

EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE  
ATHLETES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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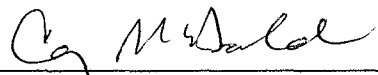
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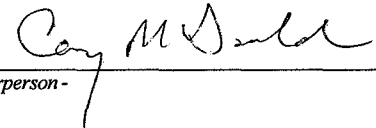
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**ABSTRACT**

Sailes (1997) provides percentages of Black males competing in the NBA (77%), NFL (65%), MLB (15%), and MLS (16%), while fewer than 2% of doctors, lawyers, architects, college professors, or business executives are Black males. This paper will focus on the effects of NCAA eligibility regulations on the educational and career aspirations of African-American athletes. (1) A brief history of the NCAA, (2) the National Collegiate Athletic Association Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse (IEC) guidelines, (3) a description of eligibility regulations Proposition 48 (*Prop 48*), Proposition 42 (*Prop 42*), and Proposition 16 (*Prop 16*), (4) a statistical analysis of graduation rates, (5) a literature review of factors which influence black male athletes educational and career aspirations. The survey instrument utilized was designed to determine the career and educational aspirations of 50 black athletes who attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The main point of this paper is to give the reader an understanding of the purpose of the NCAA, low graduation rates as a factor in the need for academic reform largely focused on black male athletes, and how the black male athlete's educational aspirations plays a role in the effectiveness of NCAA rules and regulations.

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## INTRODUCTION

For many African American males, sports appear to be one of the few allowable and available opportunities for success in a perceived racist and oppressive society (Sailes, 1984; Edwards, 1973). It is felt this accounts for the enormous over-representation of African American males in professional basketball, football, and baseball and in major college football and basketball today. Their resistance to racism and persistence to achieve success in the sports arena has not only exemplified itself in over-representation, but also in the changes which occurred in American sports as a result of that participation (24).

The above quote from Gary Sailes' (1998) chapter in *African Americans in Sport* integrates the "perceived" societal factors that have taken authority in directing the aspirations of African American men. Sailes joins other critics in connecting the over-representation of African American men in athletic programs with their ideals of opportunity. This thought suggests that young African American men are modeling the visible presence of African American athletes in sports and translating sports participation as a vehicle for social acceptance and access. Sailes supports this claim as he states, "Many contemporary African American athletes serve as role models, further perpetuating the migration of African American male youth into sports" (25). Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Charles Barkley, Julius Erving, and Isaiah Thomas are among some of the most decorated players in the National Basketball Association. Their athletic ability earned them an opportunity to play at the ultimate level of sport, but their high salaries, fancy clothes, expensive cars, and television exposure fostered the definition of success in the minds of young black males. Continuing the tradition of the previously mentioned athletes, Koby Bryant, LeBron James, Jermaine O'Neal, and Kevin Garnett maintain society's appeal to the black athlete by shattering endorsement deals, sustaining high profile lifestyles, and influencing the academic outlook by entering the professional league straight out of high school.

Collegiate sports participation, on a percentage basis, is the road most athletes travel in their aspiration to reach the professional ranks, as the athletes previously mentioned are the exception. Historically, draft eligibility rules that prevent athletes from going straight out of high school contribute to the probability of athletes attending college before entering the professional

league. The NFL minimum draft eligibility is three years out of high school, and as of with the 2006 the NBA requires athletes to be at least one year out of high school. Considering the fact that 1 out of 6,000 high school football players and 1 out of 10,000 high school basketball players will make it to the professional ranks, the collegiate experience continues to be an important factor in accessing the influential factors of sport participation (Sailes, 1997). On average, 15,000 Division I African American athletes received a scholarship to participate in collegiate sports from 1992-2001 (<http://www.ncaa.org>, 2004). As the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the governing body and scholarship funding sources for all athletes, it can play a pivotal role in the career and educational aspirations of student athletes.

The NCAA plays an integral role in the admission, retention, and graduation rates of student athletes. The NCAA has been the governing body to the majority of collegiate athletic programs since March 31, 1905. Along with representatives from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, the NCAA was created under the original name, Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS). Five years later, in 1910, the IAAUS changed their name to the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The level of control that it continues to have over the successes and failures of student-athletes is evident through policies they have put in place, rule changes when deemed necessary, and actions taken by the NCAA when athletes are not achieving academic and/or athletic obligations. The NCAA began as a discussion group and rules-making body. This non-profit organization, from its beginning, was organized for some of the same matters of contention that are still unresolved today. Today, there are 1,024 active member institutions across the United States that are regulated by the rules established by the NCAA for intercollegiate athletic programs.



One of the most important roles the NCAA plays is monitoring the admission, retention, and graduation rates of student athletes. The 2004 NCAA Fact Sheet indicates that African-American male student-athlete graduation rates improved to 35% at the onset of academic reform by the NCAA. It rose to 43% ten years later. It is currently settling at 45%, 15 years after the NCAA realized that academic reform was necessary to maintain the integrity of collegiate sports participation. Although African American male student athletes' graduation rates are low, it is important to acknowledge that African American male student athletes have consistently graduated from college at a higher rate than the African American general student body since 1985. The class of 1995 produced a 43% graduation rate of African American male student-athletes, while the general student body only produced a 34% African American male general student body graduation rate. The higher graduation rates credited to sports participation has been argued to be attributed to the mandatory study hours, academic support, and structured schedules required of student athletes that the general student body is not mandated (Coakley, 2004). While continued evaluation and reform was necessary to increase graduation rates for black male athletes, the progress of graduation rates of black male athletes, in general, over the past 15 years can be attributed to academic reforms instituted by the NCAA. Although these statistics indicate improvement, NCAA officials are clear that more reform is necessary.

Reports produced by the NCAA on graduation rates indicate that not even one-half of African American male athletes graduated from college; however they represent 80% of the NBA and 60% of the NFL. Disaggregating data by sport produces a more alarming fact. In Basketball, division I institutions, such as the University of Illinois, only graduate 36% of their African-American male student athletes. Division II and III institutions only graduate 50% of their African American male basketball players (<http://www.ncaa.org>, 2002). When academic

reform moved to the forefront, several research initiatives such as the 1989 Report on the “Experiences of Black Intercollegiate Athletes at NCAA Division I Institutions” by the American Institutes for Research, and the 1991, 1992, and 1993 report from the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics assessed problems, identified concerns, and provided suggestions for improvement. These research findings indicate that for the African American student athlete, academic experiences are vastly different, support systems need to be tailored to their specific needs, and athletic institutions need to play a more active role in the area of academic support. Despite these observations, the academic progresses of African American male student athletes are dismal compared to their white counterparts. Overall, as argued by the Knight Foundation Commission of Intercollegiate Athletics (2001), although the NCAA has implemented new programs with “sincerity and energy, it is still not enough” (14).

The purpose of this study is to reposition sport discourse to be inclusive of intrinsic and external factors that carry weight in the career and educational aspirations of African American athletes. Included is a study of the literature on black masculinity, African American men in college, and the African American male student athlete. This analysis will provide background information about black male personal development issues. After a literature review, I will discuss and apply Cross’ Theory of Nigresence that will be utilized to identify the factors that affect identity development as a roadmap to career and educational aspirations of African American male athletes. Therefore, analysis of the controversy that surrounds NCAA eligibility legislation and the problems with academic reform will be detailed. The study will conclude with a determination of the factor(s) that most influence the educational and career aspirations of black male athletes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *African American Males in Society*

In 1982, Robert Staples wrote *Black Masculinity* and argued that African American males were “the least understood and studied of all sex-race groups in the United States” (2). Staples’ work served as the impetus to produce more work surrounding black masculinity. Black masculinity studies have expanded over the past 20 years; which includes over 30 books and over 100 articles, the *Journal of African American Men* founded by Richard Majors, edited by Dr. Gary Scales, bell hooks’ (2004) *We Real Cool*, and Haki Madhubuti’s (1991) *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous* have contributed to combating American society’s unconscious desire to ignore the crisis facing African American men in America. As identified in the previously mentioned books, the crisis facing African American men in society come in the form of low academic achievement, gang violence, incarceration, and death at alarming rates. While empirical studies have exposed the economic, psychological, and social impact; of being African American and male in America, scholars contend that researchers must continue to be persistent in search of answers and solutions as the problems still exist and are arguably getting worse (hooks, 2004; Majors, 1998; Cuyjet, 2006; Edwards, 1973; Staples 1982).

bell hooks (2004) moves this conversation further by challenging her readers to examine the possibility that the problem with American society’s consciousness of African American men is the difference between “envy and desire” (xi). She quotes a passage from Ellis Cose’s *Envy of the World: On Being a Black Man in America* (2002), reinforce her point:

I mean, I don’t know what the fuss is about. I mean, everything in the world love you. White men love you. They spend so much time worrying about your penis they forget their own... And white women? They chase you all to every corner of the earth, feel for you under every bed... Colored women worry themselves into bad health just trying to hang on to your cuffs. Even little children, white and black, boys and girls – spend all their childhood eating their hearts out ‘cause you don’t love them. And if that isn’t enough, you love yourself. Nothing in the world loves a black man more than another black man... It looks to me like you the envy of the world (xi).

hooks argues that Cose's book contributes to the negative image of African American males in America by providing information about the issues but no resolution to solving the problem. She references this quote as an example of the breakdown in truly understanding the plight of the African American man. The question to be addressed is, if black men are the "Envy of the World," why are they not the most progressive or why do they not maintain a better societal position? Robert and Helen Evans (1995) may have an answer to this question, and their findings are alarming. In their article, *Coping: Stressors and Depression among Middle Class African American Men*, they rely on data from the 1991 census report, that demonstrate that despite the fact that African American men comprised only 5% of the general population, they were more than twice as likely as white men to be divorced. With regard to economics, 41% percent of African American men were not in the labor force, and 20% of these men versus 4.5% of white men in the labor force were unemployed. The life expectancy of African American men in 1989 was, on the average, seven years shorter than that of white men. Suicide for African American men increased from 8/100,000 in 1970 to 12/100,000 in 1988. These statistics continue to be bleak in that while white men commit suicide at higher rates after age 65, African American men 25-34 years of age committed suicide at a rate more frequent than any other African American group by age or sex. 137 out of 100,000 black males experienced death from accidents or violence in 1988, as compared to 83/100,000 for white men. 58 out of 100,000 African American men were murdered in 1988, as compared to 8/100,000 white men. In 1988, black men accounted for 47% of all persons incarcerated in state prisons and 41% of inmates in city, county, and local jails (27).

African American men in America battle to gain respect on a daily basis (Patton, 1995). hooks contends that the African American man's self and public respect was stripped away

during slavery. She utilizes narratives of Henry "Box" Brown, Josiah Henson, and Frederick Douglass that exposes the mentality of African American men that freedom was the way in which they could fulfill their responsibilities to their family (3). The manifestation of freedom in the life of African American men has been socially defined as a troubled process of power attainment, social acceptance, and respect. Clyde Franklin's (1994) essay, "Men's Studies, the Men's Movement, and the Study of Black Masculinities," in the book, *The American Black Male*, establishes a framework for the socialization of the African American male.

Many Black males in America experience what may be called a lethal socialization triangle. The triangle consists of: (1) a type of primary group socialization providing mixed messages regarding the meaning of Black masculinity; (2) a peer group socialization source that teaches innovative Black masculine traits; and (3) a mainstream societal socialization source that sends Black men mixed messages regarding competitiveness, aggressiveness, passivity, inferiority, and invisibility.

Franklin deduced that this structure produces an ultimate effect of "devastation" for the African American man. The process of socialization through these groups transfers a African American male's desire to associate the ability to achieve the primary groups' experiences of "freedom, democracy, individualism, equality of opportunity, competitiveness, the work ethic, practicality, and humanitarianism," to the peer group experiences that have altered their desire to achieve these things as individuals which changes because of their own experiences, and finally demolishes their self development by mainstream society's total neglect by its demonstration that it "wants nothing to do with them (13)". The connection between hooks assertion of slavery's role in black masculinity development and Franklin's proclamation of the socialization process instituted for the management of the African American man produces an end result of a critical social existence in American society for African American men.

So, what happens to the African American male who is aware of mainstream society's rejection? hooks (2004) references Margaret Wilkerson's critique of Lorraine Hansberry's depiction of African American males, particularly Walter Lee in *Raisin in the Sun*. To hooks,

Wilkerson asserted “a popular notion of manhood that says the possession of money and the things it can buy will make him a man in the eyes of his family and society” (16). Richard Majors (1998) argues that “Cool Pose is a term that represents a variety of attitudes and actions that serve the African American man as mechanism for survival, defense, and social competence” (785). Cool pose, adopted by many scholars on black masculinity (Franklin, 1994; White and Cones, 1999; Cuyjet, 2006; Hawkins, 2001; Bonner and Bailey, 2006; Langley, 1994, Coakley, 2004) maintain Majors’ ideology that this method of maintaining control in a culture that has provided a narrow piece of progressive avenues for black men is the most constant in their ability to cope with institutional establishments. The internal idealization of what is “cool” has palpable implications on the methods black men use in their interactions with their peers, families, employers, teachers, and any other person they encounter. In an attempt to promote the condition of the African American man in society, the fight to validate his manhood become the focal point of how “cool” is manifested to obtain respect and power (Majors, 1998). Cool pose then translates to money and power. hooks maintains these principles as she addresses how “cool” becomes visible in a African American man’s pursuit to fulfill the “patriarchal masculinity” as established by mainstream society. hooks further emphasizes this point. “Patriarchal socialization”, according to hooks, says “you are responsible if you get a job, bring your wages home, and provide for your family’s material well-being” (85). White and Cones (1999) articulate this method through which African American men’s “personality or social traits are adopted in three clusters: the traditional Euro-American, those related to the African-American heritage, and those from the renegade street culture” (132).

As discussed, the African American man has a personal obligation to attempt to maneuver through society to the best of his ability. Facing the challenges of racism, isolation,

and alienation, the psychological impact has a huge impression on their capacity to develop their self identity, cope with racism, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and receive environmental resources that are essential to their development. White and Cones (1999) devotes Part 5 of their book to addressing the “Major Influences on African American Masculine Development”. The family, peer groups, and neighborhoods are the three areas of influence that are argued to play a major role in “discovering adaptive possibilities” for African American male’s advancement. Franklin (1994) utilizing similar classifications as he dissects how these influential groups materialize. The “primary group” (family) teaches the black man the “ideal rather than the real” as it promotes “such beliefs as freedom, democracy, individualism, equality of opportunity, competitiveness, the work ethic, practicality, and humanitarianism” (11). Peer groups provide a space for the young African American males to connect with those who are “undergoing the same conflicts, apprehensions, pleasures, and preparation for adulthood” (12). Finally, the complete rejection of African American men in mainstream society as a group essentially creates a socialized setting that mistreats, misunderstands, and neglects them to the point that society is not equipped to influence the “hegemonic definition of masculinity” for African American men in America (14). The reality of the role that each of these groups play in the developmental process is that they all lack the ability to dictate positive life circumstances for the black male. The overarching power that the psychological control of the breakdown in the black family, the characteristics maintained from peers perceptions of masculinity, and mainstreams society depiction of them in the media, African American men internalize the stereotypes established by each group and therefore create access barriers (18).

Historically, scholars argue that sports have been viewed as the “racial equalizer” in a society that vehemently opposed race amalgamation (Dooner, 2005; Hartman, 2000; Lapchick,

1996; Edwards, 1973; Coakley, 2004; Althouse and Brooks, 2000; Hawkins, 2001; Harris, 1997). Jackie Robinson, Jesse Owens, Paul Roberson, Muhammad Ali, and Bill Russell increased access as their athletic prominence established sports as a viable vehicle for a African American man to gain respect in American society. This discernible manipulation of mainstream society then creates a contradiction within the identity development process of African American student athletes. Sports have thus become the avenue through which to exploit masculine roles in society through the power demonstrations that are made available because of sports participation. Consequently, the contradiction between the socialization triangle; family, peers, and mainstream society, that the African American male athlete is conditioned to adhere to produces a mass of people gravitating to the idea of power and respect and not the reality. Donner (2005) argues that "Black males participating in sports are more likely to possess aspirations for pursuing sports professionally than their white counterparts because they believe they will be treated fairly. As a result, African American males will generally interpret their involvement in intercollegiate (and interscholastic) sports as a conduit for achieving their career aspirations" (48).

Dyson (2004) contends that "black men with the exception of black athletes and entertainers are out of style" (139). The most persistent idea surrounding the African American athlete and masculinity is the social acceptance that appears to be associated with sport participation. White and Cones (1999) discuss the idealism of affirmation that an African American athlete gains from institutions, groups, and individuals that materializes into viewing "himself as powerful, strong, competent, and worthwhile" (145). Billy Hawkins (1998) reports in his article "The Dominant Images of Black Men in American" that "71% of cover pages for *Time* magazine and 75% for *Newsweek* were represented by African American athletes,



entertainers, criminals, and suspects” (50). So, while the majority of African American males in society are experiencing the challenges of being an eradicated being, the African American athlete is considering their participation in sports as a means of social acceptance in every aspect of mainstream society. Harris (1998) argues that this notion has a tremendous impact on the black community because sports became the most viable opportunity for “social mobility”. Majors (1998) institutes cool pose as it relates directly to the African American male athlete and interprets the access gained by sports participation mentally “tips the socially imbalanced scales in his favor and sends the subliminal message: See me, touch, me, hear me, but, white man, you can’t copy me! The expressive lifestyle invigorates the demeaning life of black men in white America” (18). As the African American athlete takes on this persona and acceptance, Hawkins (2001) emphasizes that they then take on a “dual personality” of being intellectually inferior and athletically superior. This dual personality manifests itself because African American men takes on the athletically superior persona controlled as instituted by mainstream society which first and foremost does not respect him as a black man but an athlete.

Research must begin to expose the realities of how the dual personality will ultimately affect career and educational aspirations long term. Determining the most prominent factors that ultimately result in why and how a black male athlete processes the difference between what he is taught versus the systematic spectacle society imposes upon his daily existence, will then allow families, academic institutions, and athletic programs the ability to implement programs and services that rejects the notion that athletic ability means money, power, and respect. Current research has begun to recognize the value of revealing the athlete’s voice in this discussion, where before scholars were primarily focusing on statistical data connected to graduation rates (Sellers, 2000; Harris, 2000; Sailes, 1997). This research hopes to reveal the

value added in redirecting research studies to formulate the athletes' voice and subsequently tackle the relationship that black masculinity, identity development, and sports participation has on influencing their career and educational aspirations. The value of utilizing the athletes' voice in this research allows us to learn why African American athletes make the career and educational decisions that they make and who or what influences them to make those decisions.

### ***African American Males in College***

The 2000 US Census reported that there were 603,032 African American men in college. This number is dismal considering that there were 16,465,185 total African American men in the country of which 761,600 were in prison. The statistics become increasingly disturbing when you factor in the comparison of male to female ratios. According to the 2005 *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*, after breaking down that 43% of college students were men and 56% were women, the racial analysis created a sad reality that only 35.8% of African American college students were men and 64.2% were women (Cuyjet, 2006). The empirical data is an explicit indicator that issues facing African American males in society are seriously affecting their attendance and retention in college. These indicators are particularly troubling because ultimately it will perpetuate how whites view African American males in society by their lack of presence on college campuses (Cuyjet, 2006). The focus of this research is to provide insight but not focus on the African American males who do not attend college instead concentrate on the concern for those who are attending college.

The most pressing dilemma on the subject of African American men in college is their inability to assimilate to the academic climate. White and Cones (1999) found that "from the middle of elementary school and continuing into high school, African American males lead all other groups in suspensions, expulsions, behavioral problems, and referrals to special classes for

slow learners” (257). White and Cones (1999) also indicated that 50% of African American males’ dropout of high school (259). As African American males’ interaction with academic institutions has established a “disidentification” on the elementary and high school level, the probability of it developing on the college level is low. Although most students have issues with transitioning from high school to college, African American males especially face the stereotypical notion that they are not academically capable or prepared to meet the rigors of a college curriculum (Bonner and Bailey, 2006, Cuyjet, 1997). Research shows that African American males on college campuses, in addition to academic “disidentification,” also experience high levels of isolation, alienation, and hostility (Love, 1993; Allen, 1992; hooks, 2004; White and Cones, 1999; Edwards, 1973; Hawkins, 2001; Majors, 1994; Sailes, 1997). Arguably, harboring this amount of stress has a direct impact on academic achievement of African American men in college.

Bonner and Bailey (2006) in their article, “Enhancing the Academic Climate for African American College Men,” further the three influential factors connected to the socialization triangle previously discussed in the paper: family, peers, and mainstream society. In approaching the academic barriers that African American college students encounter these three factors have their own unique impact on their development. As the African American male in college is searching to develop their identity just as other students, their primary focus is to gain the necessary resources that will mature their masculinity to the next level. The peer group “meets the need for belonging, feedback, and new learning experiences” to facilitate their desire to be accepted among the entire college population (White and Cones, 1999; Bonner and Bailey, 2006). Whites and Cones concludes that the family “meets needs for safety, emotional security, affection, and guidance” and will ultimately serve as the support system they will desperately

need (28). The impact that mainstream society has on an African American males self-identification with academic success has been reported to have the greatest impact on their psychological capability to engage fully in their educational experiences and accept the advantages that can be gained from that interaction. hooks (2004) revisits this idea as she references media images and books that reinforce the idea that education is not where African American males should focus their energies or they will be “ridiculed” (40). The images that young African American men carry from childhood to manhood remain constant and therefore continue to encourage them to abide with the idea that the body is stronger than the mind. On the college level, this translates into an unwillingness to engage socially or academically to the pressures of the intellectual atmosphere that interrogates their ability at every encounter (Brown, 2000).

### ***African American Male Student Athletes***

Sports participation as a major avenue in which to provide educational and career opportunities for African-American males who may otherwise not possess the academic achievement level to obtain admission into college is a highly contested area of research (Sailes, 1997; Edwards, 1973; Hawkins, 2001; Messner, 2006; Harris, 1997; Harrison, 1997; Lapchick, 1996; Coakley, 2004). Gary Sailes (1997) in his article, “Betting Against the Odds,” establishes a statistical foundation for the increasing concern with African American male college students’ participation in sports. One of the most interesting facts about African American male enrollment in American colleges and universities is that 1 in every 9 African American men in college are athletes. This means that 67,004 out of the 603,032 African American males in college are athletes. The number of African American male athletes who participate in sports is not as important as data which indicates the dismal rate this segment of society is matriculating

through colleges and universities. Majors (1998) reported that 65-75% of African American athletes who obtain a scholarship will not graduate and of those that do 75% will obtain a degree in physical education. One of the biggest misconceptions is that African American male athletes are overrepresented in sports, but the reality is that they are overrepresented in revenue producing sports and low academic achievement. Sailes (1998) illustrate this condition by providing statistical data demonstrates African American males represent 67% of basketball and 44% of football on the Division I level. These numbers are problematic, as they only graduate 42% of these athletes from colleges and universities across the country.

There is a general consensus in sports studies that African American male athletes are “recruited mainly to play sports” and not to get an education (Hawkins, 2001; Edwards, 2000; Harris, 1997; Majors, 1990; and Sailes, 1997). Continuing to reiterate the statistics related to African American male athlete on college campus is not necessary here as these scholars and many more have made it painfully obvious that they are overrepresented and underachieving. The important aspects of this discussion are not statistical data, but the connection of black masculinity, identity development, and sports participation. Current sports studies suggest a solid correlation that links African American athlete’s socialization to athletic institutions. Hawkins (2001) asserts in his book, *The New Plantation*, that the African American male athlete must be consciously aware that the institution attends may not have his best interest at heart:

These institutions, more specifically the athletic departments, are not solely responsible for the academic success or failure of Black student-athletes...However, with the resources they have available, they have not wholeheartedly worked to improve these results either...Increased commercialization has created hidden agendas that often cause these athletic departments/institutions to neglect the minds of Black students, while exploiting their athletic talents...Because winning equates to economic gains and increased job security for head coaches and other members of their coaching staffs, a premium is placed on enhancing the athletic abilities of Black student-athletes in sacrifice of their academics (2).

This argument is not new to this discourse as this fact has been examined qualitatively and quantitatively. C. Richard King and Charles Springwood (2001) in their book, *Beyond the*

*Cheers*, examines this issue of race as they address the “rationalization” for why white student athletes make different choices about education and professional play than African American athletes. They evaluate this by commenting on the media exposure from Paton Manning’s decision to remain in school.

Manning was hailed as an exemplary student athlete, balancing scholastic and sports to become a more complete citizen. Often latent, these comments were assessments of the characters and choices of those who had turned pro prematurely – immature, materialistic, disinterested in education, lacking discipline, and taking the easy way out – or there were rationalizations of their decisions – the athlete feels responsible for his family in the projects, so this is a way for him to give something back. Neither media commentators nor fans evaluated Manning so cynically. The authors do not recall hearing, “He is doing it to win the Heisman,” or “He wants to win the national championship.” (p.120)

They contend that the reality of the sports industry is that the media plays a large role in the lack of information provided to mainstream society, as it paints a more positive picture of white athletes and a more negative picture of African American athletes. They bring out in their book incidents in sports history that fails to examine the racial implications on the African American athlete, such as the regulations against “the dunk” and “end zone celebration”, descriptions of the “Fab Five black style of play,” and an image of Bobby Knight and Calbert Cheaney. The reality of the sports industry is that they are missing a major factor in reform and that is how to address the “blackness” and “whiteness” of the athletes experience as depicted in media and how that can affect the choices they make during their career (King and Springwood, 2001).

Coakley (2004) devotes an entire chapter to the discussion of *Race and Ethnicity* in sports, where he articulates “a sociological hypothesis for the explanation of the achievements of African American male athletes” (243). This theory ultimately exposes the “social and cultural” effects on the African American athlete’s choices that affect their career and educational aspirations. His sociological hypothesis claims that a “long history” of emphasized African American male physicality, racial segregation, discrimination, and existence of opportunities through sports leads to black males’ belief that participation in sports is their “biological and

cultural destiny". He then continues to position this notion as a manifestation for African American male athletes to take "every opportunity to fulfill their destiny as athletes, in those with certain characteristics, to be outstanding athletes in certain sports" (p.293). Coakley establishes this connection to the African American athletes' mentality toward athletes who have "made it" and therefore attempt to mimic their life after the "accomplished athletes" who has achieved stardom. As discussed previously in this paper, this method poses a problematic scenario because despite the African American athletes knowledge of mainstream societies rejection of their presence, their judgment becomes then focused on that which is visible and not the realistic outcome. Charles Barkley says...

Sports are a detriment to blacks...not a positive. You have a society now where every black kid in the country thinks the only way he can be successful is through athletics. People look at athletes and entertainers as the sum total of black America. That is a terrible, terrible thing, because that ain't even one-tenth of what we are. (Coakley, 2004; in McCallum, 2002, p.34)

This perception of the desires of the African American athlete is not limited to those who participate in the sport, but also those who view the purpose for which African American athletes occupy in academic settings. Coakley contends that there is "more research needed on this issue" where there is further investigation of the impact of society's "racial ideology" and the African American athletes ability to "expand their social identities beyond sports." (Harrison, 1998; Adler and Adler, 1991; Coakley, 2004). Again, this research intends to address this issue in first determining where the focal point for influential factors for African American male athlete's career and educational aspirations lie and how to transform that to programmatic solutions that will establish a more productive model for their academic and career development.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### ***Cross' Theory of Nigrescence – Identity Development***

C. Keith Harrison and Louis Harrison Jr. (2003) in their article, "African American Racial Identity: Theory and Application to Education, Race, and Sport in America," draws upon the theory of nigrescence model as presented by W.E. Cross (1995). It establishes the period in which African American people transform their identity from "whiteness to blackness" based on a racially charged experience that sparks this realization. Harrison et al. argues that this identity development has a different impact on the African American athlete due to institutional circumstances which may prevent the incident from occurring at the rate in which it may materialize in the average African American. The nigrescence theory says that African Americans go through five stages of development in establishing their identity; pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment (37). Harrison et al. demonstrates how nigrescence is a credible model in understanding why African American youth chose to focus their attention on sports and not other academically-based professions. The article illustrates that the stereotypes that are portrayed in the media plays a role in identity development and forces a young African American youth to conform to the lifestyle that seems to create the least amount of discrimination and an increase in acceptance in white society (39). Compartmentalizing the discourse, stereotypes, adolescent development, masculinity, and socioeconomic status is the model incorporated in this theory to situate race as a factor in social development for African American males. Inserting sport in this area is the most significant contribution to the model as it affirms the association with educational disparities that occur based on identity development (42).

This theory drawn from Cross' Theory of Nigrescence provides us with a sense of where



African American male athlete's value systems are placed juxtaposed with their identity development. In other words, who has the most influences and why do they have the most influence? If an athlete never makes it through the process they are supposed to identify where their blackness they will succumb to the racial ideologies of Eurocentric thinking which can have a negative effect on them when they attempt to assimilate into this society. Cross asserts that those persons demonstrating attitudes of the pre-encounter stage of nigrescence may be fully aware of the stereotypes of white society; however they reject them as a means to assimilate themselves into a space that allows them to achieve success. As a result, the African American athletes' ultimate desire to achieve the level of respect that he feels will help him to gain access into mainstream society. He will then focus on careers that are visibly acceptable for African Americans to achieve within white society and be emerged in environments that do not view him as intellectually capable. This, by default, results in low academic achievement. As C. Keith Harrison in his article, "There is more to Life Than Sports," in *Black Issues in Higher Education* (1997) argues, the African American athlete is "dreaming with his eyes closed and injecting himself with sports Novocain" (51). This idea is directly connected to the pre-encounter (miseducation) stage, as the African American athlete has "accepted as truthful, facts, images, and historical information about African American people that are, in fact, stereotypical and forms of cultural-historical misinformation (101).

bell hooks (2004) focuses her text around the understanding that African American boys are not predisposed to the condition they face in society, but are in fact socialized into these roles. As a young African American man is developing his identity, hooks argues that societal structures have been put in place that teaches them to "act as if they know nothing in a world where a smart African American man is punished" (33). Using Cross' model, the African

American male athlete has potentially created a destructive environment for himself that leads toward disconnecting to the positive attributes of black culture. For example, the role model image that African American male athletes typically encounter are those that connect more with Eurocentric ideals and reject the notion that pride in them and their race will afford him the respect and social acceptance that he seeks to gain. The more realistic picture that the black male athletes who is typically stuck in the “pre-encounter stage” of nigrescence is not born from the mother’s womb with a basketball or football in their hand, this is what he is taught that he is capable of accomplishing. Harrison (2000) support this claim that the “superior black athlete” pervasive in American society perpetuates the development of the African American athlete in sport because society says it validates him and rejects his blackness. This causes the African American athlete to often times be stuck in the pre-encounter stage as they may never experience the incident that reforms his identity.

The most significant question in this research is what does identity development have to do with the career and educational aspirations of the African American athlete? For the African American male athlete, Cross’ Theory of Nigrescence is particularly appropriate because in order to examine the factors that affect their career and educational aspirations a clear understanding of how black masculinity and identity development plays an integral role must be established. This understanding will assist in explaining why many may chose a pathway that does not serve their best interests.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is not to exclude Black male confidence and expression by channeling them away from sport; the challenge is how we can socialize this ethnic gender to invest in education with the same enthusiasm, work ethic and creative/artistic expression that they do on the playing fields and gyms (Harrison, 2000)

The research previously discussed in this paper indicates that the media, socialization process, and perceptions of sports participation are determinants that directly affect young African American male's desire to play sports. This is not the problem. The problem is that we have not effectively examined the influence media has had on the career and educational aspirations of African American male athletes and thereafter produced potential remedies to assist these young men. Such remedies could foster a mentality of academics over athletics which should eventually create an outcome of higher graduation rates for African American male student athletes. Although this study does not answer this question, acknowledging media influences on this area is important to encourage more investigation in this particular area. Harrison and Harrison (2003) confirm this fact in their article, "African American Racial Identity":

More investigation is needed into the perceptions of young Black male youth and how the image of professional athletes and entertainers (that look like them: Black) accessing mainstream economic structures with non-status quo (suit and tie versus hip hop) attire and behaviors – correlate, influence and affect their daily investment in rigorous learning and scholarship for delayed gratification in occupational and vocational positions. (43)

In an interview with *Colorlines* by David Leonard (2000), Harry Edwards, known for his rejection of the idea that sports should be viewed as a means of social mobility for black youth, concedes that "sports may be our last hook and handle"(440). He argues in this interview that the "golden era of black athletes;" which he marks when Jackie Robinson entered baseball and blacks were dominating basketball, track and field, football, and boxing, is coming to its end due to the "disqualifying, jailing, burying, and leaving behind" black men as a whole in American society today (438). He equates this reality with the possibility that we will see a tremendous decline in sports participation for African American male athletes, simply because of societal conditions that are putting them in spaces that are detrimental to their survival.

Othello Harris (1997) conducted a study to determine "African American and Caucasian high school basketball players' perceptions of sports as an avenue of social mobility" (243). The

results of this study supports Edwards claim that all athletes, white and black, believe that sports is the “best means to attaining social mobility for African Americans” (256). Harris concludes by affirming the idea that American society views sports as a means of social mobility for young black males, and raises a series of questions that remain unanswered in sport research.

This study indicates sport is viewed by some as a “passport to the good life” (Edwards, 1979) for African American males. It does not examine whether sport enhances or impedes social mobility for African American youth. Perhaps future research will examine: the extent to which it contributes to academic future occupational achievement (it certainly provides needed scholarship); whether it is a misguided priority among African American youth; and whether the emphasis on sport leaves African American student-athletes without skills needed for success. (258)

Based on this statement, it is the goal of this research to address these questions. Since 1997, there has been several studies conducted that address the issue of African American athletes and academic achievement (Alhouse and Brooks, 2000; Majors 1998; Sailes, 1998; Sellers and Chavous, 2003; and Cohn, 2004). There have also been studies that address career decisions for African American athletes (Gragg, 2004; Harrison and Lawrence, 2003; Parducci, 2003). I argue that they are not mutually exclusive but that the factors that influence their career aspirations are the same that affect their career decisions. The difference between aspiration and decisions for black athletes is a critical distinction as my research will hope to reveal that the black athlete may want to accomplish something that totally contradicts what actually happens. For example, despite an athletes’ aspiration to obtain a college degree the opportunity may present itself for him to enter the professional league before accomplishing this academic aspiration. By determining which factors are most influential in African American male student athlete’s career and educational aspirations, we can assert their ability to utilize this vehicle to further their “academic future” and “occupational achievement”. In asserting factors that are institutionally based (NCAA regulations, money, fame, family expectations, role models, access) versus individual priorities (respect, legitimacy, leadership opportunity, dignity), we can determine which are most influential in their career and educational pursuits.

### *Purpose of Study*

The literature on this topic is moving toward understanding the significance of the African American athletes' voice in methodological and epistemological studies (Harrison and Lawrence, 2003; Singer, 2002; Arnold, 2003; Willis, 2000). Over the past decade, the literature has emerged to continue to be critical of the institution of sport, most associated with the controversy surrounding eligibility and conduct regulations (Sailes, 1994; Andrews, 1997; hooks, 1995; Knight Commission, 2001; Lomax, 2000). This study is needed to infuse black masculinity, identity development, and sports participation the African American male athlete has manifested into his everyday life in aspiring to be a productive member of society. Graduation statistics validate the claim that the institution is failing the African American male athlete (Siegel, 1994; Harrison, 2000; Hall, 2002; Person and LeNoir, 1997; Taylor, 1999). Lapchick (1996) and Edwards (2000) most noted for scrutinizing administrators of colleges and universities, the NCAA, and professional sports association, remain firm that society must continue to focus attention toward the athlete. There is no research available that investigates the African American athletes' educational and career aspirations conjunctively. Current research also fails to address the question that provides insight into how the African American athlete's career and educational aspirations translate into what they actually accomplish academically and professionally. This study hopes to move research closer to answering the question of what aspect of the African American male athlete's socialization process creates a desire to attend or not attend, graduate or not graduate, leave or not leave college.

Sellers and Chavous (2003), Gragg (2004), and Donnor (2005) established the groundwork for understanding the motivating factors toward academic performance. As it relates to academic performance, stereotypes harbored by college professors, quality of

educational experiences, effective academic support programs, and family were common themes identified by these researchers regarding motivating factors. Harrison and Lawrence (2003), Parducci (2003), and Sailes (1997) found fundamental influences that manifest in the athletes' career transition which include family values, athletic identity, and their ability to identify with life after sports. Fundamentally, this research argues that there are several influential factors (ie, NCAA regulations, money, fame, family expectations, role models, access, respect, legitimacy, leadership opportunity, dignity) for the black male athlete as he maneuvers his way toward the ultimate goal of playing at the next level. The results of this research should conceivably provide a framework for developing programs that will positively affect the factors that have the highest level of impact on African American male athlete's career and educational aspirations.

Specifically focusing this study on the African American male athletes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was one of simple convenience in its initial conception. However, it proved to be an appropriate decision as this study was conducted at a juncture that would provide considerable advantage to the research subject. With the largest part of my sample (74%) coming from the football and basketball programs, not surprisingly, their national standing should provided me with insightful outcomes in relationship to their educational and career aspirations.

### ***Research Questions***

In attempting to tackle the essence of this research problem, these questions function to direct my inquiry:

1. What is the current status of the educational and career trends of African American male student-athletes who attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign?

2. What factors are the most influential in determining educational and career aspirations for African American male student-athletes who attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign?
3. What position do African American male student-athletes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign hold with regard to the athletic administration accountability for toward the is development and educational and career aspirations?

### *Significance of Study*

Scholars' preoccupation with the academic achievement level of African American male athletes has left open a wide space for continued exploration of the African American athlete's identity development and avenues for social mobility. This information that is gained from this research will assist parents, coaches, educators, and administrators in creating a more effective model to cultivate a strong sense of academic and career development. As discuss previously, hooks (2004), White and Cones (1999), Edwards (1983), Harris (1998), and Sailes (1998) make strong claims that African American males are being strongly influenced by the most negative images in society. This study hopes to prove that internal motivations deserve equal consideration as external motivations in creating programs and services for African American male student athletes.

Research of the past and present fails to ask the black athlete directly, how effective are academic support programs in enhancing their educational experience, how knowledgeable they are of the existence of these programs, what factors are most influential in their career and educational aspirations collectively, why did they attend college before going to the professional league, why would they prefer to go straight to the professional league, and why are they planning to complete their college degree before going to the professional league. Harrison and

Lawrence (2003) focused their study on visual elicitation to ascertain how the athlete responds to the success of another athlete, as a vehicle for self-reflection and motivation. Although this study provides insight into how the athlete feels about another athlete, in my opinion, it does not directly address the questions necessary to determine factors related to their own life goals and accomplishments. Parducci (2003) focused his exploratory study specifically on family influences, and Gragg (2004) studied former student athletes and people who work closely with student athletes.

## **PROBLEMS WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF ATHLETICS**

### ***Eligibility Regulations***

#### Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse

The Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse was established after public opinion began to criticize the NCAA after discovering that there were athletes who could not read or write after graduating from college. Even today there are coaches across the United States that have not graduated an African American male athlete from their program. NCAA News report (1999) indicated that research done in 1991 verified that although graduation rates were 42.1 percent for men's basketball and football players, it was only 26.6 percent of black players compared to 52.3 percent of white players. One of the major concerns that had been discovered during these studies is that although football players and black athletes in other sports are graduating at a higher percentage than their non-athlete counterparts, the graduation rate of basketball players is still dangerously low (Lumas, 1997; Sellers and Chavous, 2003).

The Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse (IEC) is very important to the NCAA, higher education, and student-athletes because of the claim that, "student athletes get into school with poorer academic backgrounds than the average non-athlete student and this has a measurable impact on their grades" (Maloney & McCormick, 1993, p.563). The academic standards set



initially by Proposition 48 has transformed into Proposition 42 and now Proposition 16, where student-athletes are required to have minimum grades and test scores to be eligible to participate in intercollegiate athletics. In order for a student athlete to be eligible for an athletic scholarship they must submit an application to the NCAA's Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse. As identified by the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (1998):

In 1996 there were 108,664 student athletes who submitted applications. Slightly more than 42,000 of these students were listed by one of the Division I schools as student they were considering for athletic scholarships. Fourteen percent of these potential student athletes were black. Next, the NCAA determines if these perspective student athletes meet the academic eligibility requirements set forth by member institutions. Those that do meet the academic requirements are then eligible to receive full athletic scholarships. In 1995, 16.3 percent of all black applicants were denied eligibility for athletic scholarships. In 1996, under the new academic standards, 26.9 percent of all black applicants were denied eligibility" (10).

Richard Lapchick (1996) argues in his article, "Academic Standards for Athletes: A Debate in Black and White," that the most effective way to influence higher academic achievement is by placing higher academic standards on athletes at the high school level. Lapchick credits NCAA academic regulations with holding high schools and athletes to higher standards in order to gain access to college sports participation. In his article, "Two Ways to Go: Only One is a Winner," Lapchick (1996) presents two stories of black male athletes who participated in sports. One of the athletes was allowed to progress through school not being held accountable for his academic performance and the other athlete was coached academically and not athletically to achieve academically where he could have otherwise been left behind. Lapchick argues that the most significant impact eligibility regulations had on graduation rates was the exposure that it provided to parents, coaches, educators, and institutions which began to hold them accountable for the role they play in black student athlete's academic success.

The controversy surrounding academic standards and sports participation for black male athletes is a debate between the ideals of opportunity versus exploitation (Lapchick, 1996;

Coakley, 2004; Althouse and Brooks, 2000). The case surrounding academic achievement and the black male athlete is connected to NCAA policies, academic regulations, and actions taken.

#### Proposition 48

Proposition 48 was the first NCAA initiative to address the low academic achievement of college athletes. Established in 1986, Proposition 48 raised eligibility standards for entering freshman that would qualify them to participate in their particular sport during their freshman year of college. The proposal mandated that a high school athlete entering college must have a 2.0 grade point average in 11 core courses and a minimum standardized test score of at least a 700 on the SAT or a 15 on the ACT upon graduation. The eleven courses required for eligibility included three courses in English, two in mathematics, two in the social sciences, and two in the natural or physical sciences with at least one laboratory class (Brown, 2002; Clark and Alford, 1986). Proposition 48 also provided the partial qualifier provision. The partial qualifier, according to the NCAA regulation, allows a student-athlete to maintain their athletic scholarship during their first year, by meeting the grade point average requirement of at least a 2.0 (Cross & Koball, 1991). Although an athlete would not be able to participate in practices or in games, they would still be provided with financial assistance to fund their education. Raising the standards for first-year eligibility appeared to be a progressive move toward encouraging athletes to place more emphasis on their education. Lapchick (1996) although initially opposing Proposition 48 became a proponent of the rule after research conducted by the NCAA indicated that only 16% of black athletes were ineligible. Ultimately, he found that athletes, in general, were meeting the requirements set by the NCAA (152).

Sailes (1998) discusses in his article, "The Case Against NCAA Proposition 48" that the main objection to the rule and ultimate determinate of who the rule will impact the most was

based on the inclusion of standardized test scores. The objection to the use of standardized test scores was based on the fact that African American students typically score low on these tests that have been termed "culturally biased" and also affected how historically black colleges and universities would be able to recruit and admit students. Many critics of Prop 48 agree with David Meggysey (2000) when he stated, "not only did it [Prop 48] negatively impact black athletes as a group; it potentially eliminated superior black athletes who were coveted by the top athletic programs" (p.27). Meggysey's (2000) thesis was the basis of a lawsuit (*Cureton v. NCAA*) that challenged Proposition 48. To give Meggysey (2000) some credit, but to also show that his statement could possibly be a gross exaggeration the following information is provided by the NCAA Research Report 96-01 (1997):

The enrollment trends for student-athletes are notable for the decrease in the proportion of African-American student-athletes in 1986 compared to 1983, 1984, and 1985. The proportion remained lower in 1987 and 1988, but increased in 1989; though not to pre-Proposition 48 levels. The actual number of African-American student-athletes was 3,589 in 1983, then dropped to 3,041 in 1986, before settling at 3,491 by 1989 (p.6).

The NCAA agrees that Prop 48 affected the number of African-American student-athletes participating in intercollegiate athletics. However, NCAA claims the number of African-American student-athletes leveled out in 1989. At the same time, the NCAA Research Report 96-01 also notes, "specifically, previous studies indicated that imposing stricter standards would lead to increased graduation rates, but also would bring about negative impacts on minorities"(6). In the end, data provides evident that raising the academic standards through Prop 48 has negatively affected the number of African-American student-athletes participating in collegiate athletics, but it has also increased the number of African-American student-athlete graduation rates when compared to the regular African-American student body. As stated previously, "African-American male student-athletes graduate at a five to 10 percent higher rate

than similar demographic groups in the general student body” (NCAA Research Report 96-01, 1997, p.7). Therefore, it can be said that Prop 48 helped African Americans that were able to pass through the IEC and get admitted to a college or university.

At the initial onset of Proposition 48, the academic and African American community questioned the motives and effectiveness of a new academic eligibility standard that seemed to be targeting African American athletes. The Spring 1998 issue of *Black Issues in Higher Education*, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and the Black Coaches Association declared that the use of standardized test scores was an unfair method in determining eligibility (83). The major complaint issued from these institutions was that African American students historically have not done well on standardized tests (137). Based on this knowledge of black student’s performance on the ACT and SAT, the initial eligibility requirements were thus claimed to be targeting African American athletes. Clark and Alford (1986) conducted a study with Historically Black Colleges and Universities presidents and chancellors. Clark’s article, “NCAA Rule 48: Racism or Reform?” reported that 80% of the respondents were not in favor of the rule change because they did not believe that the NCAA had a valid explanation for why they chose the SAT/700 and ACT/15 scores, there was no “black” representation to assist the NCAA in creating the rule, and the rule blames the victim not the public school systems lack of preparation for black athletes (164).

#### Proposition 42

Three years following Proposition 48, the NCAA then added Proposition 42, which removed the partial qualifier provision from Proposition 48. Although public opinion agreed that there was a need for academic reform, the visibility of the affects of this proposal increased dramatically. In 1989, as the NCAA felt they were making progress in encouraging higher

standards for college athletes, the partial qualifier provision was viewed as a “loophole” to Proposition 48. As a result, Proposition 42 was created because the committee felt that the ability to get by the eligibility regulations defeated the purpose of the previous proposition (Cross and Koball, 1991). Proposition 42 restricted non-qualifiers and partial qualifiers from receiving athlete-based scholarship during their first year of college. This proposition was amended in 1990, only one year later, to re-insert the partial qualifier provision for financial assistance to be awarded until a better agreement could be put into place.

The major problem determined by opposition to Prop 42 was the denial of financial assistance to student athletes if they did not meet the requirements. Coupled with the argument that the IEC regulations disparately affected African American student athletes with the use of standardized test scores, NCAA academic reform immediately became “a black issue”. John Thompson, Georgetown University basketball coach, actively protested the proposition by staging walk outs at two basketball games. The “partial qualifier” provision for sport eligibility was argued to allow those athletes who may not meet the academic standards the opportunity to prove that they can meet the standards if given the opportunity. In a study done by Lawrence Cross and Elizabeth Koball (1991) examining the “Public Opinion of Proposal 42” it was determined that there was an “expressed agreement” that standardized tests were culturally biases and not appropriate to utilize in determining academic achievement on the college level (1991).

#### Proposition 16

Despite the efforts of the NCAA to address the concerns of African American athletes, coaches and academic institutions, Proposition 16 seemed to steer up the most controversy of them all. As an additional effort to increase graduation rates, Proposition 16 was passed in 1992,

which raised eligibility standards yet again, as well as introduced the “sliding scale” system (Sellers, 2000). The “sliding scale” requirements set by Proposal 16 allowed for the partial qualifier provision to be re-enacted, after being abolished in 1989 with the inception of Proposition 42. Based on the “sliding scale” as set by the NCAA, a student with a 2.0 grade point average must earn a 900 on the SAT; or a student with a 700 on the SAT must have a 2.5 grade point average (NCAA Handbook, 2001-2002). The goal behind Proposition 42 was to raise the standards in one area while allowing minimum requirements in another. The partial qualifier provision holds the expectation of higher standards in one area in order to make up for a minimum standard not being met in another area. The sanctions for non-qualifiers and partial qualifiers, under Proposal 16, restrict a non-qualifier or partial qualifier from receiving any athletic-based scholarship, but does allow for need-based financial aid for those athletes who qualify (Lumas, 1997). Under a sliding scale, as a student’s SAT/ACT score increased, the minimum GPA required in the core course was allowed to decrease; as the SAT/ACT score decreased, GPA was required to increase (NCAA Manual, 1996-97), please refer to Figure 1.1 for a visual interpretation of the scale.

### ***Graduation Rates***

#### Results of NCAA Academic Reform

The reform movement for academic integrity by the NCAA brought recognition to the low graduation rates of college athletes by implementing Proposition 48, 42, and 16. The impact of these proposals spearheaded a need to conduct a statistical analysis of the low graduation rates and effects of these propositions on college athletes’ academic achievement. In 1989, following the implementation of Proposition 48, the NCAA ordered a series of reports to be done by the American Institute for Research to study *The Experiences of Black Intercollegiate Athletes at NCAA Division I Institutions*. One of the important factors that are discussed in this research is

evidence that the percentage of African-Americans on athletic scholarship is far superior to the percentage of African Americans in the general student population. Studies show that African-American people only comprise of 12% of the United States population and only 4% of Division I institutions, however African-Americans are dominating athletic programs, comprising over 50% of the overall athlete population (Lumas, 1997; Seller and Chavous, 2003). Is this an indicator that African-American people are putting more emphasis on athletics than their academic success? Although these statistics provide a basis for the argument, it would be pertinent to examine the graduation rates of college athletes. The rates for all student athletes have risen considerably higher up to this point in 2003. Although a 60% graduation rate of student athletes in 2003 may seem acceptable compared to the 54% graduation rate of non-student athletes, a closer look at the different sports and a separation by ethnic background provided a more accurate picture (Althouse & Brooks, 2000).

Statistics show that African-American athletes graduate at a higher rate than their non-student athlete counterparts. The 2002 NCAA Graduation-Rate Report showed that "male student body" at Division I institutions was only 34%, while the graduation rates of "male student-athletes" was 43%. In Sport and Society (2004), Coakley breaks down these statistics from this same study to determine their accuracy and their comparability to male student body at colleges and universities. Statistics reported by the NCAA are arguably offset by the reality that student-athletes take much longer to graduate, have lower grade point averages, and have programs of study that are much less demanding. Coakley challenges these claims by contrasting the graduation rates in revenue sports versus non-revenue sports. Basketball's graduation rate is 43%; football's graduation rate is 52%; however 50% of non-revenue sports athletes graduate. In addition, he demonstrates that "college athletes with scholarship graduate at

the same rate and in the same length of time as other students do" (500). As Coakley is in agreement with the statistics that are presented by the NCAA he concludes the importance of segmentation of those statistics to establish a true picture of the population that colleges and universities are serving. Although African-American athletes, which includes male and females, are graduating at a 48% rate this statistic is problematic in truly representing graduation rates of this group in the spirit of difference in segmentation. African American female athletes graduate at a much higher rate than black male athletes and non-athletes and their inclusion raises the percentage rate (Brown, 2002). The 2002 NCAA Graduation-Rates Report states that African-American female athletes graduate at a rate of 60%, which again is higher than the African-American female student-body rate at 45%.

### *Case Study*

#### *Cureton v. NCAA*

On December 22, 1999, after data clearly illustrated Prop 48, 42 and 16 were having a negative effect on African-American student-athletes passing through the NCAA's initial-eligibility standards, two former African-American high school track star from Philadelphia, Tai Kwan Cureton and Leatrice Shaw sued the NCAA. The lawsuit was filed in 1997, and "charged that the association's requirements for freshman eligibility discriminated against black athletes, in violation of Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits race discrimination at institutions that receive federal funds" (Haworth, 1999). Cureton and Shaw both received higher than a 2.5 GPA (part of the Prop 16 requirements). Cureton had a 2.8 GPA and finished 27<sup>th</sup> in a class of 305, while Shaw had 3.5 GPA and graduated fifth in the same class (Haworth, 1999). These were two able-minded students, who were unable to pass the IEC's SAT/ACT requirement, and therefore under Prop 16 were ineligible for a Division I scholarship. The presiding Judge Buckwalter's "decision barred the association [NCAA] from using Prop 16, a



rule that determined freshman eligibility, in part, by scores on standardized tests" (Haworth, 1999). Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston (1992) agreed with Judge Buckwalter saying that SAT:

Scores should not be used in selecting or predicting the early success of student-athletes. Proposition 48 and 42 cannot be implemented fairly using SAT scores... The schools studied would be doing a great disservice to its student-athletes if the SAT were used to deny the right of any student-athlete to compete in the first year (p.725).

Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston (1992) claim through the results of their study, the best way to predict the success of student-athletes is to categorize student-athletes as nontraditional students, and apply Sternberg's (1986) work on intelligence. Through classifying student-athletes as nontraditional students admissions boards are able to use a non-cognitive variable instead of SAT (cognitive measures) to predict their success. A few descriptive items Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston (1992) use to show the similarities of student-athletes and nontraditional students include: student-athletes are a unique culture, they spend a great deal of time together, and they tend to be subjected to prejudice and discrimination (p.724). Sternberg's (1986) three types of intelligence are used to prove the different non-cognitive variables that can help to predict the success of student-athletes, nontraditional students, or traditional students. The argument by Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston (1992) illustrates the absolute necessity for alternative methods of predicting the success of student-athletes in the future, other than using SAT cutoffs like Prop 16.

Judge Buckwalter ordered for immediate removal of the SAT standard portion of Prop 16. The immediate impact of Buckwalter's decision could have caused major repercussions. If the decision was not appealed, there would have been major implications that could have had an extended affect on the NCAA, coaches, and student-athletes into the future. However, the NCAA was able to appeal Judge Buckwalter's decision and was granted a stay. The decision put high-school seniors and the coaches who are recruiting them in a difficult position. Athletes who

sign with a Division I institution, but have not met the standards of Proposition 16, could lose a scholarship if the court's decision was reversed...Although coaches could allow freshmen who had been ineligible under Proposition 16 to play in the tournament [NCAA basketball tournament], the teams may have to forfeit games won with those players if the court were to grant a stay of the decision. After the NCAA appealed Judge Buckwalter's ruling, and won a stay, it allowed the NCAA time to do further research. "On December 22, 1999, in a two-to-one decision, the US Third Circuit Court of Appeals reversed Judge Buckwalter's ruling on a technicality" (Meggyesy, 2000, p.27). The case reversed in favor of the NCAA, and Prop 16 was reinstated.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design (Factors)***

Robert Sellers and Tabbye Chavous (2003) in their article, "Motivation vs. Structure: Factors in Academic Performance of African American College Athletes," argues that the NCAA has placed a considerable amount of attention on reforming eligibility regulations as they believe that higher standards will motivate high school athletes to take academics more seriously (3). Drawing from the study conducted by the American Institute for Research (AIR), Sellers and Chavous argue that increasing academic standards is not the sole motivating factor for improving academic achievement among black male athletes as, 95% of the student athletes in football and basketball from the study had aspirations to play at the professional level and also had high aspirations to earn a college degree (1989). Again, as the goal of this research is to directly address the question of motivating factors toward academic and educational aspirations, this research will further Sellers and Chavous claim by including NCAA regulations as a factor in determining whether it is a factor but not the primary determinant in career and educational development of black male athletes. This research hopes to support the idea that focusing academic reform solely on academic regulations will result in continued disparities in addressing low graduation rates and career attainment for black male athletes (6).

C. Keith Harrison's (1998) article, "The Assassination of the Black Male Image in Sports," discusses one of the most prominent topics that negatively affect the African American athletes, the "dumb jock" classification. As discussed previously, the African American male athlete is in constant conflict with mainstream society as they do not acknowledge his needs as a black man, but will acknowledge his presence as an athlete. This research utilizes the themes brought out in Harrison's article to provide evidence that the factors that are most influential in a African American athletes' career aspirations are connected to that which will assist him in

combating the negative stereotypes established in the media about his existence in American society. The article suggests that historically sports participation has translated to fame, respect, and money.

There is a clear evolution of NCAA Eligibility Regulations to improve the academic success of student-athletes in their member institutions. The various reasons identified in this research as influencing college athletes' educational and career aspirations – NCAA regulations, fame, family expectations, money, leadership opportunity, role models, respect, legitimacy, access, and dignity – suggest two primary classifications: tangible and intangible. These various reasons cited fit within these categories, and may help explain more generally influences that determine their educational and career aspirations for African-American student athletes. The notion of tangible and intangible are also consistent with contributions from research conducted by Evans and Kerr (1994) that...

Future research into reasons why African-American youth continue to choose traditional careers might include the influence of African American role models, cultural and social expectations of family and community (i.e., paying dues or giving back to the community), or the lack of familiarity with alternative careers (p.182).

In another study of African-American student athlete' perceptions of career transition in sport, Harrison and Lawrence explains the 5 major themes that "emerged"; inspirational imagery validation, academic and athletic success, classroom accomplishments, family devotion, and life after sports, as significant tangible and intangible aspects that they could identify with their experiences and perceptions. The inspirational imagery validation was drawn from the positive responses that the athletes gave as they admired and respected the accomplishments of their fellow athlete and related his experiences with their own. The "recognition of the significance" of academic and athletic success was drawn from Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993), where it is observed that those athletes who are "committed" to their athletic success may allow cause

their other educational and career aspirations to be not as important. The life of a college athlete is becoming an important topic of discussion that has brought recognition to the fact that they must place a greater level of importance on their classroom accomplishments. Life after sports was the final theme that was brought out as student athletes expressed the essential part of their career that should include those making plans for after the athletic career has come to an end.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### ***Methods***

#### Survey Instrument

The review of literature suggested ten primary factors that influence black male athletes educational and career aspirations: NCAA regulations, fame, family expectations, money, leadership opportunity, role models, respect, legitimacy, and access. These factors although representative are not comprehensive of all the factors that might affect career and educational aspirations of black male athletes at UIUC. Additional factors were identified through question #73, which asks the athlete to state additional factors that were not mentioned in previous questions. Those factors were categorized and are demonstrated in Figure 2. There was no preliminary research conducted with student athletes to identify additional factors. It was determined that including an unmanageable amount of choices might cause the respondent to be overwhelmed with choices.

Previous research on academic achievement of African American male athletes has come primarily from experience related inquires and none that specially asked respondents to address factors. This survey is unique in that it asks student athletes directly. Consequently, items representing the ten factors (NCAA regulations, fame, family expectations, money, leadership opportunity, role models, respect, legitimacy, access, and dignity) were generated from the literature review. Ten questions were generated to assess the ten factors as it relates to a decision to attend college before going to the professional league, preferences to go to the professional league directly from high school, leaving school early, earning a degree before going to the professional league, playing in professional league after college, educational aspirations, and career aspirations. In addition to measuring the factors that influence UIUC African American male athletes' career and educational aspirations, five items were included to measure their

knowledge of academic services available to them on campus. Six items were also included to measure whether or not the athlete would leave college early to play professional sports, and the likelihood of earning a college degree. One open-ended question asks respondents to explain what role the university plays in a student-athletes academic success. Another open-ended question asks why or why should a student be concerned about going to the professional league prior to graduation. The final section asked for demographic information.

The survey instrument was developed as a first effort to measure the factors that influenced African American male athletes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign educational and career aspirations. In addition to collecting information on factors that are influential toward their career and educational aspirations, the project will also serve as a pilot test of the items in terms of their validity and reliability for measuring educational and career aspirations.

#### Population Sample

The sample used for this thesis study was African American male student athletes at the University of Illinois. Potential respondents were African American male athletes who participated in their sport during the 2004-2005 academic school years. A listing of African American male athletes was acquired from the University of Illinois Division of Intercollegiate Athletics (DIA) website, and confirmed by the U of I DIA academic services counselor from each sport. The athletes were first contacted by email to request their willingness to participation in the study. After receiving confirmation of their willingness, they were informed that they would be contacted again pending approval of the DIA. After receiving approval by the DIA, I arranged to meet the athletes during select a time that was most convenient for each team. The respondents were all contacted in person and were asked to complete the survey while the

researcher waited. Forty-four surveys were completed and usable for the analysis (66% of the black male athletes that participated on a sporting team the past academic year completed the survey). The athletes, who did not complete the survey, chose not to participate, did not respond to my request, and were not present at the time the researcher administered the survey.



## **RESULTS**

### ***Demographics***

A variety of sports were presented (see Table 1), with the majority of the respondents participating in football. Table 2 provides a summary of the demographic information on those completing the survey. All of the athletes were African American male, 17-22 years of age, underclassmen and upperclassmen (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior).

**Table 1      Sport Participation**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Total A.A. males in sport</b>
Football	25	38
Basketball	10	11
Baseball	0	1
Track & Field	7	11
Wrestling	2	4
Golf	0	0
Tennis	0	0

\*Those sports which indicate 0 respondents demonstrate that there are no African American males who participate in that particular sport. Baseball has 1 African American athlete on the team, and he opted to not take the survey.

**Table 2      Demographic Information**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
<b>Age</b>	
17	1
18	8
19	9
20	11
21	10
22	4
<b>Year in School</b>	
Freshman	12
Sophomore	11
Junior	13
Senior	7
<b>GPA</b>	
Below 1.0	2
2.0-2.5	19
2.6-3.0	15
3.07 - 3.20	6
<b>Family Income</b>	
Below 24,000	13
25,000-59,999	10
60,000 and higher	16
<b>Home Occupancy</b>	
1-2	11
3-4	20
5 or more	13
<b>Source of Income</b>	
Athletic Scholarship	41
Subsidized Loans	4
Unsubsidized Loans	3
Grants	9
Private Loans	3
Parents	9

### *Open-ended Questions*

A series of open-ended questions were included in the survey to find out additional factors that might contribute to student-athletes struggles with making educational and career decisions, what control the university has in student athlete's academic success, and whether or not student-athletes should even be considering a professional career prior to graduation. The answers to the open-ended questions were analyzed for content similarity and categories of responses were identified by the research. A summary of the reasons given for additional factors are listed in Table 3. 63% of the respondents indicated that they could not think of additional factors.

**Table 3      Additional Influential Factors**

- Society
- Being forced to be a student and athlete
- Lack of Sleep
- Stress
- Living up to standards
- Peer Pressure
- Pride
- Jealousy
- Self-Control
- Uncertainty

Beyond looking at additional factors that play a role in educational and career aspirations of African American male athletes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, participants were also asked how much control they felt that the university had on the academic success of student-athletes. Overall, the responses as indicated in Table 4 suggests that overwhelming it is in the control of the student athletes, however the university resources provided can have in impact on that decision. 100% of the respondents felt as though ultimately it is the player's choice. They felt that if an athlete utilizes the resources available they can be successful, if they chose to ignore them the will fail.

**Table 4 University Influence on Academic Success**

- Athletes value what coaches say
- Seriously setting guidelines
- Required a GPA
- Requiring study hall hours
- Providing students with academic resources
- If they use player time for school and not to focus on sports
- They can kick you out if athletes do not do well in school

Although there may be a general consensus that it is natural for a student to think about their future prior to graduation, athletes have an additional barrier in that they may have a choice to forgo their college education to advance their future. The final open ended question examined whether or not student athletes felt they should be concerned about their professional career prior to graduation. The responses proved that it is an inevitable occurrence, and provided specific reasons why they agree or disagree with this pressure imposed upon student-athletes (see Table 5).

**Table 5 Considering Professional Career Prior to Graduation**

**Agree**

- Yes, because that is the reason they go to college to go pro
- Yes, what will they do besides play football
- Yes, it is their future
- Yes, you don't want to miss your chance
- Yes, you can always go back
- Yes, if you can get paid now, GET PAID!

**Disagree**

- No, you should focus on your education
- No, if you are good enough there will be a spot when you graduate
- No, you should focus on the present
- No, education is long term, sports are short term

**Neutral**

- It is impossible for them not to think about it
- Going pro is always going to be on your mind if you have a good shot, but education is important
- No, but the athlete has to do what is best for them

### Scale Items

#### Influential Factors

Ten influential factors for African American male athletes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign education and career aspirations were measured using a 7-point likert scale: NCAA regulations, fame, family expectations, money, leadership opportunity, role models, respect, legitimacy, access, and dignity. Athletes were asked to express the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements on a 7-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree). The factor that is most influential to UIUC African American male athlete's education and career aspirations (based on mean score analysis) was respect (M=6.295). Table 6 provides a listing of the mean score for each factor.

**Table 6** Education and Career Aspiration Influential Factors

Motive	Mean
NCAA Regulations	5.363
Fame	3.909
Family	6.090
Money	5.931
Leadership	5.431
Role Models	5.318
Respect	6.295
Legitimacy	6.204
Access	5.750
Dignity	6.227

#### Education Aspirations

Ten items were included to find out which factor most influenced these athletes educational aspirations. Each question was tailored to represent an influential factor as determined in the literature. Those responding were asked if college rules insured their success (NCAA Regulations), how fame affects their education (Fame), if it represented their family values (Family), if it will help them be rich after professional career (Money), if education can

help them advance athletically (Leadership), if they want kids to understand the importance of education (Role Models), if athletes get respect without mental talent (Respect), if they want to be admired for academic success (Legitimacy), if it will help them to gain access after sports (Access), and if it will help them build self-respect (Dignity). Table 7 shows that those responding see their educational aspirations as important because they want to be admired for their academic success ( $M=7.340$ ), this indicates that their educational aspirations are important to them because it makes them feel more legitimate.

**Table 7** My education aspirations are important to me because...

Item	Mean
College rules are available to insure my success	4.954
Being famous does not last forever	5.818
It represents my family values	5.909
I can continue to be rich after my professional career	5.795
Athletic ability is not only about physical talent	5.727
I want kids to understand the importance of education	5.954
Athletes do not get respect without mental talent	6.431
I want to be admired for my academic success	7.340
It will allow me access to a career after sports	6.318
Gaining knowledge builds self-respect	6.204

### Career Aspirations

Ten items were included to find out which factor is most influential in these athletes desire to play professional sports. Those responding were asked if eligibility regulations insure success (NCAA Regulations), if they aspire to be famous (Fame), if they want their parents to be proud (Family), if it will help them make a lot of money (Money), if it will help them follow in the footsteps of athletes they admire (Leadership), if it will help encourage kids (Role Models), if it will give society more acceptance (Respect), if it will legitimize their talents (Legitimacy), if it will help them not be unemployed (Access), and if it will help them build self-respect (Dignity). Table 8 shows that those responding see their career aspirations as important because they want

their parents to be proud ( $M=6.204$ ), this indicates that their career aspirations are important to them because of influence from their family.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Eligibility regulations make sure that I am successful	4.545
I aspire to be famous in some aspects	5.318
I want my parents to be proud	6.204
I want to make a lot of money	6.022
I want to follow in the footsteps of athletes I admire	4.886
Kids should role model someone with a future	5.454
It would give me a proper acceptance in society	5.250
After college it makes my talents legitimate	5.295
I don't want to be without a job or education like my friends	5.954
It will build my self respect	6.090

#### Education and Career Aspirations

A set of items examined the likelihood of a UIUC African American male athlete's desire to complete their degree before going to a professional career, playing professional sports, return to college after professional career, pursue another career after sports, leave college early to go professional, and allow their child to go professional straight from high school. Table 9 shows that these athletes definitely will complete their degree before going to their professional career and plan to pursue a second career after professional career. The responses also show that they are uncertain if they will play in the professional league, if they would return to college after professional career, and if they would allow their child to go professional straight from high school. Those responding feel they definitely will not leave college early to pursue a professional sport career. Responses to the questions on future educational and career aspirations were grouped according to those who indicated they "definitely will" represent a respondent in each category, those who are uncertain, and those who say the "definitely will not" represent a person in each education and career category.

**Table 9****Future Educational and Career Aspirations**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Complete your degree before pro career	4.318
Play in a professional sport league	3.090
Return to college after pro career	3.613
Pursue another career after pro career	4.363
Leave college early to go pro	2.431
Agree with your child to go pro out of high school	3.022



## **Discussion**

The review of literature suggested ten factors that might influence the educational and career aspirations of African American male athletes: NCAA regulations, fame, family expectations, money, leadership opportunity, role models, respect, legitimacy, access, and dignity. The results of the study indicated that all but one factor is influential in determining their educational and career aspirations. The respondents were neutral in deciding whether or not acquiring fame ( $M=3.909$ ) was influential toward their educational or career aspirations. Responses to the scale items showed that the primary factor that influenced educational and career aspirations was respect ( $M=6.295$ ). Responses to the open-ended questions on influential factors also indicated that they felt the survey covered those which had the most impact on their aspirations. It was expected that NCAA regulations and family obligations would be the influential factors that affect UIUC African American male athlete's education and career aspirations, but responses to the survey did not support the first hypothesis. NCAA regulations was actually the eight factor identified (out of ten), and family obligation was the fourth identified (out of ten).

An interesting finding from the study was that the athletes could not strongly agree or strongly disagree on which of the ten factors was most influential in their decision to leave college early to play in the professional league or go straight to the professional league from high school. The hypothesis that these athletes would be most influenced by NCAA regulations suggested a second hypothesis that their responses would depend on their grade point average. Findings indicated that overall UIUC African American male athletes did not agree that NCAA regulations had an affect regardless of grade point average. The most important finding from this study is the respondent's familiarity and rating of the academic services that are established to ensure their academic success at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. They rated

academic counseling and the Irwin Academic Center nearly excellent services provided to them, and identified them as those that they were most familiar. The respondents were neutral on the quality of the other services provided and rated graduate assistants and the Life Skills program that they were least familiar with low quality ratings. This might be explained by understanding that if they are unfamiliar with the service they may not be able to accurately assess their quality.

The second and third hypothesis were neither supported nor not supported. College athletes reported that they were uncertain about whether or not they would play in the professional league or return to college after professional career. Responses from the open-ended questions indicate that they feel it is ultimately their responsibility to be successful academically and utilize the resources the university makes available to them. While they believe this, they also believe that thinking about a career in professional sports before graduating from college is "inevitable", because it might provide an opportunity that may not always be available. It is important to note that the responses could indicate these athletes' confidence in their athletic ability on the professional level, however money ranked highest amongst the factors that would most influence their decision to leave early or go straight to the professional league. UIUC African American male athletes indicated that the factor that most influenced their desire to earn a college degree before playing in the professional league was a matter of legitimizing ( $M=6.318$ ) their ability to be a student and athlete.

## CONCLUSION

NCAA regulations have a significant historical relevance in examining access to college athletics for African American male athletes. It is essential that we understand the educational and career aspirations of our black male athletes, to have the ability to combat the barriers that might negatively affect their academic success. Although this study proved that NCAA regulation is not the primary factor that influences their educational and career aspirations, it is a factor nonetheless. What this study did prove was that more research should be conducted with student athletes that allow the athletes to express their experiences. The most affective academic reform is going to be getting a clear understanding, from the athletes themselves, of what their struggles are and how we can help them to be successful.

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**APPENDIX A:*****Questionnaire for Participants of the Survey***

Nameka R. Bates  
708 S. Mathew St.  
Urbana, IL 61801

Terry Cole  
Associate Director of Athletics  
Division of Intercollegiate Athletics  
1700 S. Fourth Street  
Champaign, IL 61820

Dear Mr, Cole,

My name is Nameka Bates. I am a graduate student in the Department of Leisure Studies and Kinesiology. I am currently in the final stages of completing my Master's Thesis and would appreciate the athletic department's cooperation.

The title of my master's thesis is, "The Effects of NCAA Regulations on the Education and Career Aspirations on African-American Male Athletes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign."

Purpose: This research has two goals. The first goal is to determine African-American male athletes' knowledge of the academic services that are available to them and their utilization of these services. The second goal is to determine the factors that shape their decisions to attend college, leave before graduation, or complete their degree. The purpose of this research is to establish a better understanding of the influential factors and evaluate the effectiveness of NCAA eligibility regulations on the African-American male athletes' career and educational aspirations.

Survey Instrument: I am planning to survey the African-American male athletes that attend the U of I. The instrument takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, will be completely anonymous and confidential. The information gained from this study will only be used for the purpose of research and no information will be distributed for the use of media coverage.

I plan to email all the athletes that I would like to survey to identify a time that is best for them. I anticipate that I will attempt to administer the survey to most of the students during their study table hour at Irwin or the Football Stadium.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions. I have attached a copy of the survey instrument and a list of the students I plan to contact to complete the survey. I can be reached via email ([nbates1@uiuc.edu](mailto:nbates1@uiuc.edu)), or by phone at (217) 637-0877. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Nameka R. Bates

## African-American Male Student Athletes at UIUC by Sport

### **Wrestling**

Tyrone Byrd  
Casio Perro

### **Track**

Terry Davis  
Andre English  
Jamaal Folks  
Anthony Young  
Adrian Walker  
Abe Jones

### **Baseball**

Emanuel Bishop

### **Basketball**

Marcus Arnold  
Calvin Brock  
Dee Brown  
Warren Carter  
Luther Head  
Rich McBride  
Fred Nkemdi  
Roger Powell Jr.  
Shaun Pruitt  
Deron Williams

### **Football**

Shariff Abdullah  
Ade Adeyemo  
Charles Bailey  
Alan Ball  
Arthur Boyd  
Anthony Brodnax  
Melvin Bryant  
Kambium Buckner  
Sam Carson III  
James Cooper  
Bryant Creamer  
Jason Davis  
Jody Ellis

**Football cont...**

Kisan Flakes  
Kieron Frazier  
Xavier Fulton  
E.B. Halsey  
Justin Harrison  
Kelvin Hayden  
Lonnie Hurst  
Justin Ijel  
Kendrick Jones  
Taman Jordan  
Marcus Mason  
Anthony McClellan  
Water Mendenhall  
Kevin Mitchell  
Jarvis Newsom  
Charles Myles  
Duke Preston  
Tony Sparkman  
James Stevenson  
Pierre Thomas  
Anthony Thornhill  
Bryan Truttling  
Morris Virgil  
Derek Walker  
Bryon Waller  
Dejuan Warren  
Travis Williams  
Remond Willis  
Andre Young

Sports Management  
Masters Thesis  
Educational & Career Aspirations of African -American  
Male Student Athletes at the University of Illinois @  
Urbana-Champaign  
**Survey**

---

*Nameka Bates; May 2005 Candidate for Masters in Sports Management*

I am a Master Candidate in Sports Management. I am asking for a little of your time to provide me with assistance in researching an important topic: the educational and career aspirations of African-American Male student-athletes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The information gathered through this study will provide the UIUC Athletic departments to further provide the best opportunities to modify the services to students based on their aspirations, and the NCAA to examine the usefulness of eligibility rules and regulations. This survey is your opportunity to help shape the future of student-athletes on the UIUC campus and colleges and universities all over the country. It will take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete this survey. Feel free to take your time and answer each question to the best of your ability.

*The information that you provide will be completely confidential, so please give your honest opinion. Elaborate on questions that are important to you. There will be no attempt made to determine who responded to what questions in any particular way.*

Thank you for taking out the time to complete my survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
African-American Male Student-Athlete  
Educational and Career Aspirations**

**1. How familiar are you with the following Academic Services that are provided to student-athletes on campus? *Very familiar = utilize this service; somewhat familiar = heard of but never used, and unfamiliar = never heard of the service.***

**(Please place a  $\checkmark$  check on the line that best describes your knowledge)**

**Academic Counseling**

*(ie; Jason Holtman, Kristine Kane, Sheri Clapp, Anthony Kinney, Tom Michael, Joe Cross, and Kathy Kaler)*

\_\_\_\_\_ very familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ somewhat familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ unfamiliar

**Life Skills Program**

\_\_\_\_\_ very familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ somewhat familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ unfamiliar

**Study Hall Hours**

\_\_\_\_\_ very familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ somewhat familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ unfamiliar

**Irwin Academic Services Center**

\_\_\_\_\_ very familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ somewhat familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ unfamiliar

**Academic Graduate Assistants**

\_\_\_\_\_ very familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ somewhat familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ unfamiliar

**Tutoring**

\_\_\_\_\_ very familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ somewhat familiar  
\_\_\_\_\_ unfamiliar

2. Overall, how would you rate each of the academic services provided to student athletes? Circle the appropriate response where, 1=poor and 5=excellent.

<b>Academic Counseling</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Life Skills Program</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Study Hall Hours</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Irwin Academic Services Center</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Academic Graduation Assistants</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Tutoring</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

3. Overall, how often do you utilize these academic services? Circle the appropriate response, where 1=Never and 5=Always

<b>Academic Counseling</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Life Skills Program</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Study Hall Hours</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Irwin Academic Services Center</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Academic Graduation Assistants</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Tutoring</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

4. Are you required to participate in these academic services?  
(please circle the appropriate answer)?      **Yes**    **No**

5. If yes, would you utilize these services if they were not required?  
(please circle the appropriate answer)?    **Yes**    **No**

6. *The following is a list of factors that may be influential in your educational and career aspirations. Please rate the factors according to their importance to you in your educational and career aspirations. Circle the appropriate response, where 1=not at all important and 7=extremely important.*

<b>NCAA Regulations</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Fame</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Family Expectations</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Money</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Leadership Opportunity</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Role Models</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Respect</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Legitimacy</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Access</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Dignity</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

Please tell us about factors which contribute to your educational and career aspirations.  
Rate the extent to which you **DISAGREE** or **AGREE**

with the following items by **circling** the appropriate number in the scale beside each statement.

Think of each statement beginning with the phrase,  
*"I attended college before the professional league because..."*

Strongly  
Disagree

Neutral

Strongly  
Agree

7. Regulations would not allow me to do so	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I enjoy the popularity gained from playing college sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My parents would not allow me to play pro ball	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. It would raise my stock for the draft	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I wanted the training gained in college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Pro players I admire went to college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. My success in college helps to build my self esteem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. It gives me the opportunity to prove my talent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Playing Big Ten sports increases my chances of going pro	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. A college degree builds character	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Rate the extent to which you **DISAGREE** or **AGREE**

with the following items by **circling** the appropriate number in the scale beside each statement.

Think of each statement beginning with the phrase,  
*"I would have preferred to go to the professional league because..."*

Strongly  
Disagree

Neutral

Strongly  
Agree

17. College rules are too restrictive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Most college athletes do not get enough attention	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. My family needs for me to make money now	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I do not get paid for college sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. My talent would be hidden in college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Pro players that I admire did not go to college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. People admire pro players more than college players	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I would be more accepted as a top athlete	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



25. Being a pro player is better than being in college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. It would prove how good a player I am	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Rate the extent to which you DISAGREE or AGREE**

with the following items by circling the appropriate number in the scale beside each statement.

**Think of each statement beginning with the phrase.**

Strongly  
Disagree

Neutral

Strongly  
Agree

**"If given the opportunity, I would leave school to go pro because..."**

27. Eligibility regulations would not allow me to play in college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. People would acknowledge my talent more	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. My parents want me to be famous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I could get hurt and risk not making money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I am not given the opportunity to be a leader on my team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. My role models left college to play pro sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. Other players respect the talent of athletes who leave early	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. It will legitimize my exceptional talent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. It would encourage more college players to do leave early	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. If I got hurt, I would not respect my decision to stay	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Rate the extent to which you DISAGREE or AGREE**

with the following items by circling the appropriate number in the scale beside each statement.

**Think of each statement beginning with the phrase.**

Strongly  
Disagree

Neutral

Strongly  
Agree

**"I plan to earn a college degree before playing in the professional league because..."**

37. Regulations allow me to be successful academically	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

38. I want academic recognition too	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. My parents value education more than sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. I want something to fall back on after sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. The training gained in college will help me later	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. My role models earned their degree before going pro	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. People respect athletes who earn a degree more	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. I like to follow the standards of society	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. Athletes without education have limited opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. I will not respect myself if I do not get a college degree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Rate the extent to which you DISAGREE or AGREE**

with the following items by circling the appropriate number in the scale beside each statement.

Think of each statement beginning with the phrase.

Strongly  
Disagree

Neutral

Strongly  
Agree

"I plan to play in the professional league after college because..."

47. I fulfilled all the requirements in college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. I want to continue my popularity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. I plan to pay my parents back for supporting me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. I paid my dues in college and want to be rewarded	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. It will allow me to stand out more than college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. I want to have an impact on pro sports as my role models	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53. College players that don't go pro get no respect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54. It will prove that I am a genuine athlete	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55. It will give other athletes the ability to play at this level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56. It will prove that all this work was not for nothing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Rate the extent to which you DISAGREE or AGREE**

with the following items by circling the appropriate number in the scale beside each statement.

**Think of each statement beginning with the phrase,**

**"My educational aspirations are important to me because..."**

Strongly  
Disagree

Neutral

Strongly  
Agree

57. College rules are available to insure my success	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58. Being famous does not last forever	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59. It represents my family values	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60. I can continue to be rich after my professional career	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61. Athletic ability is not only about physical talent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62. I want kids to understand the importance of education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63. Athletes do not get respect without mental talent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
64. I want to be admired for my academic success	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
65. It will allow me access to a career after sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
66. Gaining knowledge builds self-respect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Rate the extent to which you DISAGREE or AGREE**

**with the following items by circling the appropriate number in the scale beside each statement.**

**Think of each statement beginning with the phrase,**

**"My career aspirations are important to me because..."**

Strongly  
Disagree

Neutral

Strongly  
Agree

57. Eligibility regulations make sure that I am successful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58. I aspire to be famous in some aspects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59. I want my parents to be proud	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60. I want to make a lot of money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61. I want to follow in the footsteps of athletes I admire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62. Kids should role model someone with a future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63. It would give me a proper acceptance in society	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
64. After college it makes my talents legitimate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
65. I don't want to be without a job or education like my friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
66. It will build my self respect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How likely are you to do the following (please circle the Appropriate response in the scale next to each statement?)	Definitely will not		Uncertain		Definitely will
67. Complete your degree before pro career .....	1	2	3	4	5
68. Play in a professional sport league.....	1	2	3	4	5
69. Return to college after pro career.....	1	2	3	4	5
70. Pursue another career after pro career.....	1	2	3	4	5
71. Leave college early to go pro .....	1	2	3	4	5
72. Agree with your child to go pro out of high school.....	1	2	3	4	5

73. Student athletes are often dealing with pressures that extend beyond those factors mentioned previously. What would you say that college student's reasons for these struggles are contributed to?

---



---

74. What control, if any, do you think that the university has on student athletes academic success in college? Please explain **why** or **why not**?

---



---

75. Do you feel that student athletes should be concerned about their chances of going to the professional level prior to graduation from college? Please explain **why** or **why not**?

---



---

## I. Please tell us about yourself

76. Sport (please circle the appropriate response):

**Football      Basketball      Baseball      Track & Field      Wrestling**  
**Golf              Tennis**

77. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years

78. Year in school (please circle one of the following):

**Freshman      Sophomore      Junior      Senior      Graduate School**

79. What is your major? (please feel in the blank) \_\_\_\_\_

80. Current Grade Point Average: \_\_\_\_\_

81. Parent's Household Income: (please circle one of the following):

\$60,000 and higher      \$25,000 to \$59,999      \$24,000 and below

82. Number of people who live in your parent's household including yourself?

1-2              3-4              5 or more

83. Source of income: (please circle all that apply):

Athletic Scholarship              Subsidized Loans              Unsubsidized Loans  
 Grants              Private Loans              Parents

**Thank you for taking time to complete the survey and for providing your thoughts and ideas.**

**APPENDIX B:**  
***Recommendations for Future Research***

The National Collegiate Athletic Association; History and Policy

In 1905, President Roosevelt was notified that 18 football players were reported dead and 149 with serious injuries. The cause of death to these players called for immediate implementation of rules and an established governing body to find solutions and preventive measures to these casualties. The National Collegiate Athletic Association was established under the name Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) in 1905. Five years later, the association adopted the official title as the National Collegiate Athletic Association, more affectionately known as the NCAA. The NCAA began as a discussion group and rules-making body. This not-for-profit organization slowly began to pick up member institutions. From its beginning, the NCAA was concerned with the same objectives that are still important today. Today the NCAA has 1,025 active member institutions across the United States. In the past, it has used a variety of its members to form committees in order to make recommendations and proposals, and most importantly, for the protection of student athletes.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association is an extremely complex system. The member institutions are broken down into five divisions; Division I-A, Division I-AA, Division I-AAA, Division II, and Division III. An active member is a "four year college or university or a two year upper-level collegiate institution accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting agency". There are 117 Division I-A, 121 Division I-AA, 88 Division I-AAA, 279 Division II, and 420 Division III active member institutions within the NCAA. There are a total of 14 provisional member institutions, which means that these colleges or universities have applied to become active members of the NCAA. The provisional member institutions do not have the right to compete in NCAA competition and do not have a vote; however they receive all NCAA

publications and mailings. There are a total of 148,614 Division I, 74,807 Division II, and 137,754 Division III student-athletes. Division I athletes receive full scholarship awards, Division II athletes “pay for school through scholarship money, grants, student loans, and employment earnings”, and Division III student athletes do not receive financial aid “related to their athletic ability” (NCAA.org).

As the NCAA now services over 400,000 athletes, it has the primary responsibility of setting forth rules and regulations that are to assist in student athletes’ academic success (Brown, 2002). The mission statement of the NCAA states that their purpose is, “to govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount.(NCAA.org)” In 1931, the “Sanity Code” was introduced by E.K. Hall of Dartmouth College, Football Rules Committee Chair. The Sanity Code included adherence to the definition of amateurism, institutional responsibility, sound academic standards, financial aid controls and recruiting restrictions. Reform is nothing new to the NCAA. The NCAA has always been about making the best out of student-athlete experience.

### Big Business of College Sports

While examining the relationship between the NCAA and its member institutions, it is important to keep in mind the conflict of interest that this private organization faces in making decisions regarding their student athletes. Although the NCAA strives to keep the amateurism in college sports, it is difficult to accomplish, considering that there is an apparent level of “commercial value” that comes along with being a private organization benefiting from the resources that public organizations have to offer (Davis, 2000). In 1950, the NCAA established a Television Committee, the committee established the 1952 Television Plan that called for

limited live television, controlled and directed by the NCAA. Two years later NBC bought the 1952 plan for \$1,144,000, which increased to a \$31 million dollar plan by the early 1980's (Shulman and Bowen, 2001). Television coverage began at 3 total televised hours of sports programs listed in 1955 and increased to 15.5 total televised hours in 1979. In 1993 sports programs nearly tripled to 43 total televised hours. The Television Plan has taken the NCAA from a small discussion and rules-making body to a giant in the intercollegiate athletics industry. The NCAA holds a monopoly over governing issues concerning all collegiate athletic member institutions. According to the NCAA stated purpose, the goal of this reform movement is to encourage athletes to understand the importance of "valuing the education" that is being provided to them through their participation in sports (NCAA Handbook, 2004). Despite the reality of the affects of athletic participation on athletes' academic success, the appearance of African-American athletes' success in sports hinders the NCAA efforts to influence athletes to focus on their education. The "commercial value" that is placed on athletes' success on the field, displayed on 24 hour sports shows such as, ESPN, ESPN2, and Fox Sports Network, provided for athletes and winning programs, places less value on the associations' attempts to regulate academics (Harrison and Harrison, 2003).