Black student-athletes separated themselves by socializing exclusively with their Black teammates.

However, they also understood they must overcome the expectation that Black male student-athletes were not likely to be academically successful. Gerald stated, "I want to separate myself from that, just making sure I do my work and try not to be the stereotype of all football players and all that stuff."

In contrast, Michael stated that although African Americans felt more pressure than others, some student-athletes used discrimination as a crutch for not doing well in college. Ezequiel discussed the self-fulfilling prophecy that occurs when there are low academic expectations based on race and group membership. He stated that when people do not believe in Black males, these young men do not believe in themselves and ultimately do not succeed: "Because they don't think they can do it. Everybody tells them—or they hear the stigmas or the stereotypes, and they just fall into it. They don't believe they can be successful as these White guys or Asian guys."

Some instructors do not embrace student-athletes. Almost all of the participants stated that instructors did not embrace student-athletes; athletes were stereotyped, treated inequitably, disliked, and expected to not succeed. For example, Maurice stated that some instructors did not embrace student-athletes because of stereotypes, such as "we don't do our work. We come to class and make problems. That's basically the stereotype of football players. We're jocks. Basically we're just ignorant."

Maxwell stated that instructors stereotype African American Black basketball players: "I feel like they see me and just, like, you know, he's not here

for school, he just wants to play basketball. He don't care about this; he's just using it to get his credits."

Many participants felt that Black males were being watched more closely than White students by campus constituents. Ezequiel emphasized that people were watching "even if you think they're not. . . . You never know who's really not on your side so you have to just kind of always keep your composure and act civilized." When asked what it meant to be a Black male, Gabriel stated that "The word Black to me is trials and tribulations, struggle, strifes, people not believing in you, people trying to stereotype you, not being better, not good enough, having to work for everything that you get, wanting to be accepted." Another participant felt that people try to walk over them, and, therefore, Black male college students must be strong, fearless, mask their emotions, and have a strong faith to succeed.

Leonard surmises the feelings of most participants, "And I don't feel they show support for the student-athletes, unless it's within the physical education department." He described feeling unloved: "I feel we're not loved as much as we should."

No racism on campus. Six participants believed race did not play a role in their academic experience while at Fullerton College. Ezequiel stated that although he had not come across any racism in the classroom, he had heard of stories concerning racism in the classroom. He shared his story:

> I also heard about a teacher who was just kind of slandering the blacks in the class telling them that, Oh, Blacks have come a long way 'cause, you know, we let you guys get educated, and stuff like that. So I know there's still racism and it's still very real.

Eron felt that equality was not a barrier to his education and that he received the same academic opportunities as everyone on campus. He felt that the differences in the way Black men were treated in the classroom were related to the level of focus they applied to their classes. One participant, Aaron, shared that he only had positive experiences at Fullerton College and had not experienced racism; however, he felt Campus Safety treated African American inequitably. He felt that when African Americans were in a group, Campus Safety were more likely to approach them than students of other races.

Instructors embrace student-athletes. Some of the participants stated that instructors embraced student-athletes: Six participants believed that some instructors embraced student-athletes, and two felt that the campus as a whole embraced them. Michael felt most of his instructors embraced student-athletes:

> I think most of the teachers I have do embrace athletes, but maybe not right away. And depending on the sport as well, I think football players definitely they get a not so great rap. . . . Even your classmates and teachers, they'll perceive you a certain way at first. . . . Once they start doing the work and interacting with their classmates and their teacher and showing them that they're serious about the class, they warm up to you, definitely. They'll embrace you. They'll do what they need to do to help you.

Ezequiel also shared that most of his instructors embraced student-athletes:

> Most of the teachers that I've come across are all pretty embraceful. I've never come across those teachers that I hear from some students that say they belittle them or make them feel like they're less because of their race or something like that.

Fears at the Community College

Participants discussed barriers related to fear. These fears were identified as fear of the environment, fear of independence, and fear of inadequacy and failure. Also discussed were variables to overcoming barriers of fears.

Fear of the environment. Some participants stated they felt just as afraid of people in their new environment as these people were of them. Participants also felt they had to be overly cautious in their conduct in public at all times. Others described feeling unwelcomed, different, and like outcasts. Gabriel shared that, "Seeing a big, Black man walking around Fullerton College, it's scary, not only for the people that are here, but for us, too, because we don't know what to expect." He also discussed why his color and size made him feel unsafe in the community:

> We can walk off campus and be at the wrong place at the wrong time, and we could fit the description of something we didn't even do, because it's not norm for you to be big and Black in Fullerton, California.

Some participants shared that their mothers lived in fear for their safety and warned them not to walk the streets at night because they could be a target or seen as a threat by some people.

Fear of independence. Participants emphasized that the new freedom and independence at Fullerton College made them feel excited and strong, but they mostly felt overwhelmed, worried, and afraid. Michael shared that it was difficult acclimating to his new independence. He stated:

> It was overwhelming being a student here. Coming out of high school you hear all these things about college, but you really don't know until you try it, and being here was—The toughest part was you're on your own time. That was something I had to adjust to.

Independence was also difficult for Gabriel:

> I had nobody to tell me . . . to go to class. I had nobody to tell me to wake up in the morning no more. You know, I was just roaming free, thinking I knew everything. . . . I was excited and happy and I felt free. I should have been more worried about education.

Fear of inadequacy and failure. Participants described that when they enrolled in college, they had feelings of inadequacy and failure. Eron shared that he attempted to hide his feeling of inadequacy by placing his efforts in other activities where he excelled: "I was kind of scared to go to school, so I was trying to do anything I could to go around going back to school. It was that feeling of inadequacy." Also, Michael shared that his fears originated from the stories circulating throughout campus about challenging instructors and difficult classes. Other participants described having the fear of wasting money if they failed classes and of letting their families down.

Overcoming barriers of fear. Participants indicated they overcame their fears with self-determination or with support from their families. They shared having applied the following strategies to overcome their fears: (a) stop making excuses; (b) develop a serious plan and attitude; (c) develop a belief in yourself; and (d) get support from family and people with experience. Only Bernard stated that he had not overcome his fears. He continued to feel that if he failed his classes, he was not only failing himself, but he was also failing his family: "I haven't really overcome that fear yet. . . . So I'm still fearing that if I don't get these classes out, I'm failing, not just myself, I'm failing the people back home that are out there supporting me."

Michael described having overcome his fears by developing a serious plan with a serious attitude. In addition, Aaron stated having overcome his fears by reaching out to people with experience and by researching answers to his fears—this strategy helped him feel more confident in accomplishing his goals. Ethan also indicated that by instilling in him the importance of graduating from college, his family helped him overcome his fears.

Supporting Black Students

Participants discussed factors that support Black males staying in college, such as offering a comprehensive support system that includes early outreach to students, mentoring, tutoring, food, books, and a safe zone; offering incentives for success; fund raising to help Black students afford school and stay away from drugs; increasing financial aid awards; encouraging Black students to participate in a club or sport. Below, I discuss some of these support systems.

Early Outreach to Students

Bernard discussed the importance of educating K-8 students on the resources available to them and the techniques that would help them succeed:

> So if we can get the message out there early, like people getting in the seventh and eighth grade, for them to know that, "Hey, school is important, you got to get to it." [And] K through 8th grade, basically techniques to show you how to do good in school

Brian emphasized the importance of giving African American student-athletes "a better understanding of, one, the history and where they come from; and two, where they could be going and what they're capable of." He further acknowledged the importance of reaching out to student-athletes:

> It really comes down to history, and then people really reaching out to them of different races. Because a lot of times Black people feel inferior, because a lot of times they're the only ones, and there's not a lot of them in these classes.

Tutoring

Participants discussed the need for tutoring and what this support should include. Gabriel discussed the need for a major tutoring support system:

> So they [student-athletes] need a major support system of tutoring, food, and a place for them to sleep and lay their heads without worrying about nothing, and they're going to go to class and take care of their business and finish what they have to do.

Michael also felt tutoring would help African American males: "I think what you're doing [in Incite] is wonderful. I'm not perfect; I'm still working on things, but I think it's great what you're doing." Aaron also emphasized that Incite definitely helped student-athletes, if the resources offered were taken advantage of: "If they're all taken advantage of, I feel like that will help support us and keep us in college and stop people from trying to drop out or anything or being overwhelmed."

Mentoring

Without exception, all participants discussed the importance of supporting African Americans to stay and finish college by offering resources that included mentoring and life-skills coaching. Participants stated that mentors should be role models and African American, including successful Black male student-athletes. Mentors should be willing to share their stories and have genuine appreciation for the students they mentor

Michael described that it was important to male student-athletes to have successful mentors of the same gender and ethnicity: "I don't want to say any specific names, but I love seeing successful African American, male student athletes in study hall helping with tutoring, that's awesome. . . . I feel comfortable to ask him." Maurice suggested providing "more people [that] relate to us. . . . Like if you see more people from your surroundings, your ethnicity." While Brian emphasized the need to have Black men leading Black young men to success because they better understood their struggles. Michael discussed the importance of "just having people who won't condemn or degrade or hurt feelings or make them feel less. Because once you feel appreciated, you feel worth something; when you're worth something, you want to move on and you want to prosper." Michael described mentors as successful Black male student-athletes who have a well-rounded knowledge of many subjects.

Maxwell also emphasized the importance of Black males sharing their stories with other Black males and encouraging them to stay in college. He indicated that he would probably tell the young Black males "Don't quit on yourself. Don't quit on your family. Don't quit on the people that are looking out for you." In addition, Ethan described the importance of sharing real stories about real, known people.

Currently, Fullerton College does not offer a support system that includes mentors to African American male student-athletes. Although the absence of a support system was important to participants, the absence of this resource was deemed much more important to out-of-state participants. Maxwell (an out of

state student-athlete) stated that, "I'd say lack of support definitely [is a reason why African American male student-athletes drop out of college], because there's people like me that came a long way, and they don't have that person on our back pushing them or motivating them." Michael also believed that the absence of support systems, such as a mentors, role models, or guidance counselors increased the chances that Black student-athletes would drop out of college. One participant, Ethan, stated that it was easier for students to graduate from high school than college because they could leave college whenever they wanted: "There's nothing to hold them accountable for not doing that."

Incite Study Hall

Nearly all participants stated that the Incite study hall had helped them the most in becoming a better college student. One participant, Gerard, stated that Incite embraced student-athletes: "Incite really helps. . . . You guys come and talk to us if we're failing classes or about to fail. You guys will come and remind us and make sure that we have to get this done." Gerard further stated, "It makes me feel good because I know we have support, and that's a good feeling to have."

Bernard stated that Incite provided many resources and opportunities that promoted academic success: "I think you guys have a lot of good resources here that keep you up and keep your grades straight and organized. They have a lot of workshops. . . . They just give you a lot of opportunities to be successful."

Incite staff. Half of all participants described Incite staff as role models who were resourceful, helpful, and knowledgeable. Brian described the Incite

staff as helpful. Eron described how Incite staff understood student-athletes and helped them calm down after practice so they were more successful during study hall:

> I'm a student-athlete and they understand the times when we do get out of practice late and we're still kind of amped up from practice and they tolerate us until we calm down, and there's always somebody in there to help us with math, reading, or if we have questions we need to ask.

Bernard described the academic support offered through Incite as unique: "I've never seen a program like this." He also indicated that the staff understood the challenges faced by student-athletes, and that "they basically said that's why we're here. We're here to help you." Moreover, the Incite staff helped underprepared student-athletes move forward on completing their homework, stay on task, and become better students. Leonard believed that Incite helped him become a better student by teaching him time management and how to focus on his assignments. Maurice also described how staff helped him to gain the skills he needs to be successful, such as "getting caught up from the things I didn't know from high school." Additionally, Bernard described Incite staff as role models, adding "It's good to have someone in there to know that you're a student-athlete because they know what the situation is. . . . They've been through it."

Maxwell indicated that one of the best aspects of study hall was the knowledgeable and well-rounded staff; they provided students with help on any subject. Moreover, Michael emphasized how he often observed student-athletes who excelled academically help their teammates and that this made him "feel good about it."

Incite environment. The environment in Incite was important to most participants. Maxwell stated he appreciated the friendly and family atmosphere of Incite and stated that "They're just student friendly. They're there for the students and that's big." However, Leonard felt that the strictness in Incite deters students from attending:

> Study hall is more strict, which means that it deters most athletes away from it, because sometimes we can't take breaks like we want to because they're always on our back about "Get back to work," or "Make sure you focus on working and not talking."

The Incite extended hours of service was important to participants. Gerard stated that, "I think it's good because they open in the morning, and they close at 8:00 at night, so that's more than enough time to get your work done, and I think that's real good." Eron emphasized that staff are flexible. The staff were willing to leave study hall open to accommodate student-athletes who need additional help.

Additionally, Gabriel stated that the hours enabled student-athletes to complete their homework before going home. He described study hall as "beautiful," particularly because it allowed him to complete his homework before going home, which was in his case the park. He shared, "So [when] I go back to the park . . . I didn't have to worry about studying for a test, because I done studied the whole day in study hall."

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the findings from this research study. Seven themes were presented that provided an understanding of the lived experiences of successful African American male student-athletes at Fullerton College

specific to athletic and academic achievement. Each of the 13 academically successful Black young men who participated in this study spent over one-hour with me sharing the rich details of their lived experiences as student-athletes. Some of these experiences reached as far back as their childhood and high school. There were times where the young men spoke with excitement, such as when they talked about their family, sport, academics, and their goals. However, there were times that they struggled with their emotions, such as when they talked about their hunger, finances, and topics concerning racism. By quoting from the interview transcripts, I provided the reader with the voices of 13 participants that described their experiences and give meaning to their athletic and academic achievement.

This synthesis of their experiences provides a unique look into the lives of these African American student-athletes as they described their individual journeys. These journeys introduced their families, discussed motivators and barriers to success, and shared their goals. The findings reveal that most of these young men entered college underprepared and many had unrealistic expectations. For the student-athletes who were unprepared pre-collegiate challenges greatly affected their college adjustment. Students who described their high school experiences as positive entered college prepared for the academic rigor of college life. Once in college, all of the participants utilized a combination of support resources to leverage their academic success. However, there was limited use of coaches and instructors as resources. It is evident that students continually negotiate relationships with coaches, instructors, and

teammates to support their goals of playing a sport, graduating, transferring from college, and qualifying for scholarships. Without exception family variables greatly affected students academically and emotionally. Although the lack of financial support was ardently described as a barrier to their academic success, these young men were motivated to remain eligible for financial support by their homelessness, hunger, and the high cost of tuition.

Fervent discussions concerning race provided a unique look into the resiliency of these young men. As in our society, race was intertwined throughout all aspects of their campus life, including the surrounding community. Findings reveal that these young men are aware of the campus stereotypes concerning African American student-athletes; however, they chose to use their race in a positive way to promote their academic success, negotiate their relationships, and effectively navigate the collegiate world. Instead of falling into the stereotype of a "dumb jock," they chose to be successful and thrive, both academically and athletically. In addition, this study provided a collective picture of how these young men described their experiences and the impact of their engagement within Fullerton College, an institution they perceived willing to open the doors athletically, but not yet geared up to support African American students holistically.

In Chapter 5, I provide a discussion of the major findings, implications for practitioners, recommendations for future research, and a summary of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study focused on successful African American male student-athletes for the purpose of eliciting a rich description of their lived experiences, including their sources of motivation, their perceptions of factors that contributed to their academic achievement, as well as their perceptions of factors that impeded their academic success. As this study unfolded, students provided meaningful perspectives on how the college that served as the setting of the study and community colleges in California can promote African American male student-athlete retention and success. This study may lead to improved programs and services for student-athletes of color through increased campus engagement and student academic success.

The primary research question guiding this study was: What are the lived experiences of successful African American male student-athletes at Fullerton College specific to athletic and academic achievement? Using a qualitative descriptive approach, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 successful African American male student-athletes. Three questions were used to support of the primary research question. These questions were:

1. How do successful African American male student-athletes describe their experiences at the college?

2. What academic challenges do successful African American male student-athletes experience?
3. How does participation in academic support programs affect successful African American male student-athletes throughout their educational journey?

In this chapter, I first summarize and interpret five of the seven findings presented in Chapter 4: academic challenges, negotiating relationships, impact of family variables, impact of financial factors, and resiliency: an outcome of racism. Second, I provide implications and recommendations for policy and practice that include increasing the number of African American coaches and faculty; exploration of new models of environments culturally compatible with those of underserved students, the adoption of a framework of inquiry and inclusiveness that addresses the diversity of students enrolling in college (Rendon, 2006); and a staff development pathway that gives coaches and faculty training in cultural sensitivity and cultural competencies. Third, I provide recommendations for future research that includes utilizing a mixed methods research to investigate and examine participants' desire to succeed and analyzing longitudinal data to investigate which academic resources are helping close the achievement gap. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a summary of the dissertation.

Summary and Discussion of Finding

Seven significant findings emerged as factors impacting the engagement of 13 African American young male student-athletes at the college: (a) academic

challenges, (b) academic support resources, (c) negotiating relationships, (d) impact of family variables, (e) impact of financial factors, (f) resiliency: an outcome of racism, and (g) supporting black students. I will summarize and discuss the most salient factors from the voices of the students in this study who shared their lived experiences as African American student athletes. A discussion of the findings will follow with recommendations that focus on academic challenges, negotiating relationships, impact of family variables, impact of financial factors, and resiliency: an outcome of racism.

Academic Challenges

While there were a few participants who felt that they had graduated high school prepared for college, the majority of the African American male student-athletes in this study experienced a multitude of challenges in high school and in college. High school barriers affecting college performance were identified as being awarded grades without having attended classes, lacking academic goals, and enrolling in remedial classes.

During high school, these participants were not held accountable for their academic success; they were given passing grades without attending classes. However, they received accolades for their athletic success from coaches, instructors, family, community members, teammates, and students, and it was their belief in their athletic prowess that they brought with them to college. Consensus among participants was that their high schools placed more emphasis on athletics than academics; subsequently, most reported they did not

perform well in high school. The majority of those who took remedial courses in high school reported having been enrolled in remedial math and English. Research indicates that African American student-athletes who are recruited from high schools with insufficient resources are likely to be underprepared for the demands of college-level work (Harper et al., 2013), and this was the case with most of the participants in this study. These young athletes indicated that high school did not prepare them for the rigorous demands of college, particularly in math and English. Moreover, they needed to improve their skills in focusing and time management. In spite of their underpreparedness, participants initially believed they would receive passing grades because they were athletes, since that had been their experience in high school. The reality that in college their grades would be based on their academic performance was a new phenomenon for most of these men, and it required a major adjustment in attitude and academic effort to change the habits that had served them up until this point.

Most participants considered the environment at Fullerton College as a motivator for achieving academic success. They indicated that they had selected to attend Fullerton College for its social and physical environment and its emphasis on academic excellence. Their coaches had also emphasized the opportunities available to student-athletes, such as transferring to a university, access to teams with outstanding athletic standings, smaller classes, and accessibility to classes.

They relied on intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and self-determination to persist in reaching their academic and athletic goals in spite of

the challenges they faced in college. Motivating factors attributed to their intrinsic motivation and self-determination included (a) their drive to earn the required GPA to transfer to Division I universities, (b) their desire to attain competitive academic scholarships, (c) the self-satisfaction they received from earning good grades, and (d) their goal of attaining degrees in higher education. Participants emphasized that earning good grades made them feel good and increased their self-esteem. In addition, excelling academically meant that coaches from universities would be interested in recruiting them and that their parents and family members would be proud of their accomplishments. The extrinsic motivation factors contributing into students' drive to succeed included: (a) having a high salaried career, such as playing for the NFL or NBA, in order to support their family, (b) acting as a role model to siblings and members of the campus community, (c) being challenged, encouraged, and mentored by athletic coaches, (d) maintaining good grades to remain in financial aid compliance, and (e) proving wrong teacher's low academic expectations of Black student-athletes (Griffin, 2006). Findings also indicated that participants used transferrable skills from their sport to motivate them in the classroom.

Institutions must be cognizant of challenges that many African American male student-athletes face in meeting their basic needs, such as food, shelter, security, and a sense of belongingness (Maslow, 1943). Not having the resources to meet those needs hinders them from reaching their full athletic and academic potential. Institutions should also consider the factors that increased the self-efficacy of the young athletes in this study: receiving incentives for

earning As; enrolling in honor roll classes; performing well in college; enrolling in a larger number of units, and attaining academic success. Moreover, to minimize academic challenges facing these young men, it is important to focus on the primary reasons individuals choose to go to college—to obtain an education and develop life skills for a successful future career (Stansbury, 2003).

Negotiating Relationships

The importance of leveraging relationships was of great importance to Black student-athletes. When participants were asked whether they had experienced barriers to their relationships on campus, half of all participants stated they had not encountered any challenges. Several participants also indicated they had positive relationships with tutors, faculty and counselors. Other participants emphasized having challenging relationships with their coaches and in the classroom as a result of challenging instructors and their teaching styles. Team sports also presented study participants with challenges, such as recruitment issues, competing against their teammates, and injuries. Young men who encountered barriers early in their educational journey over time developed the coping skills and abilities to most often resolve their problems expeditiously by using available resources and assistance.

While on the surface responses seem contradictory, researchers have documented the challenges of obtaining valid responses to questions about threatening or controversial topics, such as hostility to White interviewers (Anderson, Silver, & Abramson, 1988; Harms, 1995; Schuman & Hatchett, 1974). This data indicates that (a) Black responses concerning the expressed closeness

to other Blacks tend to vary according to whether the interviewer belonged to the same racial group as participants, while answers about discrimination, living conditions, and personal background did not—Blacks interviewed by Blacks were more likely to feel close to Blacks than were Blacks interviewed by Whites, and (b) Blacks give more valid responses to Black interviewers (Anderson et al., 1988; Harms, 1995; Schuman & Hatchett, 1974). It is important in future studies that when gauging or evaluating the relationship of Black males and White constituents that factors related to race and gender be considered. Since I am an Hispanic female, I attempted to address those issues, and I believe that the difference in race and gender in this case was somewhat negated by my role at the institution and previous interactions I have had with student-athletes in an advocacy role at the college. Nonetheless, an interviewer who is Black who has a similar background and experience as the participants in the study is advantaged and may be able to explore more deeply the lived experiences and perspectives of African American male student-athletes.

Findings in this study also indicated that participants varied in their perceptions about their relationships with their coaches and instructors. Some participants described their coaches as mentors who supported and inspired Black student-athletes to succeed, while others viewed their coaches as being unable to relate to Black male student-athletes. However, the consensus among the participants in this study, particularly out-of-state students, was that coaches only cared about their athletic performance and not their basic needs. For example, one participant shared that after confiding to his coach that he was

homeless and hungry, his coach gave him bread and peanut butter and suggested that he find a homeless shelter. Although NCAA rules prohibit coaches from offering food to student-athletes, this student-athlete felt that the coach did not care about his wellbeing.

Nearly one-half of all participants indicated that some instructors embraced student-athletes. However, most participants felt that they were not embraced by the campus as a whole, including instructors and administrators. The student-athletes in this study described instructor barriers to their success that included assigned homework, instructor's language during lectures, incompatible instructor teaching styles, disengaged instructors presenting uninteresting lectures, and limited access to math classes. Some young men in this study perceived instructors as disrespectful and indifferent to Black athletes. They also emphasized the importance of having faculty who understood African American male student-athlete challenges and would support them. It is critical that institutions understand that these students need to feel supported by faculty, especially since so many of them have limited academic backgrounds and are experiencing the added pressures of athletics, practices, time commitment, competition, and injuries (Person & LeNoir, 1997).

Team sports were discussed as being both motivators and barriers to their academic and athletic success. Although previous studies have emphasized that African American student-athletes have a greater desire to play professional sports than White athletes (as cited in Gaston-Gayles, 2004), only two participants in this study shared that the sport they played motivated them to do

well academically. The major motivating factor for these two participants was the hope of being drafted to play on a professional team.

The team sport barriers to athletic success were identified by participants as recruitment, missing practice, competing against teammates, and injuries. These young Black men perceived that their pathway to a full scholarship at a Division I university was dependent on not missing practice, not getting injured, outperforming their teammates, and ultimately being recruited. When developing academic support programs for student-athletes, institutions need to acknowledge that athletic stressors, coupled with the rigor of their academic responsibilities, create a volatile environment for this population.

Findings related to stereotypes of Black student-athletes indicate that most participants felt there was prevailing racism at Fullerton College and half of all participants believed that Blacks in general were dropping out of college because of racism. Some participants stated that their coaches were disrespectful and indifferent and that race mattered to the all White coaching staff. Maurice emphasized that some instructors did not embrace student-athletes and held stereotypes about this group, such as "we don't do our work. We come to class and make problems. That's basically the stereotype of football players. We're jocks. Basically we're just ignorant." Ezequiel discussed the self-fulfilling prophecy and stated that when people do not believe in Black males, these young do not believe in themselves.

Campuses must realize that the greatest effects of stereotypes are that students may internalize stereotypical beliefs to the extent that they become self-

defeating and self-threatening (Steele, 2000). Therefore, to support the academic success of African American student-athletes, institutions should consider increasing the number of African American coaches and instructors. In addition, it is essential that institutions design programs that give coaches and instructors training in cultural sensitivity and cultural competencies and provide venues for them to engage with Black students in their academic life and outside of the classroom on an interpersonal level. It is also essential to create pathways for student-athletes to engage with teammates from other sports on an academic and interpersonal level in and outside of the classroom.

Almost all of the participants emphasized that the strongest factor driving their motivation to succeed was their passion to be role models. Without exception, they discussed the importance of mentoring their siblings. Additionally, their future career goals included a profession that helped others, such as coaching children, being a role model, and serving as either a motivational speaker, minister, firefighter, policeman, or as a personal trainer. These findings were in line with studies indicating that rather than relying only on internal forces, African American high achievers draw on both internal and external sources to fuel their academic motivation (Griffin, 2006). Since these students find helping others meaningful and may feel less socially isolated if they have opportunities to interact with others, institutions should consider pathways that provide Black student-athletes opportunities to be role models for new students entering Fullerton College and for children in the community, including on and off campus tutoring and mentoring.

Most African American students in this study identified student success barriers as (a) lack of academic skills; (b) lack of funds to purchase food, books, and supplies; (c) having parents who were unable to help them with their homework; (d) being directed towards physical education classes by coaches; and (e) being unaware of campus opportunities and resources. These barriers are in line with the leading barriers facing community colleges today concerning serving traditionally underserved populations that are documented as being at risk, underrepresented, low-income, and first generation students (Spring, 2012) African American students are traditionally classified within this group. Furthermore, low-income, first generation students are frequently placed in less demanding high school courses that do not support preparation for college level courses.

Reflecting on their social networks, most participants indicated their network included other athletes, faculty, and people from different cultures who were of similar ages and had similar goals. Some participants indicated their social network were family, friends, and girlfriends. A few participants indicated that their self-isolation and their lack of a social support system were academic barriers.

In summary, it is critical for coaches and institutional leaders to collaborate in supporting student-athletes in their efforts to become academically and athletically successful.

Impact of Family Variables

Family issues and home environment were perceived by nearly all Black males in this study to be motivators as well as barriers to their academic success. The findings indicate that family support and encouragement, particularly by mothers, was important to the retention and success of these young men. It is not by coincidence that Black males in this study more likely to be encouraged by their mother's and seek their support. National data indicates that in 2000, fifty-three percent of Blacks under the age of 18 lived in single-parent families; forty-nine percent lived with only their mother, while only 4% lived with only their father (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). In 2013, national data indicated that sixty-seven percent of Blacks under the age of 18 lived in single-parent families (National Kids Count, 2015).

There was a general consensus that the strongest barriers affecting the academic and emotional state of these African American men and contributing to their dropout rates were family problems, lack of a father figure at home, lack of a family network, and homelessness and hunger. The young men in this study discussed feeling hopeless about their ability to help resolve family tribulations, and they talked about missing their families; these factors were of particular importance to out-of-state student-athletes. Based on student responses, the lack of a father figure contributed to students feeling unprepared to tackle the challenges of independence and racism.

This study revealed that homelessness and hunger amplified other critical barriers, particularly for out-of-state students. Ultimately, the lack of family support perpetuated the feeling of hopelessness for these students.

Impact of Financial Factors

The cost of tuition was considered a motivator for some participants. Having to pay for classes motivated them to do their homework and get good grades. Students also felt strongly about having the grades necessary to transfer to a Division I school and to get full academic and athletic scholarships. Homelessness and hunger were also considered motivators to academic success. Gabriel explained that receiving a scholarship at a Division I institution meant that he would have a place to sleep and would never be hungry again.

Financial security was also considered a barrier and played a significant role in how Black young men saw themselves throughout their academic journey. Thus, when these young men struggled financially, they saw themselves at their worst. Subsequently, the top three barriers related to finance were family, homelessness and hunger, and out-of-state tuition. There was also an interrelationship between these three financial barriers; when students struggled financially, their families were often also struggling financially. Thus, students advanced quickly to being homeless and/or hungry if timely family support was not provided. Out-of-state students often transitioned more quickly towards personal and academic struggles than in-state students. For example, out-of-state participants often lacked funds to purchase class supplies. Students in this study reported that after having paid for a math class, they and their teammates

often dropped the class because they lacked $50 to purchase a lab code to complete their online assignments.

When this research was conducted, a national dilemma affected student-athletes—NCAA strict guidelines restricted college athletes from receiving money, special gifts, or food for their athletic ability. This rule was placed to ensure competitive levels existed among all colleges. This rule prohibited anyone associated with the college, including coaches, give hungry athletes anything to eat, with the exception of water. Thus, this rule caused dissention among hungry student-athletes and their coaches. Subsequently, as of April 2014, the NCAA board of directors removed the probation that prevented institutions from feeding student-athletes. This reform is expected to bring year round relief for many student-athletes.

Resiliency: An Outcome of Racism

A powerful belief among African American male student-athletes was that some campus constituents expected them to fail and believed they were only in college for athletics alone. Since students described race as both a motivator and barrier, it is important to recognize the need for validation to counteract the negative messages that some athletes may experience both in and outside of the classroom (Rendon, 2006). Barriers that were described included confronting inequitable standards in and out of the classroom, having a small number of African Americans on campus, and feeling lonely and disconnected to the campus, even though there were many times that the students felt supported, welcomed, and cared about from some members of the college community.

Finding validation from the campus community for their desire to succeed academically and athletically was a central factor for engagement for the student-athletes in this study. This type of affirmation is particularly important to African American young men because many of them are from low-income families, are first-generations students, and have been directed to higher education without the skills to compete academically (Griffin, 2006; Person & LeNoir, 1997; Rendon, 2006).

Most of the young men in this study believed that Black students were dropping out of college because of racism. They believed that many Black students felt unwelcomed on campus, segregated, and constantly being watched. It is not uncommon for the world of higher learning and the Black male students to be disconnected and experience cultural incongruity as manifested in the forms of alienation, marginalization, stereotyping, and discrimination (Rendon, 2006). Additionally, research has shown that isolation and loneliness affects the interpersonal relationships of African American students, particularly African American men on White campuses (Chavous, 2002; Kincey, 2007). , Because students who connect with social groups that reflect their culture are more likely to be motivated and persist in higher education (Kuh & Love, 2000), institutions of higher learning should assess the availability of campus social and academic groups that reflect the culture of their diverse populations.

Another common belief among the Black young men in this study was that instructors lacked the cultural competencies to teach African American student-athletes effectively. These young men believed that many instructors expected

them to fail, were prejudiced against the color of their skin and their participation in sports, treated them inequitably, and did not embrace them as students. Although most young men in this study believed racism was prevalent, some felt that if they could show they were worthy of respect, they would be respected. They believed that by completing their work assignments, interacting with the classmates and teachers, showing that they actually wanted to learn, and being conscientious of their behavior, they could persuade others to embrace them as vital members of the campus community. Therefore, it is imperative that college constituents understand that they make a valuable contribution to a student's self-worth and self-esteem through words of encouragement, purposeful and meaningful interactions, and social integration (Tinto, 1993). It is important to consider that as student-athlete's academic self-worth increases, their GPAs also increase (Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000). In addition, African American college athletes who are encouraged to further their education or are mentored by faculty tend to get higher GPAs (Comeaux & Harrison (2007).

Finally, findings indicate that the rampant classroom stereotype that football and basketball players were jocks and ignorant may have (a) caused some student-athletes to internalize these beliefs, (b) created further isolation amongst these students and the institution, and (c) given life to a self-fulfilling prophesy of defeat.

Institutions must consider how the complexity of racism plays out on college campuses and be cognizant that our campus communities mirror our communities. For example, social media have brought to national attention the

racial tension and isolation students of color face by sharing protests by Black students on campuses nationwide (Chiles, 2015). On the other hand, cases involving crimes against African American young men nationwide, such as the Treyvon Martin case in Florida, may introduce fear in the lives of Black students living in predominately White communities (CNN Library, 2014).

Fears. Findings indicated that fears were perceived as barriers to student success and student development. These fears were identified as fear of the environment, fear of independence, fear of inadequacy and failure, and fear of stereotypes regarding their academic ability. Data in this study also indicated that some mothers feared the environment would be unwelcoming and potentially dangerous to their sons. Similarly, some of the young men in the study felt unwelcomed at the college, different from others, and like outcasts. They felt vulnerable walking off campus and ending up in the wrong place at the wrong time or of fitting the description of another Black man who may have been involved in a crime. Additionally, these high-achieving student-athletes indicated they overcame their fears through self-determination or with support from their families. Only one participant indicated he had not overcome his fears and felt that by failing his classes, he had failed his family. Research indicates that high achievers motivate themselves to succeed academically, while underachievers succeed to please their parents (Fisher, 2005). Thus, studies support the need for underachievers to have support networks to engage them in academic and social behaviors that lead to academic success, which will increase their own satisfaction and their intrinsic motivation (Fisher, 2005).

These successful African American male student-athletes provided a rich and detailed description of their lived experiences in and outside of the classroom as well as the motivating and challenging factors that affected their engagement in their academic and athletic worlds. Seven emergent themes identified from the interviews are academic challenges, academic support resources, negotiating relationships, impact of family variables, impact of financial factors, and resiliency: an outcome to racism. Recommendations for salient themes will follow.

Recommendations

In this section, I present recommendations for policy and practice as well as for future research. Coaches, administrators and staff who work with successful African American male student-athletes in community colleges, community college educators, and educators in general may benefit from the policy and procedures and recommendations that follow.

Recommendations for Policy

Institutional commitment to pathways supporting the athletic and academic success of students at all levels is critical. The findings in this study bring to light the need for institutions to (a) give student-athletes access to free nutrition through a campus wide food bank collaborative, (b) place textbooks on reserve in the library or learning labs for student-athletes, and (c) offer new student orientations that inform students of campus wide resources.

Most importantly, policies must be created that eradicate prevailing racism and inequitable standards in and out of the classroom. Behaviors that support

student success must be expected of all faculty and staff as well as the student body. The college must also assess the availability of campus social and academic groups that reflect the culture of African American students, such as an UMOJA Community Program and academic support programs for student-athletes, that are designed specifically to address the academic success and retention of African American and other at-risk students in community colleges (Fullerton College Annual Report, 2011).

Community colleges should consider working with high schools to provide (a) pathways that strengthen the common core curriculum necessary for high school students to succeed in college, (b) boot camps with an emphasis on math and English and that include assessments, (c) counseling, (d) skills development workshops, (e) tutoring, and (f) a diversified staff of faculty/peers with adequate representation of same-race staff members. To reinforce the motivation of African American high achievers, community colleges should consider providing them with opportunities for employment in tutoring, mentoring, and internships involving helping others on and off campus. These pathways should also include strength-based first-year college programs that stimulate and promote personal accountability, leadership, resiliency, self-management, and multicultural and social competence in students (Day-Vines & Terriquez, 2008).

To minimize identified barriers to student success, the college must build pathways that (a) create out-of-class opportunities for faculty or staff to interact with students, such as participating in a campus or off-campus program such as an athletic, theater, or field trip event during student-athletes' off-season; (b)

coordinate mentoring relationships where students are matched with a coach, faculty, staff member, university student, community member, or former athlete; (c) use innovative methods of tutoring and provide subject specific workshops offered by faculty and staff who are sensitive to the students' cultural identity and that have access to additional opportunities and resources such as on-line, weekend tutorials; and (d) provide available funds for resources that facilitate textbook rentals, school supplies, and free food that are available to students campus wide.

Recommendations for Practice

In this section I provide recommendations for practice that include the justification for the changes I recommend and suggestions for implementation.

The first recommendation is for colleges to explore new models of environments that are culturally compatible to the home of underserved students and to adopt a framework of inquiry and inclusiveness that address the diversity of students enrolling in college (Rendon, 2006). Underserved students most often experience cultural incompatibility in the forms of alienation, marginalization, stereotyping, and discrimination. The college could promote cultural compatibility through its campus wide initiatives, such as Habits of Mind, and gradually introduce this new environment.

Habits of Mind are referred to 16 attributes that human beings display when intelligent people are confronted with problems. The Habits of Mind incorporate the following dimensions, (a) value—choosing to use a pattern of intellectual behaviors; b) inclination—having the tendency to use a pattern of

intellectual behaviors, (c) sensitivity—recognizing opportunities to employ the pattern of behaviors, (d) capability—having the basic skills and ability to apply the behaviors, (e) commitment—continually attempting to consider and enhance performance of the pattern of behaviors, (f) policy—verifying a policy is in place to enhance and apply the patterns of behaviors (Costa & Kallick, 2008). One activity may include banners placed throughout campus promoting a college wide position on cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness. Moreover, activities in the classroom and student activities grounded in Habits of Mind will support the new environment.

The second recommendation is for staff development to design a pathway that gives coaches and instructors training in cultural sensitivity and cultural competencies and an opportunity to engage with Black students in and outside of the classroom on an interpersonal level. This training could also help eradicate prevailing racism and counter the dumb jock stereotype by helping faculty and college constituents understand their valuable contribution to a student's self-worth and self-esteem through words of encouragement, mentoring, and respecting their cultural differences. It is also important to consider that as student-athlete's self-worth increases their university GPAs may also increase (Simons & Van Rheenen, 2000). Research indicates that the more involved students are with faculty and academic resources, the more they benefit academically and personally (Njororai, 2012).

The third recommendation is for the college to offer pathways for breaking down fears of an unwelcoming environment at the personal, high school, college,

and community level. To achieve this goal, it is critical that campuses engage student-athletes and their parents with campus personnel and community contingency groups in orientations, programs, and workshops that are purposefully designed to develop rapport among these groups and to assist with breaking down fears concerning an unwelcoming environment. Skills may be developed and facilitated by counselors and offered in-and-after-high school program activities, throughout the year as part of college program activities, and role-modeled by program staff. Activities may include addressing hot issues through the use of guest speakers and providing discussions of diversity, equity, and cultural competencies in monthly personal and group sessions (Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pedersen, 2006). Moreover, colleges must create educational opportunities for parents to gain valuable knowledge that will help them support their son and to understand the academic rigor these students face. These activities may be offered through workshops throughout the year and/or a six-week summer boot-camp.

The fourth recommendation is to create pathways that provide students with their basic needs of water and food and to make available to students textbooks on loan and college supplies. This study revealed that homelessness and hunger amplified other critical barriers, particularly for out-of-state students. To minimize hunger, the college should create pathways where students who do not have a family support network can receive nutrition and other health support. For example, institutions could have nutritional items regularly available for student-athletes, such as fruit, water, vegetables, cheese, crackers, and

nutritional bars in a central location such as study hall. Free nutritional items should also be made available to student-athletes before and after practice. Coaches could choose to help sponsor a yearly campus wide fundraiser to purchase nutritional items for student-athletes.

The fifth recommendation is for the college to provide a comprehensive framework for excellence that incorporates diversity and a pathway for students to develop healthy racial identities with their same-race peers and to minimize the underpreparedness of Black male student-athletes (Bauman, et al., 2005). This framework includes providing boot camps for student-athletes with an emphasis on math and English, counseling, life-skills coaching, skills development workshops, tutoring, and a diversified staff of faculty and students with adequate representation of same-race staff members. College policies should be developed to improve the impact of programs and services on student outcomes, enrollment trends, and student involvement and engagement for underrepresented and underserved student athletes. A main goal of these policies must be to build pathways that promote the development of learners who will find enjoyment in learning and who will be motivated to learn (Ryska, 2002).

The sixth recommendation is for the college to support the academic success of African American male student-athletes by increasing the number of African American coaches and instructors. Same race coaches and instructors would enable the development of mentoring programs that match same-race faculty, staff, and peers with student-athletes. Mentoring programs would help create an environment in which Black student athletes have an opportunity to

work with role models who have the same racial identity. Since these student athletes have such a strong orientation towards role modeling and helping others, perhaps reaching out to student-athlete alumni to assist with mentoring, coaching, and teaching at Fullerton College would yield successful outcomes. Planting that seed while the student is enrolled at the college is a good first step.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data from this study suggests that further research is needed to explore in greater detail the concept of *wanting to succeed*: This desire was expressed by participants throughout the interviews and was discussed as both a motivator and a barrier to their academic success. By utilizing mixed methods research to investigate this phenomenon, researchers will be able to examine participants' desire to succeed from multiple perspectives instead of the one perspective used in this qualitative study. Moreover, the information gained from a mixed method study could bring forth questions such as: Is this variable unique to high-achievers? Is this variable influenced by the environment, intrinsic motivation and self-determination, or by all of these factors? How can low-achievers be influenced to develop this desire? Would the desire to succeed increase or decrease if all negative factors, such as racism, stereotypes, homelessness, hunger, and finances, were removed?

Moreover, longitudinal data could answer questions about the retention, success, and persistence of students who participated in the Incite Program. More importantly, the combination of longitudinal data and qualitative data could help to shape future policies and to develop new campus academic support

programs and services, or help enhance current ones to better meet the needs of this population. Additionally, further longitudinal research is needed to reveal which academic support programs are helping close the achievement gap between African American male student-athletes and their White peers.

Further research is needed to explore the challenges African American male student-athletes experience as a result of late distributions of financial aid, such as dropping classes for non-payment, homelessness, and hunger.

Finally, when evaluating the relationship of Black males and White constituents in institutions of higher learning, it is important to consider the race and gender of the interviewer.

Summary of the Dissertation

This study addressed the lived experiences of African American male student-athletes in a California community college. Synthesis of their experiences revealed that each of these young athletes perceived themselves as African American men attending an institution that struggles to meet them where they are. Academic integration had been difficult for most of these students; high school had ill-prepared them for rigorous college demands. At the same time, race served as a support to their success rather than a barrier. One of the lessons learned from participants is that what may be a barrier in one instance can be a support in another.

Institutions cannot expect all high school students to come to college and be prepared. We have a responsibility to prepare these students. They must know we are committed to their education! In an interview, Dr. Dawn Person,

Professor at California State University Fullerton, stated (personal communication, February 2, 2015):

> The challenge starts much earlier than the community college and work needs to be done from elementary all the way up to their senior year in high school. Community college has a responsibility since they are the college of the community.

This study suggests that colleges must strongly consider minimizing the underpreparedness of Black student-athletes by building comprehensive pathways that transition students from high school to college using a framework for excellence that provides an opportunity for students to develop healthy racial identities with their same-race peers (Bauman et al., 2005). Consideration should be given to pathways that strengthen that common core curriculum; boot camps with an emphasis on math and English, skills development workshops, and tutoring. These pathways should also include strength-based first-year programs that promote personal accountability, leadership, resiliency, self-management, and multicultural and social competence in students (Day-Vines & Terriquez, 2008).

This study suggests that colleges must consider minimizing racism, fears, and stereotypes by increasing the number of Black coaches, instructors, staff, and students. Institutions should also consider offering mandatory workshops in cultural sensitivity and competencies to campus employees through staff development. They should also provide a comprehensive framework that incorporates a pathway for students to develop healthy racial identities with their same-race peers, faculty, and employees in and outside of the classroom.

Family matters beyond high school. Therefore, colleges need to include family in the educational process. Institutions should offer assistance to families to learn how to help their sons and to breakdown their fears.

In conclusion, institutions must regularly assess the needs of student athletes and set up a system of ongoing evaluation of program intervention effectiveness. The call for change in institutional policy and practice is essential to ensure student success and inclusiveness.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Dear Student,

My name is Olivia Veloz. I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Dawn Person at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).

I am conducting a study to understand the experiences of successful African American male student-athletes who graduated from or are approaching graduation from Fullerton College. The purpose of this study is to uncover meaning in the factors that influence the achievement of successful African American male student-athletes enrolled in an academic support program.

If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to participate in one face-to-face interview with me for approximately one hour. With your permission, I will record the interview so I don't have to make so many notes. You will not be asked to state your name on the recording. The benefits are that this is an opportunity for you to tell your story about your experiences concerning your academic success as an African American student-athlete.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you will not be paid for your participation. You may withdraw from the study at any time without suffering penalty or loss of benefits/services you may otherwise be entitled to. You may withdraw by informing me that you no longer wish to participate (no questions will be asked). You may also skip any question that you may feel uncomfortable answering during the interview, but continue to participate in the rest of the study.

Your responses to interview questions will be kept confidential. At no time will your identity be revealed. You will be assigned a random numerical code. Anyone who helps me transcribe responses will only know you by this code. Interview recordings and transcripts will be kept on my personal password-protected computer. Study materials linking your name with your number will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for three years and I am the only one who will have access to them. These recordings will not be used for any other purpose other than the interview for this specific study. Results of this study may be published but no names or identifying information will be included for publication; results will be reported in group format. I won't use your name or information that would identify you in any publications or presentations. Although research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law, anonymity is not assured as I will know your identity.

I have no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise, relating to results of this study.

If you have additional questions please contact me at 714-814-0302 or oliveloz@csu.fullerton.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Dawn Person, at dperson@Fullerton.edu. For any questions concerning your rights as a research participant you may contact the CSUF Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 657-278-7640.

Thank you.

FOR THE PARTICIPANT

I have carefully read and/or I have had the terms used in this consent form and their significance explained to me. By signing below, I agree that I am at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in this project.

Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Dear (Participant Name)

My name is Olivia Veloz. I am a graduate student at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).

I am conducting a study to understand the experiences of successful African American male student-athletes who graduated from or are approaching graduation from Fullerton College. The purpose of this study is to uncover meaning in the factors that influence the achievement of successful African American male student-athletes enrolled in an academic support program.

If you are interested in participating in this exciting and important study or would like additional information concerning this research topic, please contact me at oliveloz@csu.fullerton.edu or call me at (714) 814-0302. I will return your call promptly.

Sincerely,

Olivia Veloz

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project: Fullerton College Successful African American Male Student-Athletes

Time of Interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Position of Interviewee:

Describe here the project, telling the interviewee about the following:

- ☐ Purpose of the study
- ☐ Sources of data being collected
- ☐ What will be done with the data to protect the confidentially of the interviewee
- ☐ How long the interview will take
- ☐ **Have the interviewee read and sign the consent form.**
- ☐ **Turn on the tape recorder and test it.**

Questions:

1. **Please tell me about yourself.**

PROBES: Tell me about your family, where you grew up, and your interests.

2. **Tell me some of your reasons for choosing to come to Fullerton College?**

PROBES: What was important about this college? Describe for me how it felt for you to be a student when you first came to Fullerton College. What was it like for you? Talk to me about how it felt for you?

3. **Think about being at Fullerton College during the last two-years. Can you describe for me any experiences you had that were really challenging for you?**

PROBES: How did you handle the challenge? Now talk about an academic challenge. Like for example, in the classroom, were there any problems that you had or times in the classroom when things didn't go well for you? To what extend has race played a role in your academic experience while at Fullerton College?

4. **Describe what your academic and social experiences have been here at Fullerton College.**

PROBES: Did your high school performance impact your college performance? Did you take any remedial classes?

IF YES: How were you able to be successful in your classes?

5. **Can you think of a time prior to coming to college when you were really afraid of this experience or when you had fear about coming to college?**

PROBES: Can you describe what that felt like? What do you think was contributing to you feeling fearful? How did you overcome those fears?

6. **What motivates you to do well in school?**

PROBES: Is there a person (such as parents, friend, coach, faculty, or mentor) who motivates you? What motivates you to do your homework? Tell me about your goals for the future?

7. **Did you use tutoring, study groups, was the instructor key, or was something (or someone) else instrumental to your success?**

PROBES: Where did you go for help (such as Skills Center, Tutoring Center, Writing Center, Math Lab, Computer Lab, mentor, coach, or instructor?

8. **Can you describe for me when you saw yourself at your best as a student?**

PROBES: What was going on at the time? What about when you saw yourself at your worst. What was going on? How are you doing at this point?

9. **Was there ever a time when you wanted to drop out or thought about dropping out from college?**

PROBES: Tell me about a time when you felt discouraged or weren't sure that you wanted to continue?

10. **What other challenges/factors came into play for you with school (such as social, financial, and health)?**

PROBES: What about factors with respect to relationships with your coach, mentor, faculty, staff or other students? What about the campus environment or culture? Do you think that the campus as a whole, including instructors and administrators, embrace student-athletes? How does this make you feel?

11. **What is your honest opinion about the academic support offered to you in study hall?**

PROBES: Which academic support programs do you feel have helped you the most in becoming a better college student and why?

12. **What does it mean to you to be a Black and male?**

PROBES: What does it mean to be a Black male student-athlete at Fullerton college, i.e., academically, culturally, socially, emotionally?

13. **When you think about yourself and other African American student-athletes on this campus, what is your sense of how well you and others are doing?**

PROBES: If I told you that many African American were dropping out, and asked you why, what would you say? What do you think would

support African American male student-athletes to stay and finish college?

I know I've asked a lot of questions, is there anything that I didn't ask that you would like to add?

(Thank the individuals for their cooperation and participation in this interview. Assure the student of the confidentiality of the responses. Ask if you may contact him by email if you need clarification about something he said. If he says it's OK, have him write his own email address on the Consent Form below his signature. If he says it's not OK, make a note of this yourself at the bottom of the Consent Form and assure him you will not contact him further.