Running Head: Racial and athletic identity of African American football players

Racial and athletic identity of African American football players at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWI)

Jesse A. Steinfeldt, Ph.D.
Indiana University-Bloomington

Courtney Reed, B. S.
Kentucky State University

M. Clint Steinfeldt, M.A.
Southern Oregon University

Short title: Racial and athletic identity at HBCU and PWI

MANUSCRIPT ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION IN JOURNAL OF BLACK PSYCHOLOGY

Abstract

This study examined racial and athletic identity among African American football players at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). Negotiating the dualism of racial and athletic identities can be problematic because both roles are subject to prejudice and discrimination, particularly for student-athletes in revenue producing sports like football. Results indicated that seniors at both institution types reported significantly lower levels of Public Regard, and that lower levels of Public Regard predicted higher levels of college adjustment. Senior football players reported a greater acknowledgement that society does not value African Americans, and this acknowledgment predicted greater college adjustment. No differences between institution types in racial Centrality emerged, but football players at PWI reported higher levels of Athletic Identity. By garnering a better understanding of the psychosocial needs of African American football players, these results can inform college student personnel who can prioritize facilitating student-athlete academic and life skills with the same attention given to ensuring their athletic success.

Keywords: racial identity, athletic identity, African American student-athletes, football, college adjustment

Racial and athletic identity of African American football players at HBCU and PWI

Contemporary research has investigated the experiences of African American college students. These studies have utilized such variables as perceived ethnic fit (Chavous, Rivas, Green, & Helaire, 2002), cultural heritage and identity (Cole & Jacob Arriola, 2007), and racial identity (Hudson Banks & Kohn-Woods, 2007; Killeya, 2001; Neville & Lily, 2000; Pillay, 2005) to describe the college experiences of African American students who attend Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). Several studies have also examined the experiences of African American students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in comparison to those at PWI (Cokley, 1999; Cokley & Helm, 2001; Sellers, Chavous, & Cook, 1998; Worrell, Vandiver, Schaefer, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2006).

In spite of the increased attention to this necessary area of inquiry, comparatively little attention has been devoted to the experience of African American student-athletes in this regard. Studies that have explored the college experience of African American student-athletes have traditionally focused on academic success and persistence measured by cognitive factors (Hyatt, 2003). This is problematic because measures of cognitive factors (e.g., ACT, SAT, GPA) tend to correlate with persistence among White college students, but this relationship is not the same with non-White college students (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). While psychosocial variables other than traditional cognitive measures have been shown to be successful in predicting persistence among African American students, particularly student-athletes (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992; Tracy & Sedlacek, 1987), prior research has not investigated culturally relevant psychosocial variables. Consequently, the current study intended to combine culturally appropriate psychosocial variables (i.e., racial identity) with a psychosocial variable relevant to this specific population (i.e., athletic identity) in an effort to better understand the college

adjustment of African American student-athletes, particularly football players, at PWI and at HBCU.

Experiences of African American student-athletes

Sport is an area for social and racial resistance, a contested racial terrain wherein African Americans define themselves and the relationship of their race within society at large (Hartmann, 2000). Carrington and McDonald (2002, p. 2) suggest that a "culture of racism is deeply ingrained in sport." Within this context, African American student-athletes face a great risk for poor college adjustment based on their membership in multiple at-risk groups (Killeya, 2001), by belonging to a racial/ethnic minority group, by being a student-athlete, and by participating in a revenue-producing sport (i.e., football, men's basketball). This assertion may be explained by the fact that African American male student-athletes in revenue producing sports endure unique encounters with discrimination in their college experience (Astin, 1984; Hyatt, 2003; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007). Differential racial experiences among student-athletes is also supported by Lawrence (2005), who concluded from her qualitative study that race plays a role in the lives of African American student-athletes but not in the lives of their White teammates.

In addition to instances of discrimination, African American student-athletes face isolation, integration, and commitment as barriers to positive college adjustment (Hyatt, 2003). Isolation can paradoxically exist despite the high level of public visibility afforded to student-athletes through attention to their athletic performance. The campus perception is that student-athletes are admitted under special circumstances, and as a result, both their student peers and faculty marginalize their academic potential (Hyatt, 2003). Research has indicated that faculty members hold prejudicial beliefs against student-athletes, particularly Black student-athletes in revenue producing sports (Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Simons et al., 2007).

Engstrom and colleagues (1995) studied the attitudes of 128 faculty members, 91% of whom were White, and discovered that faculty members hold prejudicial attitudes toward student-athletes in general. However, certain scenarios (e.g., a student-athlete driving an expensive sports car) in the study elicited responses that the authors attributed to faculty perceptions that African Americans in revenue producing sports are disadvantaged student-athletes who are unable to afford luxury items unless they are attained illegally (Engstrom et al., 1995). In another study, African American student-athletes reported a much higher degree of negative perceptions from faculty than their teammates of different races. Twenty-nine percent of African American student-athletes in this sample reported they were suspected or accused of cheating in class, compared to only six percent of their White teammates (Simons et al., 2007).

While African American football players are a highly visible population on campus, they are not often perceived in a manner that socially integrates them into the campus community. This feeling of isolation and a lack of integration can be influenced by the racial climate of the campus. Racially homogenous isolation found on most college campuses can create social adaptation problems when African American students are required to assimilate into predominantly White environments (Cureton, 2003). Assimilation problems could negatively affect one's self-concept (Brown 2001), and force students of color to expend cognitive and affective energy in this process when their peers can allocate energy elsewhere.

The cultural values of an institution influence the way that student behavior is evaluated, the directions in which educators attempt to move students, and the knowledge base that is utilized to assess and explain student development (McEwan, Roper, Bryant, & Lange, 1999). HBCU provide campus environments that are specifically designed to meet the needs of African American students with curricula that include a greater integration of Black history and culture.

When compared to students at PWI, African American students at HBCU enjoy closer relationships with faculty, and are more integrated into campus life through greater participation in campus organizations and activities (Redd 1998; Roebuck and Murty 1993; Webster, 2002). Thus, it is possible that students at PWI and HBCU may have different experiences and engagement with the campus environment, but little research has explored student-athlete experiences in these different institution types.

In addition to perceptions of discrimination and isolation that may have an institutional influence, African American student-athletes also face issues related to commitment as a major barrier to college adjustment (Hyatt, 2003). Commitment may be viewed within multiple and interactive domains, such as academic commitment (e.g., degree commitment, institutional commitment), athletic commitment, and other areas of commitment (e.g., social, philanthropic). A high level of institutional commitment, or attachment to the university and campus community, can enhance the student's willingness to get involved in the social and academic aspects of the campus, thereby increasing degree commitment in the process (Hyatt, 2003). For student-athletes, aspects of academic commitment may be undermined by the influence of athletic commitment. The logistics of athletic commitment require college football players to often spend upwards of 40 hours per week lifting weights, running, watching films, studying game plans, and doing an overwhelming variety of football-related activities outside of their academic responsibilities (Simons et al., 2007). These logistic constraints contribute to a commitment dilemma wherein the *athlete* portion of the student-athlete moniker supersedes the *student* aspect, particularly for football players who strongly identify with being an athlete.

Athletic Identity

Athletic identity is the degree to which a person identifies with the athlete role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer (1996) view athletic identity as the combination of cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social aspects relating to the role of athlete. An overly salient athletic identity has been linked to negative outcomes such as academic disengagement (Adler & Adler, 1985; Lewis, 1993) and greater difficulty transitioning out of sport (Grove, Lavallee, & Gordon, 1996). Cornelius (1995) views athletic identity through the lens of a multidimensional self-concept theory. Within this framework, psychological identity as an athlete can be conceptualized as one domain of a multidimensional self-concept. Cornelius purports that including the athlete role into one's self-concept has the potential to influence social relationships, the activities that one seeks, and the way that an individual processes his/her experiences. According to Adler and Adler (1991), this influence on social relationships may be reciprocal wherein strongly athletically identified persons may influence their social networks and lead to the creation of athletic subcultures.

Racial Identity

Much like athletic identity, the development of racial identities is either nurtured or hindered in the athletic domain (Hartmann, 2000). Racial identity, the sense of collective identity based on a perception of common racial heritage, is perhaps the most heavily investigated area among African Americans (Killeya-Jones, 2005). Because it is believed to influence African American students' perceptions of the college environment, racial identity is important to understanding African American students' vulnerability to academic failure and psychological stressors (Hatter & Ottens, 1998). Shaped by cumulative social experiences, racial identity should be viewed as situationally emergent because it is enacted as a reaction to context-specific social interactions (Davis & Gandy, 1999).

The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997) is a model of racial identity used to assess the content and meaning ascribed to African Americans' racial identity. MMRI delineates multiple dimensions in an effort to provide a framework for examining greater complexity in the function and structure of racial identity in the lives of African Americans. This typological model integrates both universal and Afrocentric approaches, and asserts that racial identity has properties that are both stable and situationally specific. MMRI focuses on African Americans' beliefs regarding the significance of race in how they define themselves, the qualitative meanings the individual ascribes to membership in their racial group, and how these beliefs influence behavior (Sellers et al., 1997).

MMRI is measured by the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers, Smith, & Shelton, 1998). The MIBI has three domains (i.e., Centrality, Regard, Ideology) which produce seven scales. The first scale, Centrality, measures whether race is a core aspect of an individual's self-concept. The Public Regard scale assesses one's perception of how other groups positively or negatively view African Americans. The Private Regard scale taps into the extent to which an individual personally regards his/her own racial group. The first of the four Ideology scales, Nationalist Ideology, measures the level to which an individual emphasizes the uniqueness of being African American and being in control of one's destiny with minimal input from other groups. The Humanist Ideology scale assesses the degree to which an individual accentuates the commonalities among all humans independent of distinguishing characteristics such as race, gender, and class. The Humanist Ideology and the Nationalist Ideology theoretically exists on opposite ends of an ideological continuum. The Assimilationist Ideology scale measures the degree to which an individual highlights the mutuality between African Americans and the remainder of the American society, thereby endorsing the strategy of working

within established systems to promote change. The fourth and final Ideology scale that represents the seventh MIBI scale is the Minority Ideology, which taps into the degree to which an individual describes the common denominators with which all minority groups are confronted, thus endorsing the position that all minorities (e.g., LGBT, women, those with disability) should band together to bring about societal change.

Current Study

Cornelius's (1995) view of athletic identity within a multidimensional self-concept conceptualization is consistent with the tenets of the MMRI. According to MMRI, an individual's level of racial identity will be related to his/her social network, choice of friends and activities, and the way in which the individual reciprocally interacts with the environment, which is also consistent with how Adler and Adler (1991) conceptualize athletic identity. The MMRI makes the assumption that African Americans have a number of hierarchically ordered identities of which race is merely one, thus creating space for the intuitive inclusion of other identities, such as the athlete identity.

In spite of this potential theoretical link between sport and race, there are a dearth of studies that have examined racial identity and athletic identity in conjunction, with a particular absence of institution type (i.e., HBCU, PWI) comparison studies that focus on student-athletes. The role of the athletic subculture should be considered an integral aspect of student-athlete development (Melendez, 2006), and the racial climate needs to be examined because universities that attempt to affirm the racial identities of African American students increase the chances that these students will experience success in college and beyond (Bennett & Xie, 2000). This current study aimed to first examine how racial and athletic identity affect college adjustment (i.e., Social Adjustment, Institutional Attachment) among African American student-athletes who play

intercollegiate football, and secondly, compared the experiences of African American football players at PWI to those who play in the unique cultural context created by HBCU.

Research Hypotheses

To the first aim, we hypothesized that higher levels of Athletic Identity would predict lower levels of Institutional Attachment among African American football players. Student-athletes who emphasize their identity as an athlete at the expense of their student identity experience negative outcomes (Lewis, 1993). An elevated sense of athletic identity may undermine their college adjustment by decreasing commitment to educational goals, as demonstrated by lower levels of Institutional Attachment. We also hypothesized that higher levels of Assimiliationist Ideology would predict higher levels of Social Adjustment since African American students may use assimilation as a strategy to survive in a predominantly White environment (Cokley, 1999). This phenomenon may be more pronounced in athletic endeavors, based on the structure of sport. Even though HBCU are characterized by greater numbers of Black coaches and administrators, African American student-athletes are socialized from an early age in a system of sport that is coached and governed almost entirely by White males (Lapchick, 2008), potentially influencing an ideology that values working within mainstream structures.

To the second aim, we hypothesized that football players at HBCU would report comparatively higher levels of racial Centrality and Nationalist Ideology. This hypothesis was generated due to HBCU curricula that includes a greater integration of Black culture and history than PWI, highlighting the importance and uniqueness of being Black (Bennett & Xie, 2000). Conversely, we also hypothesized that football players at PWI would report higher levels of Athletic Identity and Assimilationist Ideology, along with lower levels of Public Regard. In a

campus environment where the alienation and isolation of African American football players is exacerbated by perceptions that they are only on campus due to their athletic skills (Hyatt, 2003), these student-athletes may be more acutely aware of the low regard society has for African Americans, and they may feel forced to adopt assimiliationist views that highlight their athletic prowess in order to fit in and survive (Cokley, 1999; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996).

This study intended to provide a description of African American student-athletes at both institution types. This study did not intend to predict racial or athletic identities based solely on choice of institution type, because this cross sectional design did not allow us to differentiate between self-selection processes prior to attending college and socialization process that are enacted while students are attending their respective institution. The hypotheses for this study were generated based on characteristics of each respective institution type, and the authors' expectations of how these racial and athletic identities may be expressed among football players at each institution type.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants in this study were 163 African American football players from five different colleges in the Midwest and Southeast that compete at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division IAA and II levels. There are no HBCUs that participate in intercollegiate football at the NCAA Division I level, so PWI that also competed at Division IAA and II levels were chosen for this study. This decision represented an attempt to include student-athletes who may have been recruited to play and possibly receive an athletic scholarship from comparable athletically competitive institutions, both HBCU and PWI. Eighty two players attended one of three HBCU that participated in the study, and 81 players attended one of two

PWI that participated in the study. All five universities have the ability to provide athletic scholarships to their players, and there were no significant differences among institutions in percentage of players receiving scholarships. The majority (74%) of participants in this study received an athletic scholarship. The average age of the student-athlete in this study was 19.7 (SD = 1.52), and 41% of student-athletes were freshmen, 21% were sophomores, 21% were juniors, and 17% were seniors. The sample had an average college GPA of 2.5 (SD = 0.45), and an average high school GPA of 2.8 (SD = 1.21).

After receiving institutional review board approval, the investigators contacted coaches and university administrators who agreed to extend voluntary participation requests to their players. Instructions and consent forms were given to the players, who filled out survey packets during position meetings and other team functions outside of the classroom setting. The survey packet included Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers, et al., 1998), Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS; Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993), Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1989), and a demographic sheet which elicited information on age, scholarship status, year in school, high school and college GPA, and race(s) with which the student-athlete identified. The survey packet also included explicit instructions for players to either fill out or skip certain sections based on their self-identified race. In order to avoid alienating any players based on race, every player had the opportunity to fill out a survey. Players who did not self-identify their race as Black filled out different sections of the survey that were to be used in a related study.

Measures

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity. The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al., 1998) is a 56-item self-report instrument based upon the Mulitidimensional

Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers et al., 1997). The MIBI employs a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree." The MIBI measures the stable dimensions of racial identity along three scales: Centrality, Regard, and Ideology. Centrality has no separate subscales and constitutes the first of the seven MIBI scales, Regard contains two subscales (i.e., Public Regard, Private Regard) and Ideology is comprised of four subscales (i.e., Assimilationist, Humanist, Nationalist, Minority), thus producing seven total scales for MIBI. Cokley and Helm (2001) reported a range of Cronbach's alphas from .70 to .85 on all MIBI scales in a sample of students from both PWI and HBCU. In this current study, Cronbach's alphas were found in the range of .68 to .76, which is consistent with prior research (Sellers et al., 1998; Cokley & Helm, 2001). The MIBI was chosen based on the potential compatibility between Athletic Identity and the MIBI's Centrality scale. These variables have the potential to be relevant indicators of the importance and salience of each respective aspect of identity that exists in this specific population. In a previous study, Jackson, Keiper, Brown, Brown, and Manuel (2002) did not find a relationship between centrality and athletic identity, but they used a single item to represent racial centrality. This study hopes to utilize the MIBI as a more comprehensive assessment of racial identity as it relates to athletic identity.

Athletic Identity Measurement Scale. The Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS; Brewer et al., 1993) is a 7-item self-report instrument that employs a 7-point Likert-type scale with possible responses ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree." Items such as "I consider myself an athlete" and "Sport is the most important part of my life" serve the AIMS' purpose of measuring the strength and exclusivity of identification with the athlete role. The Cronbach's alpha in this study was .76, comparable to the range of .80 to .93 found in a review of the literature on athletic identity (Martin, Eklund, & Mushett, 1997). Support for construct

validity of the AIMS is found in the statistically significant differences in AIMS scores across levels of athletic participation. As levels of competitive athletic activity increased, so too have AIMS scores. Non-athletes attained a significantly lower mean AIMS score when compared to the scores of NCAA Division I athletes (Brewer et al., 1993; Cornelius, 1995). Furthermore, Brewer and colleagues (1993) reported convergent validity by finding statistically significant correlations among the AIMS and instruments assessing both competitiveness and importance of sport competence.

Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. The Social Adjustment and Institutional Attachment scales from the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1989) were used to assess some of the specific experiences of African American student-athletes (Hyatt, 2003). The SACQ is a self-report instrument that employs a 9-point Likert-type scale with possible responses ranging from (1) "applies very closely to me" to (9) "doesn't apply to me at all." The Social Adjustment scale is designed to assess the student's success in coping with the interpersonal-societal demands inherent in the college experience. The Institutional Attachment scale is designed to explore the student's feelings about being in college in general (i.e., commitment to educational goals) as well as how he feels about the specific college he is attending. In their review of the literature, Dahmus and Bernardin (1992) concluded that the SACQ has shown good internal consistency in studies, with coefficient alphas ranging from .83 to .91 for the Social Adjustment subscale and .85 to .91 for the Institutional Attachment subscale. In this study, the Cronbach's alphas were .76 for Social Adjustment and .77 for Institutional Attachment. Construct validity for the SACQ has been evidenced by the relationship between SACQ scales and independent real life outcomes and behaviors. Baker and Siryk (1989) reported a statistically significant relationship ($r = .47$, $p < .01$) between the Social Adjustment subscale

and amount of extracurricular activity among college students. Statistically significant ($p < .01$) negative correlations ranging from -.27 to -.41 were also found between the Institutional Attachment subscale and attrition (Dahmus & Bernardin, 1992).

Results

Relationship Between Identity Variables and College Adjustment

Descriptive statistics for the major variables are presented in Table 1. The two outcome variables (i.e., Social Adjustment, Institutional Attachment) were significantly correlated with Athletic Identity and a number of the racial identity variables. In order to assess the relationship between college adjustment and the athletic and racial identity variables, two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted on the entire sample, one for Social Adjustment and one for Institutional Attachment. Institution type (i.e., PWI, HBCU) and year in school were entered in the first step of each equation, and the athletic and racial identity variables that were statistically significantly correlated with the outcome variables were entered into the second step of the hierarchical regression analyses. Because of the ratio of potential predictor variables relative to sample size, this method of selection of predictor variables was also influenced by efforts to conserve statistical power.

For Social Adjustment, neither of the demographic variables were significant predictors in the first step, and only Public Regard emerged as a significant predictor ($b = -.61$) in the second step. The athletic and racial identity variables, along with the demographic variables, accounted for 14% if the variance in Social Adjustment. For Institutional Attachment, year in school was a significant predictor ($b = 2.53$) in the first step. When the athletic and racial identity variables were added to the model, 20% of the variance in Institutional Attachment was explained. Year in school ($b = 2.55$), Public Regard ($b = -.50$), and Nationalist Ideology ($b = -.35$) emerged as statistically significant predictors of Institutional Attachment (See Table 2).

Differences in Institution Type

In order to determine the relationship between institution type and the racial and athletic identity variables, a multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted using the predictor variables of institution type (i.e., HBCU, PWI), and year in school (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior). These categorical predictor variables were evaluated to determine their relationship to the continuous outcome variables of athletic identity and racial identity.

The results of the MANOVA indicate statistically significant multivariate effects. With the Wilks's lambda criteria, the overall main effect of institution type, $F(8, 148) = 2.80$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$, $p = .006$; year in school, $F(24, 430) = 1.95$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$, $p = .005$; and the overall interaction effect between institution type and year in school, $F(24, 430) = 1.80$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, $p = .012$; were statistically significant. Follow-up univariate analyses revealed a significant institutional type difference on Athletic Identity, $F(1, 155) = 5.12$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, $p = .025$; and Nationalist Ideology $F(1, 155) = 7.66$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, $p = .006$. Follow-up univariate analyses revealed significant year in school differences on Centrality $F(3, 155) = 5.03$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, $p = .002$; and Public Regard $F(3, 155) = 3.51$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, $p = .017$. Finally, follow-up univariate analyses revealed a significant difference in the interaction term of year in school by institution type on Centrality $F(3, 155) = 4.02$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, $p <= .009$.

Football players at HBCU reported lower levels of Athletic Identity ($M = 36.28$, $SD = 6.74$) than players at PWI ($M = 39.17$, $SD = 7.66$); lower levels of Private Regard ($M = 35.19$, $SD = 6.26$) than players at PWI ($M = 37.37$, $SD = 4.96$); and higher levels of Nationalist Ideology ($M = 38.02$, $SD = 7.47$) than those at PWI ($M = 33.69$, $SD = 8.61$). Junior football players at both institution types reported lower levels of Centrality ($M = 35.47$, $SD = 5.64$) than their freshman

(*M* = 37.91, *SD* = 5.95); sophomore (*M* = 39.09, *SD* = 5.38); and senior (*M* = 37.32, *SD* = 6.84) teammates. Senior football players at both institution types reported lower levels of Public Regard (*M* = 21.39, *SD*= 5.47) than their freshman (*M* = 24.77, *SD* = 4.95); sophomore (*M* = 24.23, *SD* = 4.38); and junior (*M* = 24.76, *SD* = 3.79) teammates. Finally, Figure 1 shows the nature of the significant interaction of year in school by institution type.

Discussion

Relationship Between Identity Variables and College Adjustment

Preliminary analyses did not yield differences on either of the college adjustment variables based on institution type. Comparatively, football players at PWI were reporting that they were adjusting to college as well as their peers at HBCU. However, according to norms of the SACQ, the African American football players in this study were in the 35th percentile in both Social Adjustment and Institutional Attachment (Baker & Siyrk, 1989). Thus, although institution type did not contribute any significant differences, neither group of student-athletes is adjusting particularly well to college, based on SACQ norms.

Our hypothesis that higher levels of Athletic Identity would contribute to lower levels of Institutional Attachment was not supported, nor was our hypothesis that higher levels of Assimilationist Ideology would predict higher levels of Social Adjustment. Year in school emerged as the strongest predictor of Institutional Attachment, indicating that the longer a player was at his school, the more attached to this particular institution and to being in college in general he became. The finding that athletic identity did not contribute to lower levels of Institutional Attachment was interesting, given the duality of what the Institutional Attachment variable purports to assess (i.e., commitment to educational goals, attachment to particular institution). Since a salient athletic identity did not have a negative impact on Institutional

Attachment, this finding may indicate that intercollegiate athletic participation may create a strong sense of school pride or attachment to the particular institution that may serve to offset the potentially negative effect that a salient athletic identity might otherwise have on the commitment to educational goals portion (i.e., being in college in general) of Institutional Attachment.

Among the racial identity variables, only Nationalist Ideology and Public Regard emerged as significant predictors. Lower levels of Public Regard predicted higher levels of both Social Adjustment and Institutional Attachment. For African American football players, the ability to acknowledge that society doesn't value Black people appears to contribute to better adjustment to college. The implications of this finding will be discussed in greater detail later in this section. Higher levels of Nationalist Ideology also predicted lower levels of Institutional Attachment. Players who highly endorsed the uniqueness of being Black and advancing their community without the help of White people reported less attachment to being in college and at their particular institution. This finding may indicate the perception among football players that their present environment does not support this ideological belief system. Cokley (1999) reported that African American students, particularly at PWI, may not want to be perceived as "militant" for fear of repercussions from campus administration. For football players, this dynamic may involve the perceptions of coaches and athletic administrators who may intentionally minimalize and downplay racial intergroup differences and diversity among players so as not to interfere with their perceptions of team cohesion and winning (Jackson et al., 2002). This potential institutional ideological incompatibility might be intuitive for student-athletes at PWI, so further data analyses were conducted to assess if there were institutional type differences in Nationalist Ideology and other racial and athletic identity variables.

Differences in Institution Type

Supporting our hypothesis, football players at PWI reported significantly higher levels of Athletic Identity, which indicates that they see their role of athlete as more important to them than do players at HBCU. Endorsing a strong athletic identity, particularly in a predominantly White environment, may indicate an internalization of the perception that being an athlete is highly valuable for African Americans. Although African American males are underrepresented in most traditional venues of upward socioeconomic mobility, they are significantly overrepresented in sports like football (Sellers, Chavous, & Brown, 2002). Additionally, since negative perceptions of football players (e.g., only on campus to play football) paradoxically exist alongside the accolades and fame that these high profile student-athletes receive for their athletic exploits, a highly salient athletic identity may indicate that African American football players at PWI are subscribing to and/or internalizing the societal perception of the "archetypal African American male football or basketball player." (Simons et al., 2007, p. 267).

Consistent with our hypothesis, African American football players at HBCU reported significantly higher levels of Nationalist Ideology than their peers at PWI, indicating that football players at HBCU more strongly support the uniqueness of being Black. Lower levels of a Nationalist Ideology were predictive of higher levels of college adjustment for all players in the sample, but this may represent a differential experiential dynamic for football players at HBCU and PWI. As this study was intended to be a cross sectional descriptive endeavor, future research needs to focus on whether student-athletes at HBCU feel a stronger sense of freedom to explore racial ideologies that do not conform with mainstream White society, or if student-athletes at PWI feel constrained to explore these aspects of their identity while they are immersed in a mainstream White environment.

While the findings did not support our hypothesis that football players at HBCU would report higher levels of Centrality than players at PWI, the interaction between institution type and year in school does show a significant difference in Centrality. Figure 1 demonstrates the differences between institution type across year in school concerning the importance that football players place on being Black. Players at both institution types have similar first and second year views on the salience of race in their lives. However, juniors at PWI reported significantly lower scores on Centrality, indicating the lesser importance they place on race. In spite of this drop among juniors at PWI, scores reported on Centrality by seniors are comparable at both institution types. In his comparison of college students at HBCU and PWI, Cokley (1999) did not report significant differences between institution types on Centrality. When compared to the levels of Centrality among students in that study, the student-athletes in this study reported lower levels of racial Centrality, indicating that football players may place less importance on being Black than their student peers do. This finding has implications for future research into reasons why African American football players, when compared to their student peers, may not see race as an integral part of their self-concept.

Beyond these institution type differences, the results indicate significant differences in Public Regard based on year in school. African American senior football players at both HBCU and PWI report significantly lower levels of Public Regard when compared to their younger teammates. This finding indicates their acknowledgement of how poorly society values African Americans, perhaps especially African American athletes who have exhausted their utility to society (i.e., athletic eligibility). Given the significant differences based on year in school, this finding may represent a cumulative effect of experiences throughout their college career that supports contentions of scholars who illuminate the racial climate of intercollegiate sport.

Hawkins (1999) compared African American college student-athletes to oscillating migrant workers based on their shared experiences with institutional powerlessness, required relocation to capitalize on skills, double consciousness, and a system of labor exploitation wherein the employer bears a nominal cost of labor production when compared to the massive profits reaped from the labor. Hawkins' comparison stands in stark contrast to the popular belief that sports are a means of social mobility for young Black males.

Similarly, Edwards (1984) coined the term *treadmill to oblivion* to describe the deliberate and systematic exploitation of the college athlete, a process that begins in elementary school and continues throughout high school and beyond. Over two decades later, Rhodes (2006) described the same dynamic, instead using a *conveyor belt* metaphor. Both analyses indicate that from an early age, African American student-athletes face low expectations outside of sport, with only minimum academic requirements that ensure athletic eligibility but do not promote graduation or other forms of academic success. Thus, the *dumb Black jock* is not born, but rather he is systematically created and cultivated from an early age (Edwards, 1984). The lower levels of Public Regard among seniors in this study may indicate that African American football players are becoming acutely aware of this dynamic as they prepare to face a world without organized sports, perhaps for the first time in their lives.

The Public Regard findings, both in institutional type differences and its prediction of lower levels of Institutional Attachment and Social Adjustment, may be best understood in terms of protective factors. One factor that predicts persistence in African American student-athletes is the ability to recognize and deal with racism (Sedlacek, 1987; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). Thus, being aware that society devalues African Americans, particularly once the fame of college athletics ends, may prepare these football players for potential racist situations that could

negatively impact their self-concept. This finding has implications for college student personnel (e.g., counselors, academic advisors, athletic administrators, coaches) who work with African American student-athletes. Because these players are indicating their awareness and acknowledgement of society's negative views of African Americans, it is important for college student personnel to facilitate dialogues about racial experiences with players. This is especially important because advisors and coaches may avoid these dialogues—and worse yet, minimilize these experiences—in an effort to promote team chemistry and success (Jackson et al., 2002). However, creating such a dialogue with players may allow them to be proactive in how they can deal with these types of situations before being confronted by them. Doing so has the potential to enhance these student-athletes' overall adjustment to college and their success in life beyond college.

Limitations of the Study

Although the results of this study have implications for better understanding the psychosocial needs of African American football players, there are limitations that need to be acknowledged. The first limitation of the current study involves the design. Although the cross sectional design of this study provided a description of the experience of a particular group of African American student-athletes, this study did not represent an attempt to predict choice of institution type (i.e., HBCU, PWI) based on racial identity or athletic identity. Self-selection variables influence college choice, and these processes interact with the socialization of students while in college to make this prediction something that exists outside the scope of the current study. Additionally, as this was not a longitudinal study, the finding concerning the significant interaction between year in school and institution type (Figure 1) must be analyzed accordingly.

The second limitation involves the chosen sample. Research on African American student-athletes is sparse and may not reflect the within group variation among African Americans or among African American student-athletes in particular. As a result, some of the previous assertions in the literature (i.e., that African American student-athletes in revenue producing sports represent multiple at-risk categories; Killeya, 2001) need to be evaluated by examining the unique experiences of specific groups of student-athletes. Although it was an appropriate decision for this particular study, the decision not to include African Americans who play college basketball, another revenue producing sport, is a limitation to this study. Given the cultural relevance of basketball to African Americans, notably that basketball is "culturally marked as Black" (Appiah, 2000, p. 617), an examination of the role of racial and athletic identity in the college adjustment of African American basketball players may be a separate but interesting area of inquiry. An additional limitation involves the age of the football players in this study. Since freshmen constituted 41% of the sample, this was a relatively young group. These student-athletes have had limited socialization time at their respective institutions, and this dynamic could affect the results. Accordingly, readers should interpret the results and generalizability of this study with relative caution.

Future Research

This study attempted to describe the experiences of African American football players so that future research may be dedicated to investigating both the strengths and the needs of this group of college students. The significant correlational relationship between athletic identity and the four racial identity ideology variables is one area that warrants further investigation. For football players at HBCU, all four ideologies were significantly related to athletic identity, but for their peers at PWI, only the Assimilationist and Minority ideologies were significantly related

to athletic identity. Since the Minority Ideology endorses the position that all marginalized groups should coalesce together to effectuate change (Sellers et al., 1997), this finding might indicate that student-athletes see themselves collectively as a marginalized group in the eyes of faculty, administration, and fellow students, both at PWI and HBCU. Future research needs to investigate the unique ways that student-athletes view themselves within their environment, both in the campus community and within the athletic subculture.

Future studies would benefit from employing different methodologies to investigate the experience of African American student-athletes. For example, a longitudinal design could better explore variables that influence a student's choice of institution type, as it interacts with the opportunity to play college football, and how this interaction contributes to levels of racial and athletic identity development over time. Additionally, while it is difficult to adequately compare a unidimensional construct (i.e., athletic identity) to a multidimensional construct (i.e., racial identity), it was interesting that Centrality and Athletic Identity were not significantly related in this study. This finding is consistent with Jackson and colleagues (2002), who found no relationship between athletic identity and their single-item representation of racial centrality. Given the relationship between sports and race, it is intuitive to imagine that these constructs may represent related, if not competing, aspects of identity. Settles, Sellers and Damas (2002) discuss the impact of role salience in identifying how a student-athlete negotiates the student and the athlete roles. Along these lines, future research should be dedicated to better understanding role salience and how it relates to negotiating the duality of being a Black man and being a student-athlete to see why this seemingly intuitive connection was not supported by the data in this study.

Conclusion

Even though African American student-athletes encounter many of the same difficulties faced by their African American student peers on campus, their situation is exacerbated not only by their visible status as student-athletes, but also by the increased demands of intercollegiate athletic participation (Anshel, 1990; Simons et al., 2007) and by discriminatory views held among students and faculty (Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Hyatt, 2003; Simons et al., 2007). Student-athletes in general must successfully negotiate multiple roles and identities that exist within the student, athlete, and social domains. For African American student-athletes, negotiating the dualism of racial and athletic identities is difficult because both roles are inherently linked, and both are subject to prejudices and discrimination. The results of this study indicated that African American football players may report differential levels of athletic identity, different racial ideologies, and different perceptions of how society views African Americans. The results also indicate that these differences may result in different college adjustment experiences. A more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenological experience of these student-athletes is necessary in order to better meet the psychosocial needs of African American male football players. The results of this study can inform support programs and counseling interventions that can validate their importance on campus. This understanding can help facilitate their academic and lifelong success with the same attention given to ensuring their athletic success on the gridiron.

References

Adler, P. A. & Adler P. (1985). From idealism to pragmatic detachment: The academic performance of college athletes. *Sociology of Education, 58,* 241-250.

Adler, P. A. & Adler P. (1991). *Backboards and Blackboards: College Athletics and Role Engulfment*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Anshel, M. H. (1990). Perceptions of Black intercollegiate football players: Implications for the sport psychology consultant. *The Sport Psychologist, 4,* 235-248.

Appiah, K. A. (2000). Racial identity and racial identification. In L. Black and J. Solomos (Eds.), *Theories of race and racism* (pp. 607-615). London: Routledge.

Astin, A. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 25,* 297-308.

Baker, R. W. & Siryk, B. (1989). *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire Manual.* Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services.

Bennett, P. R. & Xie, Y. (2000). Revisiting racial differences in college attendance: The role of historically black colleges and universities. *American Sociological Review, 68,* 567-580.

Brewer, B. W., Van Raalte, J. L., & Linder, D. E. (1993). Athletic identity: Hercules muscle or Achilles heel? *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 24,* 235-254.

Brown, T. (2001). Exposure to all Black contexts and psychological well-being: The benefits of racial concentration. *African American Research Perspectives, 7,* 157-172.

Carrington B. & McDonald, I. (2002). Sport, racism, and inequality. *Sociology, 11,* 8-13.

Chavous, T., Rivas, D., Green, L., & Helaire, L. (2002). Role of student background, perceptions of ethnic fit, and racial identification in the academic adjustment of African American students at a Predominantly White University. *Journal of Black Psychology, 28,* 234-260.

Cokley, K. (1999). Reconceptualizing the impact of college racial composition on African American students' racial identity. *Journal of College Student Development, 40,* 235-245.

Cokley, K. O. & Helm, K. (2001). Testing the construct validity of scores on the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity. *Measurement & Evaluation in Counseling & Development, 34,* 80-95.

Cole, E. R. & Jacob Arriola, K. R. (2007). Black students on White campuses: Toward a two-dimensional model of Black acculturation. *Journal of Black Psychology, 33,* 379-403.

Cornelius, A. (1995). The relationship between athletic identity, peer and faculty socialization, and college student development. Journal of College Student Development, 36, 560-573.

Cureton, S. R. (2003). Race-specific college student experiences on a predominantly White campus. *Journal of Black Studies, 33,* 295-311.

Dahmus, S. & Bernardin, H. J. (1992). Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. *Measurement & Evaluation in Counseling & Development, 25,* 139-142.

Davis, J. L. & Gandy, O. H. (1999). Racial identity and media orientation. *Journal of Black Studies, 29*, 367-397.

Edwards, H. (1984). The Black "dumb jock": An American sports tragedy. *The College Board Review, 131,* 8-13.

Engstrom, C. H., Sedlacek, W. E., & McEwen M. K. (1995). Faculty attitudes toward male revenue and nonrevenue student-athletes. *Journal of College Student Development, 36,* 217-227.

Feagin, J. R., Vera, H. & Imani, N. (1996). *The agony of education: Black students at White colleges and universities.* New York: Routledge.

Grove, J. R., Lavallee, D., & Gordon, S. (1997). Coping with retirement from sport: The

influence of athletic identity. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 9,* 191-203.

Hartmann, D. (2000). Rethinking the relationships between sport and race in American culture: Golden ghettos and contested terrain. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 17,* 229-253.

Hatter, D. Y & Ottens, A. J. (1998). Afrocentric worldview and Black students' adjustment to a predominantly White university: Does worldview matter? *College Student Journal, 32,* 472-480.

Hawkins, B. (1999). Black student athletes at predominantly white National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I institutions and the pattern of oscillating migrant laborers. *Western Journal of Black Studies, 23*, 1-9.

Hudson Banks, K. & Kohn-Woods, L. P. (2007). The influence of racial identity profiles on the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms. *Journal of Black Psychology, 33,* 331-354.

Hyatt, R. (2003). Barriers to persistence among African American intercollegiate athletes: A literature review of non-cognitive variables. *College Student Journal, 37,* 260-276.

Jackson, J. M., Keiper, S., Brown, K. T., Brown, T. N., & Manuel, W. (2002). Athletic identity, racial attitudes, and aggression in first-year Black and White intercollegiate athletes. In M. Gatz, M. A. Messner, and S. J. Ball-Rokeach (Eds.), *Paradoxes of Youth and Sport* (pp. 159-172). State University of New York Press: Albany.

Killeya, L. A. (2001). Idiosyncratic role-elaboration, academic performance, and adjustment among African-American and European-American male college student-athletes. *College Student Journal, 35,* 87-95.

Killeya-Jones, L. A. (2005). Identity structure, role discrepancy and psychological adjustment in male college student-athletes. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 28,* 167-185.

Lawrence, S. M. (2005). African American athletes' experiences of race in sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 40,* 99-110.

Lapchick, R. (2008). *Lack of diversity among campus, conference leaders at Division IA schools may contribute to lack of diversity in head football coaching positions.* Retrieved July 4, 2008, from http://www.bus.ucf.edu/sport/cgi-bin/site/sitew.cgi?page=/ides/index.htx

Lewis, M. (1993). Athletes in college: Differing roles and conflicting expectations. *College Student Journal, 27,* 195-202.

Martin, J. J., Eklund, R. C., & Mushett, C. A. (1997). Factor structure of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale with athletes with disabilities. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly, 14,* 74-82.

Melendez, M. C. (2006). The influence of athletic participation on the college adjustment of freshmen and sophomore student-athletes. *College Student Retention, 8,* 39-55.

Murphy, G. M., Petitpas, A. J., & Brewer, B. W. (1993). Identity foreclosure, athletic identity, and career maturity in intercollegiate athletes. *Sport Psychologist, 10,* 239-246.

Neville, H. A. & Lily, R. L. (2000). The relationship between racial identity cluster profiles and psychological disturbance among African American college students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 28,* 194-208.

Pillay, Y. (2005). Racial identity as a predictor of the psychological health of African American students at a Predominantly White University. *Journal of Black Psychology, 31,* 46-66.

Rhoden, W. (2006). *Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and the Redemption of the Black Athlete.* Crown Publishers: New York.

Sedlacek, W. E. (1987). Blacks in White colleges and universities: Twenty years of research. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 28,* 484-495.

Sedlacek, W. E. & Adams-Gaston, J. (1992). Predicting the academic success of student-athletes using SAT and non-cognitive variables. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 70,* 724-727.

Sellers, R. M., Rowley, S. A. J., Chavous, T. M., Shelton, J. N., & Smith, M. A. (1997). Multidimensional inventory of Black identity: A preliminary investigation of reliability and construct validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73,* 805-815.

Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., & Shelton, J. N (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality & Social Psychology Review, 2,* 18-39.

Sellers, R. M., Chavous, T. M., & Brown, T. N. (2002). Uneven playing field: The impact of structural barriers on the initial eligibility of African American student-athletes. In M. Gatz, M. A. Messner, and S. J. Ball-Rokeach (Eds.), *Paradoxes of Youth and Sport* (pp. 159-172). State University of New York Press: Albany.

Sellers, R. M., Chavous, T. M., & Cook, Y. D. (1998). Racial ideology and racial centrality as predictors of African American college students' academic performance. *Journal of Black Psychology, 24,* 8-27.

Settles, I. H., Sellers, R. M., and Damas, A. (2002). One role or two? The function of psychological separation in role conflict. J*ournal of Applied Psychology, 87,* 574-582.

Simons, H. D., Bosworth, C., Fujita, S. & Jensen, M. (2007). The athlete stigma in higher education. *College Student Journal, 41,* 251-274.

Tracey, T. & Sedlacek, W. (1987). The relationship of noncognitive variables to academic success: A longitudinal comparison by race. *Journal of Educational Measurement, 6,* 203-216.

Webster, A. F. (2002). Comparing racial identity attitudes in African American teacher education students at a predominantly White university and a historically Black university. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Memphis, 2002). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 63* (5-A), 1715.

Worrell, F. C., Vandiver, B. J., Schaefer, B. A., Cross, W. E., & Fhagen-Smith, P. E. (2006). Generalizing nigrescence profiles: Cluster analyses of Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) scores in three independent samples. *The Counseling Psychologist, 34,* 519 - 547.

Tables

Table 1

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Predictor and Outcome Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. AIMS										
2. CENT	.09									
3. PriReg	.33**	.44**								
4. PubReg	.24**	-.13	.13							
5. ASS	.43**	.26**	.53**	.21**						
6. NAT	.22**	.12	-.11	.14	.10					
7. MIN	.46**	.08	.33**	.26**	.64**	.31**				
8. HUM	.24**	.24**	.48**	.13	.67**	.01	.58**			
9. SocAdj	-.21**	.03	-.02	-.31**	-.20*	-.14	-.23**	-.05		
10. InstAtt	-.20*	.11	.12	-.27**	-.04	-.26**	-.21*	.14	.70**	
M	37.85	37.56	36.08	24.06	45.29	36.55	42.62	45.23	86.79	66.19
SD	7.31	5.99	5.72	4.86	7.81	8.28	7.43	7.71	12.29	13.31

Note. AIMS = Athletic Identity; CENT = Centrality; PriReg = Private Regard; PubReg = Public Regard; ASS = Assimilationist; NAT = Nationalist; MIN = Minority; HUM = Humanist; SocAdj = Social Adjustment; Institutional Attachment

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 2

Results of Hierarchical Regression Models for Institutional Attachment and Social Adjustment

	Model 1: Social Adjustment			Model 2: Institutional Attachment		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Step and Variable						
Step 1						
Institution Type	.18	2.11	.01	2.84	2.20	.11
Year	1.05	.92	.10	2.53**	.96	.22
Step 2						
Institution Type	-.23	2.17	-.01	1.99	2.21	.08
Year	.50	.93	.05	2.55**	.95	.22
Athletic Identity	-.14	.16	-.08	-.22	.16	-.12
Public Regard	-.61**	.22	-.24	-.50*	.22	-.19
Assimilationist	-.13	.16	-.08	.29	.17	-.17
Nationalist	-.14	.13	-.09	-.35*	.14	-.21
Minority	-.11	.18	-.06	-.28	.19	-.15
R^2	.14**			.20***		
ΔR^2	.13			.15		

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Figures

Figure 1: Centrality differences between Institution Types by Year