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Academic Support Services Among African American Male
High School Student-Athletes

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ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETES

by

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Abstract

Athletics is the most widely participated in extracurricular activity among high school students. Researchers have noticed that many male African-American high school and college students who play football and basketball tend to perform less well academically compared to their non-athletic and non-African-American peers. The purpose of this study was to determine the potential role of specialized academic support services for male African-American student-athletes at the high school level. This study specifically focused on those high school athletes who play the sports of basketball and football. Data was collected using a needs assessment survey distributed to staff at nine public high schools located in Miami-Dade County Florida. High schools where 51% or more of the student population are of African-American descent were targeted. Guidance counselors, athletic directors, and the coaches of the basketball and football teams completed the survey. It was hypothesized that male African-American high school athletes who attend higher performing high schools will have higher overall academic performance than those attending lower performing schools. It was hypothesized that specialized academic support services for African-American high school athletes will be associated with overall academic performance. It was also hypothesized that specialized academic support services will be limited for high school athletes. As hypothesized, academic support services among African-American male student-athletes at the high school level were associated with overall academic performance and specialized academic support services were limited. However, African-American male student-athletes attending higher performing schools did not perform better academically than those attending lower performing schools. Findings highlight the importance of support services for these

athletes, even in those schools which are rated higher academically. Recommendations arising from this research include specialized programs for athletes that respond to their academic needs and increase social support.

Academic Support Services Among African-American Male

High School Student-Athletes

Over the past two decades, intercollegiate sports have become an important source of monetary income and exposure for their institutions (Sailes, 1998). This phenomenon is especially true with regard to the sports of football and basketball, which are classified as high revenue sports. College and university football and basketball programs currently raise millions of dollars annually for their institutions (Boyd, 2003); therefore, colleges and universities are often pressured to recruit talented high school athletes for their athletic programs. Although there are many high school students who perform well in academics and athletics simultaneously, a vast number of high school students who are recruited to play intercollegiate football and basketball do not perform as well academically as their peers recruited to play other sports (DeFrancesco & Gropper, 1992). Many researchers suggest that high school student-athletes recruited to play intercollegiate football and basketball include those who traditionally would not have considered attending college upon graduation from high school (DeFrancesco & Gropper, 1992). Some researchers have further suggested that high school student-athletes who tend to perform below-average academically appear to share similar characteristics to the average high school drop-out (Lang, Dunham, & Alpert, 1988).

Research data indicates that a sizable proportion of low academic performing high school student-athletes who participate in the sports of basketball and football are African-American males (Sailes, 1998). African-American student-athletes traditionally have been classified as the least prepared of all student-athletes attending college (Hyatt, 2003). Many times, these student-athletes are classified as low academic achievers within

the college academic setting, while being viewed as important to the university for athletic purposes (Lang, Dunham, & Alpert, 1988). Many male African-American student-athletes who play football or basketball are recruited by colleges and universities for their athletic skills in lieu of their academic skills (Lang, Dunham, & Alpert, 1988).

Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney (1996) indicate that there is a paucity of research related to the academic and developmental needs of the pre-collegiate athlete. Some researchers and professionals in the human service field stress the importance of properly transitioning high school student-athletes to the college setting (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). Although researchers and human service professionals acknowledge that student-athletes at the high school level need to be better prepared for college, data is limited on the types of services high school student-athletes would benefit from.

Therefore, the focus of this study was as follows: It was hypothesized that academic support services among African-American male high school student-athletes would affect their overall academic performance. It was hypothesized that African-American male high school athletes attending higher performing schools would have higher overall academic performance than those attending lower performing schools. It was also hypothesized that specialized academic support services would be limited for high school athletes.

The High School Student-Athlete

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), there are nearly one million high school football players and approximately 500,000 high school basketball players (Laden, 1999). A substantial amount of these high school football and basketball players are awarded athletic scholarships to attend various colleges and

universities around the nation each year. NCAA statistics reveal, there are approximately 16,000 basketball players and approximately 57,000 football players who participate at the college level. Of these numbers, a disproportionate number of these students are of African-American descent (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996).

There has been a lot of controversy surrounding the level of academic preparedness among high school athletes, especially of those athletes who play the sports of basketball and football (Sellers, 1992). There appear to be a number of factors contributing to the long-standing and increasing concern regarding preparation of high school athletes planning to attend college on athletic scholarships. Firstly, many of the African-American students who are recruited at the college level to play football and basketball attend low academic performing high schools (Sapp, 1996). Therefore, these students typically are less prepared academically for college than their counterparts who attend high schools where high academic standards are part of the school's culture (Sapp, 1996). Secondly, of the high school students who are eligible to attend college on football and basketball athletic scholarships, many more fail to meet the freshman academic requirements set by the college and universities they apply to (Harris, 1998). Currently, half of all the Division I-A institutions basketball and football players fail to satisfy the minimum college admissions requirements (Laden & Peltier, 1999). For example, researchers report that students from minority backgrounds have tendencies to matriculate with lower high school grade point averages (GPAs) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT) scores than non-minority students and non-athletes (Petrie & Russell, 1995). This most likely contributes to the dismal college graduation rates of basketball and football players (Knight, 1991). In a documentary directed by Lubin

(2004), he follows the life of a top high school football player in Miami Florida. During the film, the student who resides in the inner city battles societal pressures, academic pressures, standardized testing dilemmas, injuries, family conflict, and internal struggles. This film takes a realistic look at the actual struggle of the male African-American student-athlete at the high school level.

Although an estimated twenty-five million children participate in sports related activities in the U.S., the literature relating to the developmental and academic needs of the pre-collegiate athlete is limited (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). Some researchers and those in the human services professions consider it necessary to academically and psychologically prepare the college student-athlete-to-be for the transition from high school to college (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). Despite recommendations by these professionals such as psychologists, counselors, social workers, educators, and researchers to prepare high school student-athletes for the special challenges of college, it is rarely done. In fact, preparation for the student-athletes-to-be at the high school level most often occurs during freshman orientation in college. Some researchers and human services professionals recommend that the college preparation process for potential student-athletes begin as early as junior high school and continue throughout high school (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996).

African-American male high school student-athletes may be less prepared for college level academics and challenges due to many factors as stated above. However one important factor appears to be the lack of availability of specialized academic support services for high school athletes. All public high schools in the U.S. are required to offer support services that are available to the entire student population. Examples of these

services include but are not limited to tutoring, guidance counseling, daycare services, health services, career counseling, FCAT preparation classes, etc. Although these services are available to high school student-athletes, they do not relate to their special needs. Most high school athletic programs do not offer a full range of specialized academic support services designed to meet the academic and developmental needs of their athletes. Some high school coaches may offer tutoring and/or study hall during the playing season to their athletes or other services, however a universal consensus on the type of services high school athletes may benefit from is virtually nonexistent. This lack of specialized academic support services for athletes at the high school level may result in lower academic performance in the classroom. In the worse case scenario, high school student-athletes may lose opportunities to attend college on athletic scholarships because of poor academic performance. The latter becomes more of a risk factor when the student-athlete is male and of African-American descent. In fact, African-American male student-athletes at the high school level have filed lawsuits against public school districts alleging that they were not properly prepared for college (Abbott, 2002). Some of these high school student-athletes also alleged in their lawsuits that the negligence of the public school system to properly prepare them for college caused them to forfeit college scholarship opportunities (Abbott, 2002).

Since many high school male student-athletes recruited to play college football and basketball may be less prepared academically for college level work, many colleges and universities are burdened with remediating students in the areas of academics and personal development. The transition from high school to college for African-American student-athletes playing high revenue sports may be smoother if they began receiving

specialized academic support services at least during high school (Harris, 1998). Some researchers report that high school counselors and athletic staff must be involved in the academic intervention process of high school athletes (Gould & Finch, 1991). It appears to be extremely important for high school personnel to properly prepare the pre-collegiate athlete on ways to cope effectively with pressures, experiences, and normal developmental struggles that will occur in college (Gould & Finch, 1991). However, there is a lack of research addressing the role of specialized academic support services for the male African-American high school student-athletes who play athletics especially in the high revenue sports of football and basketball at the high school level.

National Collegiate Athletic Association

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is responsible for the supervision and governance of amateur intercollegiate athletic programs in U.S. colleges and universities. In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt formed the NCAA in an effort to protect college student-athletes from harm in athletic competitions. The NCAA's subsequent development encompasses intercollegiate championships for numerous intercollegiate sporting events. At its birth, the NCAA numbered approximately thirty-nine member institutions. Today, the NCAA reports membership of more than 1200 member institutions, conferences, and organizations, and it is divided into three divisions.

As mentioned earlier, the NCAA divides their membership institutions among three divisions. Division I institutions must sponsor at least seven sports for men and women (or six for men and eight for women) with two team sports for each gender. Each sport sponsored is accompanied by contest minimums, participant minimums, and scheduling criteria (NCAA). Schools that have football are classified as Division I-A or I-AA.

Division I institutions are typically classified as very elaborate programs (NCAA).

Football teams at the Division I-A level must meet the following criterion: 17,000 people in attendance per home game, or 20,000 average of all football games in the last four years or, 30,000 permanent seats in their stadium and average 17,000 per home game or 20,000 average of all football games in the last four years, or be in a member conference in which at least six conference members sponsor football or more than half of football schools meet attendance criterion (NCAA). Division I-AA football teams do not have to meet the minimum attendance criteria. However both Division I-A and I-AA must meet minimum financial aid awards for their entire athletic program (NCAA). It is important to note that many of the academic difficulties occurring among male African-American student-athletes attend colleges and universities classified as Division I-A (football), and Division I (basketball).

Colleges and universities classified as Division II institutions have to sponsor four sports for men and women with two team sports for each gender. Schools do not have to meet attendance requirements for football or arena game requirements for basketball. NCAA requires maximum financial aid awards for each sport that a Division II school must not exceed. Students attending these schools tend to finance their education through a combination of scholarship money, grants, student loans, and employment earnings. Colleges and universities classified as Division III institutions are required to sponsor at least five sports for men and women with two team sports for each gender. Student-athletes at these institutions are not allowed to receive financial aid related to their athletic ability.

Since their introduction in U.S. colleges and universities, intercollegiate athletes have been the subject of numerous controversies ranging from special admissions policies to institutional abuses of athletic talents (Sapp, 1996). In order to address many of the issues surrounding intercollegiate sports, the NCAA has adopted numerous propositions since the early 1980's in an effort to protect student-athletes and to increase the academic integrity of sponsoring educational institutions (Lang, Dunham, & Alpert, 1988). Proposition 48, adopted by NCAA in 1983, was the organization's first attempt to strengthen the eligibility requirements for college freshman student-athletes (Lewis, 1996). Presently, colleges and universities follow the guidelines of Proposition 48 to meet various requirements upon graduation from high school. Currently, incoming student-athletes attending Division-I institutions must meet certain criteria set by the NCAA upon graduation from high school. The dismal college graduation rates of student-athletes and apparent exploitation of student-athletes at Division I institutions during the 1980's was a hot topic in the U.S. In particular interest were the extremely low college graduation rates of male African-American student-athletes participating in basketball and football.

Many researchers, educators, coaches, student-athletes and society as a whole continue to believe that male African-American student-athletes are exploited despite NCAA legislation designed to minimize such abuses. In March 2002, an ESPN "Outside the Lines" program revealed that thirty-six Division I member institutions exhibited low or nonexistent college graduation rates among African-American male basketball players (NCAA News, 2002). On January 18, 2001, the football team at The University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) organized the Collegiate Athletics Coalition (CAC). The CAC is a registered student group at UCLA seeking to support other Division I

football and basketball teams to form a national players association. This student group seeks basic protections for student-athletes by exclusively targeting NCAA legislation which they believe impose inequitable restrictions. According to Lapchick (1989), African-American student-athletes are the object of low academic expectations, are not receiving the education by colleges and universities, have few African-American coaches or faculty members on campus to serve as role models. Although African-Americans student-athletes attend 117 Division I-A institutions, currently only two head football coaches are African-American (Ventre, 2004). A series of reports conducted by the Knight Commission examined intercollegiate sports and recommended reform in many areas. Findings of the Knight Commission, (1999) reported that the many colleges and universities appeared to be exploiting their student-athletes. The reports issued by the Knight Commission reiterated the importance of viewing student-athletes first as students and secondly as athletes and encouraged the NCAA to implement some of their recommendations. To date, the NCAA has implemented many of the changes recommended by the Knight commission. The report issued by the Knight Commission in 1991 also strongly suggested that student-athletes should begin their preparation for college athletics during their high school years.

College Student-Athletes

A report issued in 2004 by NCAA revealed that college graduation rates among all Division I student-athletes are higher than the rates of students of the same race and gender groups who did not participate in sports (NCAA, 2004). According to the NCAA report, 62% of all college student-athletes at the NCAA Division I level who started college in 1997 graduated within the six-year window standard as established by the U.S.

Department of Education (NCAA, 2004). However, the graduation rates for male African-American student-athletes playing the sports of football and basketball at the Division I level were below that of the overall student population and below that of other student-athletes at the Division I -level (NCAA, 2004). Their graduation rates are considered relatively low since the report was based on student-athletes who graduated within six years of first enrollment in college (DeFrancesco & Gropper, 1992). According to the NCAA, when the sports of basketball, football, baseball, and track/cross country are excluded from graduation totals, male student-athletes graduate higher than their male student body counterparts (NCAA, 2004). According to the NCAA, there has been a slight increase in the college graduation rates among African-American student-athletes who play football and basketball at the Division I level, however the rates are still below the graduation rates of the overall student body and continues to remain a concern for many (NCAA, 2004). Despite the reported graduation rate increases among male African-American student-athletes, there has been a decrease in the number of African-American athletes playing at the college level in 1996 (Welch, 2003). Welch (2003) reported that in 1996, African-American males made up 55% of the basketball players in the previous year's class, but were only 52% of the 1996-1997 class. A similar pattern existed for African-American football players and male African-American athletes in general. In addition, the data that the NCAA uses to determine graduation rates of student-athletes on scholarships was modified in 2003 by the U.S. Department of Education. Prior to the modification, all colleges and universities were required to reveal graduation rates for all students and scholarship athletes. However, colleges and universities with two or fewer people graduating in any category must suppress

information for that category (Welch, 2003). Therefore, it is not possible to determine which institutions graduated no athletes in a particular sport or ethnic group (Welch, 2003). Of the student-athletes who are awarded scholarships following high school, it is estimated as many as 65% to 75% may never earn their college degrees (Sailes, 1998). Of the small number of student-athletes who manage to graduate from college, approximately 75% of them will earn degrees in physical education or degrees in majors that are typically created for athletes (Sailes, 1998).

According to the NCAA, African-Americans are over-represented in intercollegiate athletics at the Division I level in football and basketball. Division I college athletic programs as stated previously, are considered to be high profile and include large schools such as Florida State University, University of Miami, and Duke University. African-Americans comprise approximately 12% of the U.S population, however, they account for approximately 25% of the student-athlete population at the Division I level (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). One-third of all male student-athletes in college are African-American. This calculates to the fact that approximately one out of every nine African-American male students attending a predominantly White (Caucasian) four-year college is an athlete (Person & LeNoir, 1997).

African-American athletes are also overrepresented at the national sports level as well. Approximately 80% of the National Basketball Association (NBA), 60% of the National Football League (NFL), and 25% of Major League Baseball (MLB) players are African American (Sailes, 1998). Despite the disproportionate numbers of African American males who participate in intercollegiate sports, less than 6% of all athletic scholarships provided in the U.S. are awarded to African Americans (Sailes, 1998). This

may be due to the fact that between 25% to 35% of African-American student-athletes at the high school level do not qualify for scholarships as a result of poor academic performance (Sailes, 1998). Of those students who qualify for athletic scholarships, it is widely believed that a substantial number of them would not be bound for college except for their athletic ability (Sapp, 1996). Approximately nine percent of students enrolled in college are of African-American descent (Person & Lenoir, 1997).

Student-Athletics as a Culture

Unfortunately, high schools, colleges, and universities hosting athletic programs are faced with many pressures. Athletic departments at Division I institutions and in some high schools are often pressured to create award winning and high revenue producing programs. These pressures in turn are transferred to the high school and college student-athlete. The college and high school student-athlete faces many challenges their non-athlete peers do not (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1991). The transition from high school to college is often challenging for many students entering college. However, transition from high school to college for the student-athlete appears to be more stressful. They tend to lead stressful lives, experience time consuming and unique demands placed on them, and often are subject to discrimination and stereotyping on campus and in the classroom (Sedlacek, 1992). In addition, student-athletes appear to be at increased risk of experiencing certain developmental and mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and identity confusion (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). It appears that the amount of time required to develop into a successful student-athlete reduces the available time to develop a personal identity exclusive of sports-related personal competencies (Nelson, 1983).

In a large research study of student-athletes at a NCAA Division I-A institution, the patterns of life stress sources, stress reactions, and perceptions of personal control over life situations were investigated (Etzel, 1989). According to the results of this study, student-athletes reported experiencing significantly greater amounts of overall life stress, and cognitive symptoms (e.g., anxiety, worry, irritability), and possessing a chance-oriented, external locus of control (Etzel, 1989). Another researcher observed that student-athletes on scholarship appear to experience more stress than the average college student which appears to warrant the attention of human service professionals (Lanning, 1982). This researcher particularly indicated that student-athletes could benefit from direct counseling aimed at self-concept, peer relationships, injury, career choice, study skills, and time management (Lanning, 1982). In addition, many student-athletes at NCAA institutions have cited the following difficulties with participation in intercollegiate sports programs: intrusion on time, inability to integrate into the rest of the student body because of time demands, isolation imposed on them by coaches, socialization and culturalization failure (NCAA News, 2002).

According to Hyatt (2003), certain subgroups of college students will experience additional academic challenges upon entering college. These students include nontraditional older students, students under-prepared for higher education, learning disabled students, first generation college students, and minority students (Hyatt, 2003). Some researchers strongly believe that student-athletes consist of a unique population much like woman, minorities, and people with disabilities (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1991; Gurney & Stuart, 1987; Hood, Craig & Ferguson, 1992; Stone & Strange, 1989; Thompson, 1986). The subgroup of college student-athletes, and more specifically

African-American male athletes, may be classified in several of these categories (Hyatt, 2003). Research studies suggest that student-athletes appear to have a distinct culture and set of life experiences which differ drastically from non-athletes (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). Sedlacek and Adams-Gaston further suggest that student-athletes may be better classified as nontraditional students due to their unique situation (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). According to Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1991, student-athletes encounter a unique set of challenges and pressures that may negatively impact their holistic development as people. Being an athlete while attending college and high school presents students with various academic and social challenges. For example, although the NCAA mandates college students be limited to athletic practice twenty hours a week, many students volunteer to add additional time to their athletic responsibilities (NCAA). Many times, highly dedicated student-athletes spend more hours than allowed by NCAA regulations in athletic preparation. This may be especially true of student-athletes in high profile programs, require athletes to dedicate approximately thirty or more hours weekly during season to their sport (Peltier & Laden, 1999). In Division I institutions, student-athletes train, condition, practice, scrimmage, and watch film throughout the academic year (Hyatt, 2003). The typical football or basketball college athlete starts their day at 6 or 7 a.m. and finishes practice at 6 or 7 p.m. without any time set aside to socialize or study. In addition, many college student-athletes are often absent from classes due to busy game schedules. A typical basketball or football travel schedule will cause athletes to miss between fifteen and twenty percent of their classes during a single semester (Hyatt, 2003). Absences from classes are more typical of basketball players because their playing season overlaps both the Fall and Spring semesters. As a result of these absences,

students are at risk of falling behind in classes and miss important lectures. As a result, student-athletes may feel less prepared for their classes.

As a result of their hectic schedules, many student-athletes may experience mental and physical exhaustion. However, presently, there is a paucity of information regarding clinical issues of a psychological nature associated with college sports participation (Falk, 1990). Much of the literature pertaining to sports, psychology, and counseling are related to performance enhancement, strategies for motivating athletes, and sports competition and aggression (Millslagle, 1988; Suedfeld & Bruno, 1990; Taylor, 1987). Typically, psychologists trained in exercise and sports science related fields receive little training in psychological clinical issues affecting student-athletes. However it is estimated between 5% and 25% of U.S. athletes suffer from psychosocial problems appropriate for counseling (Brown, 1978; Bunker & McGuire, 19). Despite these apparent concerns, only about 5% of these student-athletes receive counseling services to address their issues.

Student-athletes often feel pressured to satisfy the perceptions and expectations of their parents, peers, and coaches (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). In addition, student-athletes at the college level also experience stress related to plans related to their future education and career goals. All of this often leads to student-athletes feeling overwhelmed and adjusting to symptoms of associated with depression and anxiety (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). This is especially true for athletes playing highly competitive revenue producing sports.

In addition, Ferrante and Etzel (1991) determined that student-athletes experience complex personal challenges in the areas of personal adjustment, academics, and athletics. For example, the social and academic integration of African-American student-

athletes is a challenge once they enter college. The issues of race and social class membership for many student-athletes further their sense of disillusionment and isolation on college campuses. The experience of racism and discrimination is considered a psychological and socio-cultural stressor that may lead to maladjustment in African-American male student-athletes. Given the challenges student-athletes face, the development of specialized student support services is very important, not only a full range of counseling services, but additional academic support services to help them experience success in the classroom and on the field (Bailey, 1991).

Challenges of Male African-American Student-Athletes

The African-American community has witnessed extraordinary advances in the athletic circle especially in basketball, baseball, and football (Scales, 1991). The aforementioned increased opportunities in sports for African-Americans have also lead to increased visibility in the media for athletes (Scales, 1991). Many members of the African-American community strongly believe that the institution of sports yields endless opportunities for the minority participant. The extensive press coverage of athletics and lack of access to prestigious occupations due to racial discrimination and prejudice often make athletic careers more visible to youth in African-American communities than say, African-American engineers or scientists (Edwards, 1983).

Several researchers have investigated the issues and concerns related to the African-American athlete (Cohen, 1988; Henderson, 1988; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lubell, 1988; Salles, 1988). Most student-athletes concerns appear to relate to difficulties with time management, pre-college academic preparation, faculty expectations, institutional ambiance, peer relationships, health (injury concerns), and financial concerns (Daniels,

1987). On average, male African-American student-athletes come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds than other African-American college students and White student-athletes (Etzel, Ferrante & Pinkney, 1996). A study released by the Center for the Study of Sport and Society at Northeastern University revealed that a poor African-American family is seven times more likely to encourage a male child to participate in athletics than is a White family (Robinson, 2004). Approximately 50% of Division I football and basketball student-athletes come from families that cannot afford the costs of a higher education (Robinson, 2004). A report issued by the Knight Commission reported that it is imperative the NCAA meet the needs of the minority student-athletes particularly those from backgrounds of the inner city or rural poverty (Knight Commission, 1999). Presently, approximately two-thirds of African-American males playing NCAA Division I-A football and Division I basketball come from impoverished backgrounds (Sailes, 1988). Presently, professional sports are the largest employment industry that readily welcomes African-American males (Robinson, 2004). As a result, many young African-American men pursue a career in sports and perceive sports as an opening to opportunities that they feel do not exist for them through traditional channels (Sailes, 1998). In reality, little is said or heard in the African-American community regarding the steps toward employment opportunities for African-American males in the business industry (Scales, 1991). In fact, in a study conducted by Scales (1991), it was determined that some African-American children during their middle school years start to focus more on sports than academics. Of the student-athletes investigated in the middle school group, 60.5% reported aspirations of becoming a professional athlete. Therefore, many of these student-athletes believe that participation in sports may offer them the only

chance to achieve success in American society (Sailes, 1998). In psychological terms, African-American male athletes believe they have a good chance of playing sports at the professional level if they attend college for at least two years (Robinson, 2004).

In addition, African-American student-athletes are more likely to be first generation college students. This usually results in a lack of family guidance related to the specifics of a college education (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). Also, many African-American student-athletes enter college with lower scores on college entrance exams and have lower high school grade point averages than other African-American college students (Peltrie & Laden, 1999). All of these findings support NCAA's position that many African-American male athletes transitioning from high school are not prepared for the academic challenges of college. This especially holds true for African-American male athletes who play the high revenue sports of football and basketball (Sapp, 1996).

African-Americans and Academic Achievement

There has been a long-standing academic achievement gap between African-American students and White-American students (Parsons, 2003). Researchers have attributed the possible causes of the gap to be related to teacher expectations, biological factors, genetic factors, and socioeconomic status. (Parsons, 2003). However, African-American students and student-athletes often report that teachers assume they are academically deficient and are only allowed admittance to college due to special admissions policies (Scales, 1991). Some researchers report that many educators assume the academic potential of African-American students and student-athletes to generally be below-average (Scales, 1991). Some researchers believe that African-American students often feel academically inferior, isolated, alienated, and pressured to alter their behavior

and their view to fit into the White upper-middle class culture (Scales, 1991). Even though the academic achievement gap has improved over the last thirty years, the improvement has been slight (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). In general, African-American males and females under-perform relative to the U.S. average, but there also appears to be a gap among African-American students. African-American males, in comparison to their female counterparts, experience more difficulties academically. There is a significant gap between the verbal and math achievement between African-American males and females (McMillan, 2004). African-Americans male students are suspended more often and tend to drop out of school more often compared to their female counterparts and non-minority peers (Majors & Billson, 1992). African-American males appear to be particularly at risk of academic failure and underachievement (Majors & Billson, 1992).

African-Americans have a long history of being denied education and attending separate and/or unequal, and unsafe schools. Although civil rights legislation has improved the conditions of education pertaining to African-Americans, many of them continue to perform poorly in school. Many African-American students continue to attend de facto racially segregated schools where there is a lack of resources and expectations of high academic achievement (Bankston & Caldas, 1996). Despite this, the dream of achieving a college education continues to be perceived by many African-Americans as the road to financial success and social class mobility (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Given the documentation of the long history of poor academic achievement among African-American students, some researchers and educators question the lack of

research literature addressing the specific educational needs of African-American students (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Academic Support Services

Due to their involvement in athletics, student-athletes have needs that differ from the traditional student (Gurney & Stuart, 1987; Hood, Craig & Furguson, 1992; Stone & Strange, 1989; Thompson, 1986). Student-Athletes also have seasonal athletic commitments and pressures in addition to their academic requirements (Gurney & Stuart, 1989). The failure to recognize the numerous pressures student-athletes face may result in the exploitation and poor academic performance of student-athletes and decreased graduation rates at the college level (Dixon, 1987). Exploitation, poor academic performance, and decreased college graduation rates among student-athletes may occur when a lack of support services exists.

An academic support program for student-athletes can be described as a set of program objectives targeting the academic and social needs of student-athletes. These programs typically include but are not limited to academic counseling and advising, tutoring, academic workshops, life skills trainings, college examination preparation courses, diagnostic assessment of academic skills, and career planning services. The goals of academic support programs are to increase the academic and social development of student-athletes. These type of services may be especially beneficial in increasing academic performance in at-risk students.

Research conducted by Richards (1975) inquired about the role of study skills advice and behavioral self-control techniques on the modification of study behaviors of college students. In addition, the research investigated whether self-monitoring and/or stimulus

control was an effective treatment in addition to the study skills advice. The results of the study indicated a positive correlation between the overall study behaviors of college students who were exposed to a combination of study skills advice and behavioral self-control techniques.

The academic performance of football players involved in an academic support program at Washington State University was researched by Harney, Brigham, & Sanders (1986). The academic support program was named, Freshman Athletic Scholastic Training (FAST). The goals of the support program concentrated on the development of the behavioral and educational skills of student-athletes attending the university. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, two comparison groups and an anonymous no-contact control group was utilized. The results of the study indicated that student-athletes in the experimental groups performed significantly higher than previous freshman football players who did not participate in the program.

In another study, the role of academic support programs among in the Mid-American college football conference was investigated (Lambertson, 1998). The directors of the academic support program at eleven universities in the Mid-American Conference were the subjects of the study. The participants were asked to respond to a questionnaire based on their experience with academic support programs. The study revealed that schools that provided the most academic support services through their programs graduated a higher percentage of student-athletes.

Most colleges and universities and all public high schools in the U.S. currently offer some type of student support program to their entire student body. However, they are usually designed without consideration to minority students and the unique needs of

athletes (DeFrancescos & Gropper, 1992). For example, student-athletes may be unable to use the available student support services offered to the general student body because of their time constraints. The NCAA, realizing that student-athletes have special needs, passed legislation requiring all member institutions to provide academic support services for their student-athletes. Prior to this legislation, many NCAA Division I participating colleges and universities did not offer their student-athletes specialized academic student support services. As a result, the NCAA created the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program to address the issues related to the lack of academic support services available to student-athletes (NCAA on-line, 2004).

The mission statement of the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program is as follows:

“The mission of the NCAA is to maintain intercollegiate athletics as an integral part of the campus educational program and the athlete as an integral part of the student body. With this in mind, the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program was created to support the student development initiatives of its member institutions and to enhance the quality of the student-athlete experience within the university setting...

In the process of achieving this mission, the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program will”

- Support efforts of every student-athlete toward intellectual development and graduation
- Use athletics as preparation for success in life.
- Meet the changing needs of student-athletes
- Promote respect for diversity among student-athletes
- Enhance interpersonal relationships in the lives of student-athletes
- Assist student-athletes in building positive self-esteem

- Enable student-athletes to make meaningful contributions to their communities
- Promote ownership by the student-athletes of their academic, athletic, personal, & social responsibilities
- Enhance partnerships between the NCAA, member institutions and their communities for the purpose of education
- Encourage the development of leadership skills

This program was piloted in 1991 and launched in 1993 and is primarily aimed at restoring the integrity to the social aspect of the student-athlete lifestyle (Knight Foundation, 1991). This program is considered a “whole-person” approach benefiting the academic and personal development of college student-athletes, and addresses academic commitment, athletic commitment, personal development, career development, community services commitment, and program administration (NCAA, 2004).

Unfortunately, many student-athletes at the high school level (especially those playing high revenue sports) do not receive specialized academic support services reciprocal of those offered at NCAA participating institutions. Student-athletes at the high school level often experience similar challenges as their college level counterparts (Abbott, 2002). High school athletes spend countless hours practicing and conditioning and still are responsible for studying and completing schoolwork. Student-athletes at the high school level may rarely be provided with various skills trainings that are vital to their academic and personal success at the high school and college levels. There are numerous reasons related to the paucity of specialized academic support services available to student-athletes at the high school level. Many high schools may lack the monetary and human resources needed to provide quality academic support services. In

addition, some educational staff may be unaware of the special needs of student-athletes, especially those belonging to minority groups. Educational staff, parents, and non-athletic students may feel that athletes already receive privileges therefore they are not offered services specially designed for athletes. Lastly, some high school athletic programs simply may not recognize the importance of specialized student academic student support services.

Non-Cognitive Variables

Academic performance of many male African-American athletes in college is troublesome. Mandates supporting educational reforms in intercollegiate sports have encouraged the NCAA to recommend the establishment of support programs at participating institutions (DeFrancesco & Gropper, 1992). The programs at NCAA participating institutions offer support programs to student-athletes to augment the social, academic, and personal development of student-athletes (DeFrancesco & Gropper, 1992). There have been numerous attempts by researchers to diagnose the causes of low college retention rates in African-American student-athletes. DeFrancesco and Gropper (1992) revealed that many institutions hosting athletic programs with a large number of African-American participants are attended by predominantly White American students. As a result, many of the student support services available to these athletes are designed without consideration to the needs of minority students (Scales, 1991). However, academic success and persistence have traditionally been defined by intellectual characteristics such as scores on college entrance exams, high school GPA, academic grades, and rates of graduation (Hyatt, 2003). Although these variables successfully predict academic persistence for White and traditional college students, they do not

appear to appropriately predict academic persistence and success among non-traditional, non-white students or student-athletes (Sedlacek & Gaston, 1992). In fact, researchers, university presidents, educators, and coaches disagree with the freshman eligibility requirements currently imposed by the NCAA (Sailes, 1998). Many expressed that the inflexible eligibility requirements of the NCAA were biased against African-American students because the sole use of standardized test scores would adversely affect the eligibility of African-American student-athletes and the recruitment efforts of athletic coaches at historically black colleges and universities (Sailes, 1998). In fact, a *USA Today* report ("Fewer Athletes", 1987) revealed that Proposition 48 mostly impacted African American student-athletes and historically black institutions. According to the American Institutes for Research (1988), 65% of the reported casualties of Proposition 48 during its first year were African American student-athletes. In addition, African Americans represented a disproportionate number (91%) of Proposition 48 casualties among student-athletes recruited for Division I basketball. Many researchers have concluded that the sole use of standardized tests scores and high school GPA in determining freshman eligibility for student-athletes are biased and unfair (Sailes, 1998). Most colleges and universities utilize multiple criteria to determine admission eligibility for students such as letters of recommendations, essays, class rank, national origin, gender, race, and other factors. Studies by Sedlacek and colleagues have concluded that non-cognitive variables appear to better predict the academic persistence and continuing enrollment of African-American college students and student-athletes than college entrance exams (Sedlacek, 1987; Sedlacek & Gaston, 1992). The non-cognitive personal and institutional variables that have been identified as barriers to persistence in the

African American and student-athlete populations include commitment, integration, discrimination, and isolation (Hyatt, 2003).

The lack of commitment is described as the primary roadblock to academic persistence among African-American students (Tinto, 1993). The level of a student's goal commitment affects their motivation to perform well in college academically, thus African-American students that exhibit low degree aspiration and vague goals are more likely to quit school. Student-athletes, especially African-American males, tend not to commit to long-term goals (Hyatt, 2003). For example, students who participated in football and basketball had significantly lower college degree attainment and aspirations compared to their peers in other sports (Briggs, 1996). Briggs (1996) determined that the degree aspirations of the football and basketball athletes dropped, while the degree aspirations of athletes in other sports were remained the same, thus, goal attainment leads to higher academic development and performance which results in enhanced academic integration, which in turn increases commitment to long-term goals (Hyatt, 1996). The next non-cognitive variable described as a barrier to academic persistence for the African-American student-athlete is integration. Two sources of integration difficulties among college students have been identified by researchers; they are incongruence and isolation. Incongruence refers to a students feeling of not fitting in with their institution. For example, many student-athletes attending college feel like they do not fit into the regular student population. This will often lead to the student experiencing a lack of commitment to their university. Isolation refers to the student's lack of time permitted to interact with their non-athlete peers and functions on campus. Isolation according to researchers can have negative affects on the student-athletes ability to integrate into both

the academic and social environment on campus (Hyatt, 2003). Many times the busy schedules of student-athletes does not allow for leisure time.

In a research study conducted by (Sellers, 1992), racial differences in the predictors for academic achievement of student-athletes in Division I revenue producing sports were examined. The research sample of the study included 409 male basketball and 917 football players at 42 NCAA Division I colleges and universities. The participants in the study were administered a questionnaire assessing their life experiences as student-athletes at the college level. The following variables were used in the analyses: college GPA, high school GPA, SAT composite score, socioeconomic status (SES), importance of getting a degree, hours spent preparing for class, mother's occupation, and year in college. The results of the research study suggested that race differences exist in the levels of certain predictors, the level of academic performance, and the actual variables that predict college GPA for male student-athletes in revenue producing sports. The study suggested that Black student-athletes were the least prepared academically, came from lower SES backgrounds, and exhibited lower academic achievement than their White counterparts. However, the gap between the Black and White students was not correlated with to deficiencies in motivation or effort by the Black student-athletes. The study most importantly suggested that the factors that contribute to the academic success of Black and White student-athletes are very different. The author of the research study suggests that due to results, any intervention designed to improve or address the academic performance of student-athletes must recognize and address the implications of race differences in predictors of academic success.

As a result of the above-mentioned information, the following hypotheses were examined:

Hypothesis 1: African American male student-athletes attending high performing schools would have higher overall academic performance than those attending low performing schools.

Hypothesis 2: Academic support services for male African-American athletes at the high school level would be associated with overall academic performance.

Hypothesis 3: Specialized academic support services would be limited for African-American male high school athletes.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of high school guidance counselors, athletic directors, and coaches of basketball and football (varsity and junior varsity) at nine public high schools located in Miami-Dade County Florida. Respondents at four high schools that were targeted for the study did not respond to the survey. The majority of high schools targeted for the study consisted of those with majority African-American student populations. Of those high schools that did not have an African-American student population of 51% or more, high schools where African-Americans were overrepresented on the basketball and football teams were targeted. Of the schools that did not return the surveys, one school had an African-American student population above 51%. Miami-Dade County Public Schools currently has forty high schools in which approximately eight do not offer sports as an extracurricular activity. Students attending high schools that do not offer sports as an extracurricular activity have the option of participating in

sports at their home school. In all, participants representing nine high schools in Miami-Dade County Public Schools were surveyed.

Permission from Miami-Dade County Public Schools to conduct the research was obtained on December 10 2004. Following the receipt of the approval letter, the principals of participating high schools were contacted via telephone, fax, mail, and in person for permission to administer surveys in their schools. Participants were asked to complete an anonymous needs assessment survey to increase knowledge about the special needs of male African-American student-athletes. Participants were asked to report their role at the school being surveyed (i.e., coach, teacher, counselor, etc.) In some situations, the researcher was instructed to speak with the athletic directors and/or coaches of the schools by the building principal. The survey requested information on staff position, school grade, available support services, student classification data, and opinion on the effectiveness of academic support services.

Data Collection

To initiate data collection, a phone call was made to principals of targeted high schools. Then a packet of material was faxed and mailed to each high school principal targeted for the survey. The packet contained the cover letter and survey explanation (Appendix A), the survey instrument (Appendix B), and a copy of the approval letter from Miami-Dade County Public Schools (Appendix C). Although the researcher instructed principals to return the surveys by mail upon completion, only one school complied with this request. In order to obtain a better survey return rate, the researcher went to each individual school and obtained completed surveys.

Instrumentation

The Needs Assessment Survey and cover letter was generated to obtain demographic and descriptive information about the role of academic support services and the male African-American student-athlete at the high school level who play the sports of football and basketball. The Needs Assessment Across Schools Survey consisted of a self-administered survey created by the researcher. The survey consisted of thirty-seven questions related to demographic information, academic information, and information pertaining to the availability of student support services for student-athletes at the high school level. The participants of the study were asked to respond to the questionnaire based on their experience with male African-American student-athletes at the high school level who play the sports of football and basketball. All participants were provided with a cover letter explaining the content of the survey, objectives, and instructions as well as their rights to refuse to answer particular questions or the entire survey. The cover letter stated that the survey would be anonymous and that participants will not be matched with the survey answers in the research.

It should be noted that the GPA information collected from this research study was not taken from actual student databases. This information was obtained from the respondents of the survey who are required to know the GPA of their students. Students attending high school in Miami-Dade County are required to have a GPA of at least a 2.0 in order to participate in athletics.

Results

This section presents the results of the statistical analyses which will be described below. These analyses provide answers to the three research questions guiding the study.

Hypothesis One

The first research question investigated hypothesized that African American male student-athletes attending higher performing schools would have higher overall academic performance than those attending lower performing schools. In order to investigate this hypothesis, a Pearson's chi-square test was conducted. In order to satisfy the requirement of a Pearson's chi-square test (see table 1 below), no more than 20% of the cells should have an expected count of less than five. To satisfy this requirement, the school grade (assigned by the Florida Department of Education) was recoded into passing schools and failing schools.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether male African-American athletes attending better schools had higher GPAs. The two variables were school quality with two levels (passing and failing) and the GPA of African-American male athlete's which consisted of two levels (2.0 and 2.5). School quality and the GPA of athletes were not found significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2 (1, N = 39) = 1.25, p = .13$ for a one-sided test.

Table 1

Failing and Passing Schools

Stage	GPA = 2.0	GPA=2.5	Total
Failing school	11 (58%)	46 (34%)	137 (100%)
Passing school	25 (20%)	46 (37%)	125 (100%)
Total	36 (14%)	92 (35%)	262 (100%)

Passing School * GPA-African-American Cross-tabulation

As a supplementary analysis, the same hypothesis was tested for non African-American male athletes. Again recoding variables was necessary, however the recoding was done slightly differently.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether male non African-American athletes attending schools classified as C or above had higher GPAs (see table 2 below). The two variables were school quality with two levels (passing and failing) and non African-American athlete's GPA with two levels (2.0 and 2.5 or above). School quality and athlete's GPA were found to be not significantly related, Pearson χ^2 (1, N = 39) = 1.39, $p = .12$ for a one-sided test.

Table 2

Stage	GPA=2.5		Total
	GPA = 2.0	or above	
Failing school	11 (58%)	46 (34%)	137 (100%)
Passing school	25 (20%)	46 (37%)	125 (100%)
Total	36 (14%)	92 (35%)	262 (100%)

Passing School * GPA- Non African-American Cross-tabulation

Hypothesis Two

The second research question investigated hypothesized that the availability of academic support services for African-American male athletes at the high school level would be associated with overall academic performance. In order to measure this hypothesis, a new variable was created representing the number of support services that are offered for athletes at the high school level. Thus, African-American male athletes would obtain higher GPAs when provided with a wider range of support services.

There is some ambiguity about the precise definition of overall academic performance in this study. This question appears to be related to the performance of the school or the performance of the male African-American male athletes. Due to this ambiguity, both the academic performance of the schools and of African-American male athletes was investigated.

First, the relationship to the performance of the school was investigated. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between school grade and the number of support services available to athletes. The independent variable, the school grade, included three levels: F, D, and C or above. The dependent variable was the total count of services reported to be available by research participants. The ANOVA was significant, $F(2,42) = 5.45, p = .008$. The researcher rejects the null hypothesis. The strength of relationship between school quality and the number of support services, as assessed by η^2 , was moderate, with the school quality factor accounting for 21% of the variance of the dependent variable. Please see table 3 below for statistical data.

Table 3

School Grade and the number of academic support services

Variable	Number of Services		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
C or above	7.57	1.27	7
D	6.60	1.90	19
F	5.50	1.21	19
Total	6.27	1.68	45

The overall academic performance as reflected in the GPAs of African-American male athletes rather than the overall school quality was also analyzed. Therefore, focusing on the overall academic performance of African-American male athletes. A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between African-American athlete's GPA and the number of support services available to athletes. The independent variable, the African-American male athlete's GPA, included two levels: 2.0 and 2.5. The dependent variable was the total count of services reported to be available.

The ANOVA was not significant, $F(2,42) = 0.533, p = .47$. The researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis. However the low power of the analysis (0.11) is probably the cause for the lack of statistical significance. Please see table 4 below for statistical data.

Table 4

GPA of African-American male athletes and the number of academic support services offered

Variable	Number of Services	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2.5	6.30	1.92
2.0	5.90	1.52

Table 5

One-Way Analyses of Variance for Effects of Training Programs on Seven Dependent Variables

Variable and Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Number of Support Services				
Between groups	2	25.72	12.86	5.45**
Within groups	42	99.08	2.36	

** $p < .01$

Hypothesis Three

The third research question investigated hypothesized that academic support services would be limited for African-American male high school athletes. This step analyzed the availability of support services not as an absolute number but as a ratio or relationship to the number of special needs. Because there were many missing values in the special

needs section of the survey, it was not possible to merely add the responses. Therefore, an average response was calculated and this average was multiplied by ten (the number of needs in the survey) to get an estimate of the number of needs in the school. Therefore, the ratio becomes the dependent variable in the ANOVA. First, the relationship to the performance of the school was investigated.

Table 6

One-Way Analyses of Variance for Effects of Training Programs on Seven Dependent Variables

Variable and Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Number of Support Services:				
Between groups	1	2.54	2.54	3.55
Within groups	39	27.968	0.717	

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between school grade and the ratio of the number of support services available to athletes to the number of special needs African-American male athletes have. The independent variable, the school grade, included two levels: passing and failing. The dependent variable is a ratio where high values reflect that available services are ample in relationship to the needs of African-American male athletes at the high school level. The ANOVA was not significant, $F(1, 39) = 3.55, p = .07$. However, low power (0.45) may be responsible for the failure to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 7

One way analyses of variance for effects of School grade on ratio of services

Variable	<u>Ratio of</u> <u>Services to</u> <u>Needs</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pass	1.35	1.10
Fail	.9	.4
Total	1.12	.87

The next step analyzed the overall academic performance as reflected in the GPAs of African-American male athletes rather than the overall school quality. Therefore focusing on the overall academic performance of African-American male athletes.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between African-American male athlete's perceived GPA and the ratio of the number of support services available to athletes to the number of special needs African-American male athletes have. The independent variable, the African-American male athlete's GPA, included two levels: 2.0 and 2.5. The dependent variable is a ratio where high values reflect that available services are ample in relation to African-American male athletes' needs. The ANOVA was significant, $F(1, 37) = 4.64, p = .04$. The researcher rejects the null hypothesis. The strength of relationship between African-American male athletes' GPA and the ratio of services to needs as assessed by η^2 , was small, with the athlete's perceived GPA accounting for 11% of the variance of the dependent variable.

Table 8

One-Way Analyses of Variance for Effects of School Grade on availability of academic support services

Variable and Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Number of Support Services				
Between groups	1	3.40	3.40	4.64*
Within groups	37	27.12	0.733	

* $p < .05$

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations for Three Training Programs and Seven Dependent Variables

Variable	<u>GPA of</u>		
	<u>African-</u>	<u>Americans</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
2.5	1.42	1.19	19
2.0	.9	.3	20
Total	1.12	.90	39

Discussion

This study provided support for the increased use of academic support services among African-American male student-athletes at the high school level. As hypothesized, academic support services for male African-American athletes at the high school level were associated with overall academic performance and specialized academic support services were limited. However, African-American male athletes at higher performing schools did not perform better academically than those attending lower performing schools.

The first research question hypothesized that African-American male student-athletes attending higher performing schools would have higher overall academic performance than those attending lower performing schools. The research data did not support this hypothesis. According to the literature, African-American male student-athletes at the high school level may not perform better academically at higher performing schools for a variety of reasons. There is a lack of research pertaining to the academic and developmental needs of the pre-collegiate athlete (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). This suggests that although African-American male student-athletes at the high school level may attend higher performing schools, their specific needs may not be addressed and/or understood. Therefore, while African-American male student-athletes at the high school level attend better performing schools, if their needs are not being addressed properly they may perform similarly to their peers attending lower performing schools. Another reason African-American male student-athletes at the high school level may not perform better at higher performing schools may be related to their perceptions of which professions would welcome them once they become adults. According to Robinson

(2004), professional sports are the largest employment industry that welcomes African-American males. As a result, many young African-American male student-athletes pursue a career in sports at the collegiate and professional levels with hopes of experiencing opportunities perceived not to exist for them through traditional channels (Sailes, 1998). This preoccupation with pursuing a career in sports often results in students at the middle and high school levels to focus more on their athletic development and less on academic achievement (Scales, 1991).

The results of the study support hypothesis two which stated academic support services for male African-American athletes at the high school level would be associated with overall academic performance. The literature suggests that student-athletes have a distinct culture and set of life experiences which are extremely different from their peers (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). The literature emphasizes that academic support services are important to help student-athletes effectively cope with their unique challenges in order to ensure success in the classroom and on the field (Bailey, 1991). Therefore, these findings among African-American male student-athletes at the high school level paralleled (Harney, Brigham, & Sanders 1996; Sanders, 1986; Richards, 1975) those findings concerning the association between the academic performance of student-athletes at the college level who utilized specially designed academic support services.

The results of this study also supported hypothesis three which stated that academic support services for African-American male student-athletes at the high school level are limited. The results of this study suggest that GPAs of African-American male student-athletes at the high school level are higher when the amount of support services is higher.

In contrast, the results of the study suggest that when the GPAs of student-athletes at the high school level are lower there may be a paucity of academic support services. The findings related to this hypothesis correlate with research findings suggesting that addressing the needs of the pre-collegiate athlete is important (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). Unfortunately, many educators, administrators, and professionals in the helping professions believe that athletes are not a special needs population and are reluctant to address this issue. The students with higher GPAs may perform better academically because more support services are available to meet their needs. The high schools that these student-athletes attend may have a better understanding of the needs of this population than those high schools in which students are not provided with the needed academic support services. In addition, student-athletes may represent a distinct culture.

A limitation of this study lies in the sampling of respondents, who were in a single public school district, and the small number of schools that participated. Additionally, survey respondents did not include student-athletes, parents, or school administrators. Actual student GPAs were not utilized in this study, which relied on reports from respondents, which may also weaken the results and thereby the results.

In South Florida (Miami-Dade and Broward Counties), there are a number of private high schools attended by African-American male athletes. Many of these student-athletes participate in football and basketball sports programs at these high schools, and many of these students who participate in the sports program attend college after completing high school. Future research should be target larger numbers of public school districts and private high schools across the country where African-American male athletes attend

school. In addition, student-athletes at the high school level and their parents should be involved to obtain their perceptions of the role of academic support services. In addition, research should focus on determining the needs of other minority groups as well as female student-athletes. Finally, research is needed to determine the academic support needs of high school students who participate in other time consuming extra-curricular activities such as band, cheerleading, dance, and flagettes.

This study suggests that improved academic support services for African-American male student-athletes at the high school level are needed. Educators, school district administrators, college and university administrators, mental health professionals, the National Federation of High Schools, the Florida High School Athletic Association must unite and recognize that student-athletes are a special population with specific needs. The development of programs in the high schools to address the needs of their student athletes should be mandated by public school districts and private schools, and individual public school districts should implement a uniform program for student-athletes at the high school level that is responsive to their needs. Public school districts and private schools across the country need to invest in determining and addressing the academic support needs among their student-athletes in order to ensure they are able to reach their true potential academically, socially and emotionally.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

Dear Research Participant:

Your participation in a research project is requested. The title of the study is Academic Support Services Among African-American Male High School Student-Athletes. The research is being conducted by Tiombe-Bisa Kendrick, a student in the Psychology Department at Barry University, and is seeking information that will be useful in the field of School Psychology. The aims of the research are to help determine if academic support services currently available to African-American male high school student-athletes affect their overall academic progress. In accordance with these aims, the following procedures will be used: Completion of a needs assessment survey to be distributed to select faculty members at public high schools in Miami-Dade District Schools.

We anticipate the number of participants to be approximately 35.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following: completion of a needs assessment survey, which will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntary and should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects on your employment with the school district you represent. Please note that the principal of your school has given approval for this study.

The risks of involvement in this study are minimal and may include some level of discomfort associated with some of the questions. The following procedures will be used to minimize these risks: names of participants will remain anonymous. There may be no direct benefits to the individual respondent. Although there may not be direct benefits to you, your participation in this study will help our understanding of the role academic support services may play in the overall academic progress among African-American male student-athletes at the high school level.

As a research participant, information you provide will be kept anonymous, that is, no names or other identifiers will be collected on any of the instruments used. Data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's office and destroyed after seven years.

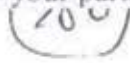
If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact me, at (786) 260-7339 or my supervisor, Dr. Deborah Jones, at (305) 899-4576, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Avril Brenner, at (305) 899-3020.



Tiombe Kendrick

Graduate student of the School Psychology Program

Thank you for your participation.



APPENDIX B

NEEDS ASSESSMENT ACROSS SCHOOLS SURVEY

- Please note: You do not have to answer this survey. You also have the right to omit any questions without penalty. Please do not write your name on this survey, all respondents will remain anonymous.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

School Grade: A B C D F (*please circle one*)

(Please circle one).

1. Your Position:

- Football Coach-Varsity
- Football Coach-Jr. Varsity
- Basketball Coach-Varsity
- Basketball Coach-Jr. Varsity
- Guidance Counselor
- Athletic Director

2. Approximate percentage of students by ethnicity on team

- African-American: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
- Hispanic: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
- Caucasian: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
- Native-American: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
- Other: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

3. Average cumulative GPA of **non-African-American** participants in basketball & Football:

1. 2.0
2. 2.5
3. 3.0
4. 3.5
5. 4.0
6. >4.0

4. Average cumulative GPA of African-American participants in football or basketball:

1. 2.0
2. 2.5
3. 3.0
4. 3.5
5. 4.0
6. >4.0

This section of the survey measures how school staff and coaches perceive the academic performance of African-American male student athletes only. This survey is designed to identify potential improvements in services for African-American student-athletes at the high school level.

1. The following academic support services are offered at this school for athletes:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|----|------------------------|
| • Study Hall: | Yes | No | Services not available |
| • Tutoring: | Yes | No | Services not available |
| • Academic advising: | Yes | No | Services not available |
| • Study skills training: | Yes | No | Services not available |
| • Time management training: | Yes | No | Services not available |
| • Communication skills training: | Yes | No | Services not available |
| • Counseling services: | Yes | No | Services not available |
| • Stress management training: | Yes | No | Services not available |
| • Workshops on NCAA rules: | Yes | No | Services not available |
| • SAT/ACT Preparation : | Yes | No | Services not available |

2. African-American student-athletes at my school fit into the following special needs categories:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|----|
| • ESE student classification: | Yes | No |
| • Reading below grade level: | Yes | No |
| • Below grade level in mathematics | Yes | No |

- Missed class time due to travel Yes No
- Below grade level in writing skills Yes No
- Poor FCAT scores Yes No
- Low self-esteem Yes No
- Feelings of anxiety Yes No
- Feelings of depression Yes No
- Feelings of being overwhelmed Yes No

3. African-American Student-Athletes who currently receive training in effective study skills perform better academically?

Yes No Services not available

4. African-American student-athletes who currently receive training in effective study skills perform better academically?

Yes No Services not available

5. African-American student-athletes who currently receive training in time management skills perform better academically?

Yes No Services not available

6. African-American student-athletes who receive specialized tutorial services during the year perform better academically?

Yes No Services not available

7. African-American student-athletes who receive academic advising on college plans are more likely to be accepted to college?

Yes No Services not available

8. African-American student-athletes who receive college entrance exam preparation have higher SAT/ACT scores?

Yes No Services not available

9. Most graduating African-American student-athletes at this school are prepared to do college level work?

Yes No

10. Most of our African-American student-athletes are enrolled in higher level math & science courses *i.e., Geometry, Algebra II, Chemistry, Physics, etc.*

Yes No

11. African-American student-athletes at this school use specialized academic support services if available on a consistent basis, *i.e., tutoring, academic advising, counseling*

Yes No

12. More African-American student-athletes at this school meet the NCAA eligibility criteria for incoming freshman when they use specialized academic support services

Yes No

13. This school offers an orientation program for incoming student-athletes

Yes No

14. If the answer to question 13 is NO, would incoming athletes at your school benefit from an orientation program?

Yes No

15. African-American student athletes who are provided with more academic support services perform better academically?

Yes No



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

giving our students the world

Office of Program Evaluation Executive Director Dr. Robed A. Collins

Appendix C

October 19, 2004 Tiombe-Bisa Kendrick

P.O. Box 69-5228 Miami, FL 33269

Miami-Dade County School Board
Dr. Michael M. Krop, Chair
Dr. Robed B. Ingram, Vice Chair
Mr. Agustin J. Barrera
Mr. Frank J. Bolanos
Mr. Frank J. Cobo
Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman
Ms. Betsy H. Kajian
Dr. Marta Perez
Dr. Solomon C. Stinson

Dr. Rudolph F. Crew
Superintendent
of Schools

Dear Ms. Kendrick:

I am pleased to inform you that the Research Review Committee of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) has approved your request to conduct the study, "Academic Support Services Among African-American Male High School Student Athletes." The approval is granted with the following conditions:

1. Participation of a school in the study is at the discretion of the principal. A copy of this approval letter must be presented to the principal.
2. The participation of all subjects is voluntary.
3. The anonymity and confidentiality of all subjects must be assured.
4. The study will involve approximately 35 faculty members in 5 MDCPS schools.
5. Disruption of the school's routine by the data collection activities of the study must be kept at a minimum. Data collection activities must not interfere with the district's testing schedule.

It should be emphasized that the approval of the Research Review Committee does not constitute an endorsement of the study. It is simply a permission to request the voluntary cooperation in the study of individuals associated with the MDCPS. It is your responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed in requesting an individual's

cooperation, and that all aspects of the study are conducted in a professional manner. With regard to the latter, make certain that all documents and instruments distributed within the MDCPS as a part of the study are carefully edited.

The approval number for your study is 1112. This number should be used in all communications to clearly identify the study as approved by the Research Review Committee. The approval expires on June 30, 2005. During the approval period, the study must adhere to the design, procedures and instruments which were submitted to the Research Review Committee. If there are any changes in the study as it relates to the MDCPS, it may be necessary to resubmit your request to the committee. Failure to notify me of such a change may result in the cancellation of the approval.

If you have any questions, please call me at (305) 995-7501. Finally, remember to forward an abstract of the study when it is complete. On behalf of the Research Review Committee, I want to wish you every success with your study.

Sincerely,



Joseph J. Gomez, Ph.D. Chairperson
Research Review Committee

JJG:fp

APPROVAL NUMBER: 1112

APPROVAL EXPIRES: 6-30-05