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Super Seniors: The Educational Trajectories and Experiences of Graduate(d) Student Athletes in Division I Football

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Super Seniors:

The Educational Trajectories and Experiences of

Graduate(d) Student Athletes in Division I Football

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Siduri Haslerig

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Super Seniors:

The Educational Trajectories and Experiences of

Graduate(d) Student Athletes in Division I Football

by

Siduri Haslerig

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Walter R. Allen, Committee Co-chair

Professor C. Keith Harrison, Committee Co-chair

Using narrative data collected through semi-structured phone interviews with eleven *graduate(d) student athletes*, this dissertation examines participants' academic trajectories and experiences. Theories regarding role-conflict, attribution, college choice and career maturity undergird analysis. Findings are divided into four chapters: *Stereotyping*, *Time*, *Academic Trajectory*, and *Graduate Program.* Participants' *Autonomy* and *Agency* are themes throughout, as are findings regarding the role of institutions in enabling or hindering athletes' ability to excel academically.

Findings suggest stereotyping decreased as participants graduated and earned increasing autonomy over their academic lives. By working toward advanced degrees, participants bolstered

their own and others' interpretation that football served as a means to an educational end; furthermore, because their graduate status could be read this way, it legitimized the primacy of participants' student role-identities. Several participants recounted early aspirations for higher education, as well as the premeditated intent to use football instrumentally as a pathway to college. Even participants without early degree aspirations tended to revise their narratives about football and education to incorporate similar instrumental framing once those educational opportunities presented themselves. Furthermore, participants took their choice of graduate degree seriously, endeavoring to align graduate programs with their passions and career goals and thereby reinforcing the finding that graduate(d) student athletes' decisions are increasingly independent from athletic considerations. The concluding chapter integrates the findings to form a fuller picture of participants' trajectories, experiences, and the larger phenomenon. Lastly, implications for theory, policy, and practice, as well as directions for future research, are discussed.

The dissertation of Siduri Haslerig is approved.

Patricia M. McDonough

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University of California, Los Angeles

2013

DEDICATION

To my father, the original Scholar Baller™ in my life: thank you for your unwavering

love, support, and encouragement throughout this endeavor (and every other).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMNENTS

I must first acknowledge the multitalented participants in my study—thank you for sharing your time with me and trusting me with your narratives.

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To my large and loving extended family, for their encouragement and pride in this accomplishment. In particular:

Mom—Thank you for your unyielding support and for teaching me what strength and loyalty look like. You've worked so hard to ensure I'd have access to opportunities and the ability to make my own choices (and mistakes). I so appreciate and love you.

Granny—you are a constant inspiration, academically and personally. I love you so much and treasure our relationship. Thank you for teaching me to think critically, even as a very young girl; thank you for reading my work critically, not 'just' as a fawning grandmother—I know you are impressed by how I take criticism, but I'm at least as impressed by your consistently

thoughtful and respectful feedback; thank you for letting me see the trade-offs and not just the positive sides of this life we both chose; lastly, thank you for your role in blazing multiple paths for female academics like myself. It fills me with joy to see and *feel* your pride as I enter the ranks of those who came before me.

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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Haslerig, S., Bernhard, L., Fuentes, M. V., Panter, A. T., Daye, C. E. & Allen, W. R. (In press).
   A compelling interest: Activating the benefits of classroom-level diversity. *Journal of
   Diversity in Higher Education.*

Haslerig, S. (April, 2013). Super seniors: Examining the stereotyping experiences of graduate(d) student athletes. Paper presentation at American Educational Research Association (AERA), San Francisco, CA

Haslerig, S. (April, 2013). Playing the game: Graduate(d) student athletes' personal development, academic trajectory, and agency. Round table presentation of paper at American Educational Research Association (AERA), San Francisco, CA

Haslerig, S., Bernhard, L., & Allen, W. R. (April, 2012). Prisms of Experience: The Role of Educational Diversity in Shaping the Law School Experience. Roundtable presentation of research paper at the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Vancouver, BC.

Vue, R., **Haslerig, S.,** Allen, W.R., & Jayakumar, U.M. (2012). Creating college going cultures for students of color in the U.S.: Balancing cultural integrity and universal norms. In *Living on the Boundaries: Urban Marginality in National and International Contexts* (ED. Yeakey, C. C.) Bristol, England: Emerald Inc.

Vue, R., **Haslerig, S.,** & Allen, W. R. (March, 2010). Affirmative action and Intersectionality: Affirming race and diversity through students of colors' lived experiences. Research paper presentation at the 4th Annual Critical Race Studies Symposium, *Intersectionality: Challenging Theory, Reframing Politics & Transforming Movements*, Los Angeles, CA.

Haslerig, S., Vue, R. & Allen, W. R. (November, 2009). Defining diversity: Are underrepresented minority students' college choices "post-racial"? Research paper presentation at the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), Vancouver, BC.

Haslerig, S. (June, 2009). Contesting 'Influence': Black students' agency and independence in choosing colleges. Research paper presentation at the Association of Black Sociologists (ABS), New Orleans, LA.

Haslerig, S. (April, 2009). Reframing the Discourse of the Standards Movement: An Approach to Legitimize College Preparatory Programs. Scholarly paper presentation, at the American Educational Research Association (AERA), San Diego, CA.

Super-Seniors:

The Educational Trajectories and Experiences of *Graduate(d) Student Athletes*

in Division I Football

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

…even among some of the positive response was an underlying head-scratching theme: isn't it amazing that a former jock can have opinions on pop culture and articulate it with words and references to books and movies? Some mentioned my height, as if I was so tall that the air up here could not support intellectual development….

What do people expect when an ex-jock discusses pop culture? 'Hmmm. Magic light box have good shows. Me like some. Others make me puke Gatorade. Me give it three jock straps.'

Maybe this will help: I have a degree from UCLA. (Abdul-Jabbar, 2-4-2013)

Abdul-Jabbar goes on to list other accolades and experiences that give him the authority to engage with this discourse, despite people questioning his qualifications and the validity of his interest. However, that first piece of his argument is key: he marshals his academic credential to signal his legitimacy. In this study of "super seniors," defined as Division I (D-I) football players who earned a bachelor's degree prior to exhausting their NCAA eligibility and continued coursework while playing, participants frequently mirror Abdul-Jabbar's strategy to negotiate prevalent stereotypes about their intelligence and intellectual curiosity.

Football is an important American ritual, considered by some to be a national religion (Bain-Selbo, 2012; Foley, 1990). College football offers a particular pull, as evidenced by the 49,670,895 fans who attended NCAA football games over the 2010 season and the more than 200 million television viewers during the regular season, not to mention the 134 million TV

viewers of the 35 bowl games that year (hootens.com).[1] Beyond this cultural import, football is big business (Byers, 1995; Clotfelter, 2011; Oriard, 2009); for example, in 2012, the six major conferences' average annual broadcasting revenue per institution (for institutions with football) ranged from 3.18 million (Big East) to 19.7-22 million dollars (Big Ten) (CollegeSportsInfo.com). The popularity of "American football" is unique to the US, as is our commercialized system of intercollegiate athletics. In fact, "there is nothing quite like it in other countries of the world" (Sage, 1998, p. 226; Thelin, 1996) in terms of the extent to which athletics are "enmeshed" (Clotfelter, 2011, p. 3) and "thoroughly institutionalized within American higher education" (Shulman & Bowen, 2001, p. 1). Sage (1990) traces the movement away from student "initiative and control" (p. 229) of intercollegiate athletics and toward the "ideological hegemony" (p. 234) of the amateur myth, focusing on the exploitation of big-time college athletes within an increasingly commercial and capitalist system. Given the cultural import and visibility of football, and American intercollegiate athletics more broadly, exploring the experiences—particularly the academic experiences—of big-time college athletes is an essential and ongoing scholarly project (Adler & Adler, 1991; Bell, 2009; Benson, 2000; Harrison et al., 2010; Oseguera, 2010), which this study furthers.

Frequently, we cast athletes as heroes, but consign them to the athletic sphere, resulting in the public's disorientation (or worse, backlash) when an athlete dares to exhibit a more complex identity (note the commercial success of athletes known for their singular, extreme, even "freakish," focus on only sport; for example, Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, and Kobe

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[1] See Staples (2012) for more information about the immense effect of TV revenue on football conferences and viewing more generally.

Bryant). When athletes dare foray into intellectual pursuits, like Abdul-Jabbar, we tell them to "know their place"[2] and not engage in arenas where we refuse to believe they have authority.

This policing is fundamentally at odds with the goals of education, particularly those of the broad liberal arts education signified by a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree. In tracking changes in big-time football between the 1960s and the present, Oriard (2009) refers to college football as "the part of our larger football culture with the longest and richest history, as well as the most profound contradiction at its heart" (p. 1). I share one of Oriard's central concerns: whether "'student-athletes'"[3] receive a fair return on their investment in football. As he explains:

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[2] Because of the racial composition of elite football and basketball (both collegiate and professional), which is increasingly dominated by Black athletes at the highest levels, the image of the prototypical athlete is often cast as a Black male. Furthermore, racist stereotypes about Black athletic prowess and the "black body" are perpetuated (Davis, 1990; Hawkins, 1995, 1999; Mahiri & Van Rheenen, 2009; Sheldon et al., 2007), along with other sources of skepticism about athletes' motives, ability, and achievements. It is important to understand our pigeonholing of athletes as an endeavor that is frequently tied to preexisting racist tropes, as well as to stereotypes about athletics itself.

[3] Although Oriard (2009) does not excise the term, he uses scare-quotes throughout when discussing "student-athletes." "Student-athlete" is the term preferred by the NCAA, which adopted it in order to A) evade workers' comp regulations and B) mitigate backlash from the public and media when it shifted away from its tradition of amateurism by allowing institutions to offer athletic scholarships (i.e. "grants-in-aid"), then moved toward the grant-in-aid being contingent on continued athletic participation (i.e. renewable one-year scholarships, instead of four-year scholarship contracts, beginning in 1973) and, therefore, akin to a contractual obligation. The NCAA then replaced "athlete" and "player" with the term in all publications and communications with the media, effectively undertaking a rebranding campaign and eventually spawning a new category of professionals (information managers) to enforce the rebranding (Byers, 1995; Staurowsky & Sack, 2005). Because of this history, Staurowsky and Sack (2005) argue academics should reconsider their use of the term "student-athlete;" accordingly, I refer to students who participate

my fundamental concern regarding college football today is that my 1960s experience

may not even be available to 'student-athletes' in our more fully commercialized, higher-

pressure football world. At the same time, an athletic scholarship today buys exactly what

it bought during my college years. Tuition, board, and housing cost more in real dollars,

but they have the same value. Or perhaps less: with less opportunity to receive a real

education, athletes today might be taking a cut in real benefits. (p. 7)

Research has addressed the academic achievement of athletes (or the lack thereof),

focusing on elements such as preparation; motivation; eligibility requirements; and equity

(Comeaux, 2007; Emerick, 1996; Padilla & McMillen, 1995; Simons, Van Rheenen &

Covington, 1999). College athletes in revenue sports have consistently performed worse

academically than college athletes in other sports and the general student body. The gap persists

for every measure of academic achievement, including: students' academic preparation and

achievement when they enter college, whether they experience proximate academic difficulties

(such as having to repeat a class or becoming academically ineligible to compete during college),

and whether they ultimately earn a degree (Gatson-Gayles & Hu, 2009; NCAA, 2001a; Purdy,

Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982; Upthegrove, Roscigno, & Charles, 1999). Furthermore, top programs

have been accused of exploiting college athletes through attitudes and policies prioritizing

athletics at the expense of college athletes' academic success (Adler & Adler, 1987, 1991;

Allison, 1995; Beamon & Bell, 2006; Emerick, 1996; Mathewson, 2000). Frequently, scholars

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in intercollegiate athletics as "college athletes" throughout this text, except in cases where the terminology would be

redundant or confusing (as in the case of a sentence on page 12), or in which I require additional specificity (such as

when I discuss *graduate(d) student athletes*).

have argued the exploitation of Black male college athletes is particularly egregious (Donner, 2005; Grant, 2002; Spigner, 1993).

Although distinct from scholarly research, public discourse about the academic achievement of college athletes has echoed many of the same themes and narratives. Over the last two decades, commentary about the problems of intercollegiate athletic corruption/reform has largely centered on financial concerns, including questions about commercialism, exploitation, amateurism, recruiting abuses, improper benefits, and pay-for-play plans. As a result, many analyses of college athletes' academic achievement within popular culture are related to, or conflated with, overarching financial narratives.[4] In this context, the American media and public have, predictably, demonstrated high levels of skepticism regarding 'the scholar athlete,' as well as suspicion that the rules are being used/abused for purely athletic reasons.[5]

In fact, in an attempt to reward college athletes' academic achievements, NCAA rules have increasingly facilitated entry into postbaccalaureate and graduate degree programs. Despite

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[4] Periodically, academic scandals have disrupted the echo chamber of calls for financial reforms; however, even academic scandals can be framed in terms of the financial incentive/imperative that institutions keep college athletes eligible to compete, or by the dichotomy between the money institutions make from big-time athletics and the 'inferior' education college athletes receive. These instances also serve to reinforce stereotypes about "dumb jocks."

[5] One example of the disdain toward those who argue that educational concerns drive college athlete's graduate aspirations is Travis' (2010) article about Masoli's transfer to Ole Miss, which went so far as to label him "felonious detritus," despite the author's claim to "side with the player." According to Travis, "there's a cynicism about every decision that's being made, a glazed-eye look, the reality of a sport that's sold it's [sic] soul." On a more systemic level, others express skepticism of the graduate transfer rule on the grounds that it may create a free agent market (Fitzgerald, 2011; Infante, 2011; Lesmerises, 2011).

the increased feasibility of graduate study and the critical mass of postbaccalaureate college athletes, the scholar-athlete continues to be cast as a "dying breed." This characterization exalts individuals at the expense of the phenomenon as a whole. Even when graduate(d) student athletes receive positive media coverage, their narratives are generally framed individualistically, in the mold of a Horatio Alger triumph.[6] Furthermore, the individualistic narratives are often implicitly dichotomized with unchallenged tropes of the academically underprepared and unmotivated college athlete. Although the academic success of graduated student athletes is undoubtedly a triumph over many opposing forces and does depend on an individual's hard work, this popular narrative ignores the larger population of college athletes engaged in postbaccalaureate studies, as well as the systemic factors driving the phenomenon and affecting graduated student athletes' experiences.

Background on Graduate(d) Student Athletes

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a voluntary membership organization, which member institutions [universities] have endowed with the power to regulate intercollegiate athletics, including the requirements all potential participants must meet in order

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[6] For example, Myron Rolle first incited a media firestorm around the conflicts inherent in competing for a Rhodes scholarship while competing in Division I football; later coverage focused on "the burden of being Myron Rolle" (Thompson, 2010) and questions of whether he was "too smart for the NFL" (headlines to that effect ran on AOL News, ESPN, Huffington Post, and USA Today news sites in April of 2010, not to mention the conversation on blogs and other media). Another example is media coverage of Chris Stewart, which tended to focus on how he balanced his commitment to both football and law school (Lopresti, 2010; Myers, 2010) and marking the exceptional nature of not just his accomplishment, but *him* (Walters, 2010) (which is also a feature in most coverage of Rolle).

to be eligible to compete athletically. The NCAA categorizes each institution's athletics program into one of three levels (i.e. Division I, II, or III), which are governed by different rules due to their member institutions' differing athletic (and academic) needs and goals, as well as the disparity between the level of competition within each division. All participants in this study hail from institutions in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) of Division I. For the purpose of this study, I focused on FBS institutions within D-I because they represent the highest level of competition and commercialism, and because the majority of existing research concerns D-I college athletes.

Once "student-athletes" enter higher education, they may compete in athletics for as many as four years, which must be exhausted within five years of when they began college.[7] A "redshirt year" is one year in college when they may practice with the team, receive a grant-in-aid, and continue course work, but are ineligible to compete. "Initial eligibility" is determined by the Clearinghouse, which evaluates every high school student any university considers recruiting as an athlete, according to a matrix of academic indicators, including standardized test scores (SAT or ACT), required coursework, and GPA.

To maintain their eligibility, college athletes must comply with NCAA regulations regarding academic standards and progress-toward-degree (as well as those regarding other

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[7] These rules apply to all college athletes; however, the NCAA has the discretion to grant individual students a waiver allowing them an extra year of athletic competition. This waiver process is the exception and not the rule, most college athletes are limited to a maximum of five years of scholarship eligibility, so I do not go into depth about NCAA waiver processes.

issues, such as amateurism).[8] These regulations establish the minimum a college athlete must do to avoid becoming academically ineligible to compete, and are largely designed to increase the five-year graduation rate of college athletes (especially those in the 'revenue sports' of football and men's basketball);[9] however, even college athletes who far exceed academic standards are entitled to the five years of eligibility.[10] As a result, a college athlete who earns a bachelor's degree in four years or less often has a remaining year (or more) in which he is eligible to compete and/or to receive an athletic scholarship. To avoid penalizing college athletes who excel academically, the NCAA permits college athletes who graduate with remaining eligibility to further their higher education with "postbaccalaureate studies," or by taking graduate courses and/or enrolling in a graduate degree program while continuing to compete athletically. Few NCAA regulations directly reference graduate student athletes and, in most cases, graduate students and those taking postbaccalaureate coursework are treated as equivalent by NCAA

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[8] The NCAA Division I Manual for 2012-2013 is 444 pages, of which 50 are devoted to academic eligibility topics. The depth and breadth of NCAA regulations can be dizzying and has necessitated the creation of a new class of professionals within athletics departments: compliance officers whose primary responsibility is staying abreast of regulations and monitoring compliance.

[9] Hockey, baseball, and women's basketball are counted among 'revenue sports' in some NCAA rules, but, in most cases, the term refers to football and men's basketball exclusively, especially when referenced in popular culture/the media or in the research literature.

[10] However, college athletes are never guaranteed a place on the team, nor entitled to have their scholarships renewed beyond the one-year term (although this is changing with the fall 2011 end of the NCAA's ban on multiyear grants-in-aid, which had been in place since 1973, currently, institutions set their own regulations regarding whether to guarantee multiyear scholarships). Assuming that a college athlete has secured a place on the team, though, they are eligible for five years of grant-in-aid, even as graduates.

bylaws. One exception to this equivalence is the "graduate transfer rule," which enables graduate

student athletes to transfer and play immediately—provided they have remaining eligibility and

enroll in a graduate program not offered at their original institution—by exempting them from

the standard regulation that college athletes in revenue sports must sit out athletic competition for

a year after transferring.[11] This rule is particularly relevant because it has likely contributed more

to the visibility of the graduate student athlete population than any other single factor.[12]

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[11] College athletes in non-revenue sports (Olympic sports) are able to get a one-time transfer waiver, so they do not

have to sit out a year. The "graduate transfer rule" has gone through several iterations in the past several years. In

2006, the NCAA passed a proposal "2005-54," which permitted any college athletes who graduated with remaining

athletic eligibility to transfer and enter graduate school at a different institution without sitting out a year. However,

the rule was only in full effect for one season (and college athletes transferring for the autumn of 2006 were the sole

cohort to use it), because NCAA member institutions voted to overrule the regulation in 2007, with the justification

that the rule would effectively create free agency amongst graduate student athletes and result in a second recruiting

season. Shortly thereafter, the NCAA compromised by creating a waiver process, exempting graduate student

athletes who were entering a graduate degree program that was not offered at their original institution from sitting

out a year. In the summer of 2011, this waiver process was formalized into a rule so graduate student athletes

wishing to transfer no longer had to apply for a waiver on a case-by-case basis, assuming they met all of the rule's

criteria (Infante, 1-14-12; Martin, 2008).

[12] The graduate transfer rule has made this population more visible in that it's gotten positive coverage (Sports

Illustrated writer Staples [2011] refers to it as "the best rule in college sports" and asserts it's "the only NCAA rule

that actually rewards student-athletes for taking care of the 'student' side of the equation") and in that it has

increased the visibility of graduate student athletes because their graduate status is integral to a story that is more

likely to be considered newsworthy (the college athlete's transfer to a different team). Even so, Russell Wilson has

been described as "a one-year transfer" (Thamel, August 26, 2011) and, aside from the description "smart enough to

The combined effect of these NCAA regulations—in concert with the national trend toward college students needing/taking more than the traditional four years to complete a bachelor's degree[13]—renders the quadrisection of a college career into *freshman, sophomore, junior,* and *senior* years insufficient for situating college athletes within the five-year eligibility system. As a result, various terms are used to differentiate college athletes' 'class year,' including using "redshirt" as a preface to a college athlete's year, which denotes that the student entered college one year earlier than their current year on the team. For example, a "redshirt junior" is in his third year of competition (at most), but took a redshirt at some point in his college career, so he is in his fourth year of classes and has another year of athletic eligibility remaining. The next year, his fifth year in college and fourth year actively competing for the team, he will likely be labeled a "redshirt senior" or a "fifth-year senior" during media coverage of games, regardless of his academic standing.

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graduate from N.C. State in three years," that article did not talk about his graduate student status or use of the graduate transfer rule.

[13] According to *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)'s* Condition of Education 2012 report, only "58 percent of first-time, full-time students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year institution in fall 2004 completed a bachelor's degree at that institution within 6 years" (p. 108). Furthermore, "only forty-four percent of 2007–08 first-time bachelor's degree recipients completed a bachelor's degree within 48 months of their initial postsecondary enrollment, another 23 percent within 49–60 months, and an additional 9 percent within 61–72 months" (NCES website). In other words, a full 66% of *degree recipients* did not graduate within the traditional four-year timeline (and these statistics don't account for those who never earn a degree). Nonetheless, students who take more than the traditional four years to earn a Bachelor's degree are largely absent from media portrayals of college life, so negative stereotypes about students who take more time to earn a degree persist (unchecked by the statistical reality), and college athletes may be particularly visible examples of 'fifth-year seniors.'

There are inherent shortcomings in the terms frequently used to refer to *graduate(d)*

student athletes.[14] Because these "super seniors" have graduated with their bachelor's degrees, it

is problematic to saddle them with a label that obscures their academic accomplishments. Given

the dominant images of both college athletes and Black men—and especially of Black male

college athletes—as academically at-risk, unmotivated, and disengaged (Beamon & Bell, 2006;

Benson, 2000; Oseguera, 2010; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2006), the 'fifth-year senior' label is

particularly loaded and problematic. The phrase renders invisible an entire population of college

athletes who contradict prevailing stereotypes, and instead reinforces the trope of the 'dumb

jock.' Not only does it obfuscate the bachelor's degrees these athletes have *already* attained and

the advanced degrees many of them are working toward, it actually implies that they are

academically *behind* because they "need" more than the traditional four years to earn a

bachelor's degree.

This Study

This study reframes the discourse about college athletes by examining the experiences of

graduate(d) athletes who have negotiated the transition to college and campus life well enough to

use their athletic eligibility to complete coursework beyond their bachelor's degree, thereby far

exceeding academic expectations and standards. I use a degree attainment model to define

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[14] I refer to the population collectively as '*graduate(d) student athletes*' selection criteria encompasses any NCAA

Division I football players who continued coursework (and playing) after earning a Bachelor's degree 'early' (i.e.

before exhausting their athletic eligibility). As such, some participants were postbaccalaureate students who are not

pursuing graduate degrees; however, they became 'graduated student athletes' by earning a BA or BS and remained

students. Furthermore, grouping graduate and postbaccalaureate college athletes is consistent with the NCAA, which

considers them equivalent statuses in terms of eligibility to participate (NCAA Manual, 2009, bylaw 14.1.9).

academic success (rather than a GPA measure of achievement, for example); this is both because

of the increasing import of bachelor's—as well as graduate—degrees in today's job market

(Pew, 2013; Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013) and because it serves as a marker of

belonging to the particular population of interest. Participants are Division I (D-I) football

players who earned a bachelor's degree (e.g. a BA or BS) and pursued additional coursework

within their NCAA eligibility. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 11 participants from a

racially diverse sample of college athletes address the research questions:

1.   What were participants' lived experiences as graduate(d) student athletes?

    a.   How did participants navigate those experiences and balance their various

    roles as graduate(d) student athletes?

2.   What motivated, supported and/or facilitated participants' academic and athletic

trajectories?

    a.   *How* were participants able to pursue these trajectories?

    b.   *Why* were they motivated to do so?

3.   How did participants make meaning of their graduate(d) student athlete status?

4.   Were these decisions, processes, and/or experiences moderated by race? If so,

how?

The graduate(d) student athlete population has been virtually invisible in both scholarship

and popular discourse regarding college athletes and academic achievement. As such, this study

significantly adds to research literature on higher education, student achievement and collegiate

athletics, and simultaneously challenges assumptions and stereotypes. The academic success of

participants is in marked contrast to the overall low academic achievement and degree attainment

of football players; their success may offer insight into how to better serve (both high- and low-

achieving) college athletes' academic needs. Furthermore, many student populations, especially those traditionally underserved, experience role conflict (Adler & Adler, 1987) between their student identity and their other role(s). As such, college athletes' experiences successfully negotiating role conflict and excelling academically may hold lessons that are applicable to a large percentage of students, not just college athletes.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature

The popular belief that intercollegiate athletics provides college access opportunities for disadvantaged athletes is yet another adaptation of the American meritocracy myth (Bilberry, 2000; Eitzen, 2003). There are several arguments as to how intercollegiate athletics facilitate college access, including: A) giving students who might not otherwise be college-bound (including relatively large numbers of first generation, low-SES, and students of color) a reason to aspire to college (i.e. bolstering predisposition); B) recruiting them; C) offering preferential admissions, (including lowering academic admission standards for some college athletes and, according to proponents, scaffolding college athletes who did not meet initially academic eligibility requirements time until they catch up to high academic standards; and/or, D) providing financial support for college through athletic scholarships (Eitzen, 2003; Harrison, 2006).

Popular culture and intercollegiate athletics in the US have embraced the concept of the *student-athlete* since the NCAA adopted the phrase in the 1950s (see footnote 3, on page 3). In the ensuing decades, scholars and popular culture have interpreted the term through a revisionist lens, insisting it literally places "student" first in order to reflect and maintain the primacy of the student role (Byers, 1995; Staurowsky & Sack, 2005). However, maintaining the primacy of academics for college athletes has proved an elusive goal, especially at the most elite levels (Byers, 1995; Emerick, 1996; Mathewson, 2000; Purdy et al., 1982; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Staurowsky & Sack, 2005; Upthegrove et al., 1999).

In fact, concerns the intercollegiate athletics system may violate college athletes' legal rights abound.[15] Most courts and many scholars have considered the relationship between athletes and universities "contractual in nature" (Davis, 1991, p. 769; Johnson, 1985), a supposition useful when considering the question of universities' obligations to college athletes. The good faith doctrine regarding contracts "provides a means to imply an obligation that the university provide an educational opportunity to student-athletes" (Davis, 1991, p. 777). If participating in collegiate football is a job college athletes do, but cannot be paid for, the question becomes *what do college athletes get out of it?* The belief that college athletes work for higher education institutions can cut both ways—supporting the argument that athletes are entitled to the substantive educational opportunities that are ostensibly their compensation (Ciccolella, Sharp, & Krueger, 2008; Davis, 1991; Johnson, 1985), or the belief that elite athletes should not reasonably be expected to achieve in realms other than sport (Anderson & South, 1993; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Zimbalist, 2001), presumably due to the perception of inherent conflict between achievement in the realms of athletics and academics (Harrison, 2006). In effect, despite the fundamental fallacy of conflating amateurism with protecting college athletes' status as students,[16] amateurism creates an additional implicit obligation for institutions to ensure

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[15] For example, scholars have examined the issue of exploitation in intercollegiate athletics using laws and legal principals as wide-ranging as educational hindrance (Emerick, 1996; Martin, 2008), disparate impact (Cureton v. NCAA, 1999; Mondello & Abernethy, 2000; Rosen, 2000; Taylor & Traub, 2000), contract law and the good faith doctrine (Ciccolella, Sharp, & Krueger, 2008; Davis, 1991; Johnson, 1985; *Ross v. Creighton University,* 1992), and anti-trust laws (Mitten, 2000).

[16] Numerous scholars and commentators have debunked the rhetoric creating a false-equivalency between amateurism and maintaining student status (Mitten, 2000; Zimbalist, 2001); however, Sack and Staurowsky (1998)

college athletes have the opportunity to meaningfully access education—because receiving an education, as well as a degree,[17] is ostensibly the agreed upon payment for the work they do athletically. Furthermore, Davis (1991) argues that, beyond institutions' implicit "commitment to the educational and intellectual well being" (p. 780) of college athletes, the "intimate and pervasive involvement of athletic departments in decisions that significantly impact a student-athlete's academic success justifies creating a duty that may not extend to other students" (p. 788). As such, the academic success and degree attainment of college athletes is essential to the integrity of the entire system of intercollegiate athletics (Byers, 1995; Davis, 1991).

Academic Failure

Prior research on the academic achievement of college athletes has primarily focused on academic failure, generally indicting students, the system of intercollegiate athletics, or some combination thereof (Byers, 1995; Upthegrove et al., 1999). This focus on negative outcomes is understandable, given the discrepancy between rhetoric exalting academic primacy and college athletes' academic outcomes. Specifically, student-athletes in *revenue sports* (i.e. football and men's basketball) have consistently underperformed on every academic measure, including

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report that the educational establishment "has rallied around the myth" (p. 96) of amateurism promulgated by the NCAA.

[17] I specify both 'an education' and 'a degree' because it is possible that college athletes leave college with either one, without the other, or neither. Due to steering into easy majors with dubious academic value, "a degree may not constitute an accurate measure of whether student-athletes have obtained educational skills that will permit them to compete and earn a living" (Davis, 1991, p. 758). Thus, it is essential, ethically, that college athletes have the opportunity to leave college both with the skills, knowledge, and intellectual development *signified* by a college degree, and with the actual credential (Davis, 1991).

academic preparation for college, whether they maintain their academic eligibility during

college, and whether they ultimately earn a degree (Gayles & Hu, 2009; NCAA, 2001a; Purdy,

Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982; Upthegrove et al., 1999). College athletes in revenue sports generally

perform worse on each of these measures as compared to both student-athletes in other sports

(which are referred to as *Olympic* or *nonrevenue*) and the general student body. In this section, I

will review the literature on the academic achievement of college athletes. I start by discussing

research on the effect of academic preparation; next, I discuss the commitments college athletes

are expected to balance; finally, I review studies that make sense of college athletes' motivation

and behavior, as well as the resulting academic outcomes, using socialization and identity

frameworks.

College athletes in revenue sports enter college having taken fewer college preparatory

courses, with lower test scores and GPAs, and overall less likely to meet NCAA initial eligibility

requirements than other college athletes (NCAA, 2001a; Stuart, 1985; Upthegrove et al., 1999).

Furthermore, when the initial eligibility data is disaggregated by race, it becomes clear that

college athletes of color are especially likely to be under-prepared academically (NCAA, 2001b)

and that the concentration of students of color in revenue sports accounts for some of the

preparation and prior achievement gap between revenue and non revenue athletes (Upthegrove et

al., 1999).

Institutional Responses to Academic Failure

Institutions have an obligation to offer students academic support given their good faith

agreement, the negative effect competitive athletics is likely to have on college athletes'

academic achievement (Upthegrove et al., 1999), and because they may have recruited college

athletes with lower academic achievement and/or preparation (and therefore greater needs for academic support) than their general standards (Davis, 1991).

NCAA attempts to increase the academic success, retention, and degree attainment of college athletes have primarily focused on remedies responding to purely academic factors influencing achievement. As Mondello and Abernethy (2000) explain, "in an attempt to eliminate the stereotypical 'dumb jock' image, the NCAA has consistently raised the academic requirements" (p. 127) since the 1980s. Examples include, but are not limited to, a series of increases raising initial eligibility and academic requirements in order to ensure college athletes have the ability and preparation to succeed academically (most notably Prop 48 in 1983 and Prop 16, which was fully implemented in 1996); mandating[18] athletic departments provide academic support services (in 1991); enforcing benchmarks such as college athletes declaring a major and making appropriate progress-toward-degree in order to remain academically eligible to compete; and holding institutions and teams accountable for their athletes' academic success and graduation rates, by penalizing those teams that fail to make academic progress with fewer athletic scholarships (Mondello & Abernethy, 2000; NCAA, 2009). The NCAA and member institutions have made substantial progress in improving academic outcomes for college athletes in revenue sports since the 1980s (Mondello & Abernethy, 2000). However, critics question whether institutional reforms from within the NCAA and/or athletic departments are the

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[18] Academic standards for college athletes were initially lowered in the 1970s (initial academic eligibility standards were abolished in 1972 and, in 1974, all freshmen were allowed into varsity competition in revenue sports). These changes created a nadir of academic achievement, leading to clear cases in which college athletes were exploited for their athletic ability at the expense of academics and the opportunity to earn a degree (Mondello & Abernethy, 2000).

appropriate origin for addressing athletes' academic preparation and performance (Benson, 2000; Fountain & Finley, 2000; Mathewson, 2000).

Critiques of Institutional Approaches to Academic Failure

Despite the many gains in academic standards and supports for college athletes, many continue to face substantial issues impeding their academic success. Subsequently, the NCAA continues to face criticism, due to the seeming intractability of these systemic impediments, as well as the immense financial and public relations stakes that the NCAA and member institutions have in intercollegiate athletics (especially financially and in terms of public relations). Mathewson (2000) sees an inherent conflict of interest between NCAA eligibility requirements and the organization's fundamental purpose—to protect the interest of intercollegiate athletics, not academics. Academic standards then function as an achievement ceiling instead of a floor, a "de minimis concept, which provides universities with substantial incentives to maintain, and discourages them from investing in or exceeding, the minimum eligibility requirements" (Mathewson, 2000, p. 85).

Proponents of academic redshirting argue that the practice gives college athletes who are initially ineligible a chance to adjust to college life and to "catch up" on academic subjects and courses that he hadn't taken or had failed prior to college; in this formulation taking a redshirt is essentially used as an opportunity for college athletes' academic remediation (Mondello & Abernethy, 2000, p. 129). Prior to the early 1970s, freshman were ineligible for varsity competition, "based on the belief that incoming student-athletes need a year to adapt to the rigors of college, and learn to balance the demands between class, study, and practice time before allowing them to suit up and to travel" (Grant, Leadley & Zygmont, 2008, p. 23). In that formulation of redshirting, it is an opportunity to adjust and excel academically, as well as useful

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in that it enables college athletes to receive five years of athletic scholarship. Which led Grant, Leadley and Zygmont (2008) to advocate for across the board redshirting by posing the question, "If the NCAA was serious about ensuring that student-athletes succeed in the classroom, why not prohibit or limit their athletics participation in their first year to give them a chance to adapt to college?" (p. 23). However, given the amount recent and current freshman athletes in football report training and, in particular, the supplemental freshman conditioning and academic supports such as study hall/table that they are mandated to attend, it seems likely that their restrictive schedules and the increasingly professionalized culture of college football would hinder reforms aimed at restoring the redshirt year to it's former status as a time for college adjustment.

Compounding the issue, academic reforms to intercollegiate athletics have often treated college athletes as 'empty vessels;' inactive recipients of knowledge as opposed to dynamic learners. For example, athletics counselors often 'steer' college athletes into picking certain class schedules (Fountain & Finley, 2009), in effect encouraging college athletes to passively allow others to make decisions about their futures (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000). Institutional policy responses have been almost exclusively focused on cognitive reasons for failure (Mondello & Abernethy, 2000). Furthermore, many academic reforms may actually reinforce college athletes' sense of isolation from the wider campus community by centralizing even academic services within athletic departments and disempowering college athletes by undermining their sense of control over their student role (Bell, 2009; Benson, 2000).

Lastly, students' family background, cognitive ability and prior preparation are factors relatively unresponsive to manipulation or compensatory strategies, and therefore seem counter-intuitive loci to focus on in attempting to prevent college athletes' academic failure. In contrast, many non-cognitive factors, such as motivation and behaviors, are more plastic (Adler & Adler,

1987; Harrison et al., 2010; Hyatt, 2003). Given research demonstrating that college athletes enter with high academic aspirations and expectations, which are diminished by their socialization into both athletics and the broader campus culture (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1991; Benson, 2000), it would seem that nurturing the high academic aspirations students enter with, and supporting their achievement in both symbolic and tangible ways, might provide better dividends in terms of increasing academic success (Davis, 1991; Harrison et al., 2010).

Socialization and Identity

Although some scholars have argued college athletes struggle academically due to a lack of academic motivation in ways that then place onus for failure on the college athlete,[19] most research on college athletes' academic behavior and motivation uses socialization and identity formation frameworks (discussed at greater length in the next chapter) to understand the broader structures impacting motivation (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1991, 1999; Benson, 2000; Harrison et al., 2006; Simons, Van Rheenen, & Covington, 1999). This research, which situates college athletes' behavior and motivation in interaction with socialization processes, has the potential to recognize college athletes' agency, while also avoiding 'blaming the victim' or absolving institutions of all responsibility for outcomes. This research suggests college athletes' college experiences often perpetuate academic failure (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1991, 1999; Benson, 2000; Comeaux, & Harrison, 2007; Fountain & Finley, 2009). As such, many factors found to contribute to academic failure and attrition are not inevitable, nor due to characteristics intrinsic to college athletes, but are instead the products of socialization.

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[19] Furthermore, much of the popular culture discourse in the media implicates college athletes in their own academic failure—often linking their lack of academic motivation to deficient values or laziness—and research findings suggest these stereotypes remain prevalent (Carter et al., 2010; Oseguera, 2010; Sailes, 2000).

Football players go through several overlapping socialization processes, including socialization into gendered and raced roles, and socialization into college and team communities. As these young men are socialized into the role of college athlete, the high demands on their time and resulting frequent isolation may make other college athletes an especially influential peer group and the role of athlete particularly salient (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1991; Benson, 2000). Many studies have used Role Theory to examine college athletes' academic achievement, focusing on college athletes' role-set identification and the concept of role conflict (Adler & Adler, 1987, 1991, 1999; Bell, 2009; Chandler & Goldberg, 1990; Killeya-Jones, 2005; Settles, Sellers, & Damas, 2002; Woodruff & Shallert, 2008). For college athletes, especially those on high-profile teams, the demanding time commitments, intense proximity to teammates through various contexts (wherein they become the primary peer group), as well as the stereotyping they may be subjected to by outsiders, can reinforce self-imposed isolation and over-identification with the role of athlete (Adler & Adler, 1999; Bell, 2009; Benson, 2000). Adler and Adler (1985, 1991) found college athletes enter with high academic aspirations and expectations, which are diminished by their socialization into both athletics and the broader campus culture.

Commitments. In addition to educational opportunities intercollegiate athletics participation may provide college athletes, it is important to acknowledge the duties—above and beyond those of the average college student—elite college athletes have as a result of their participation (Carodine, Almond, & Gratto, 2000; Upthegrove et al., 1999). In addition to time-consuming athletic responsibilities such as practice, weight-training, team meetings and meals, travel, and games, college athletes on high-profile teams are often treated as celebrities; catering to fans or the media also consumes time and energy, and is likely to disrupt any semblance that athletes are just like other college students (Adler & Adler, 1999).

While making the case for student services for athletes, Carodine et al. (2000) describe all college athletes as facing "huge time commitments, physically grueling workouts, a high-profile existence, and demanding expectations." The authors then extrapolate, "even in the case of an academically gifted student, the combination of academic and athletic requirements can cause incredible strain" (p. 19). This conclusion is particularly interesting for this study, in that it again highlights the navigational skills the graduate student athlete population must possess.

Direct conflicts. Often college athletes are faced with expectations that they will prioritize football above all else. Because conflict between academics and athletics is framed as zero sum, the "singular commitment required" (Harrison, 2003, p. 131) to excel athletically is viewed as incompatible with college athletes having other priorities (Harrison, 2003; Hill & Lowe, 1974; McLaughlin, 1986). "Coaches in particular are resistant to athlete involvement in other career-related activities fearing will detract from their concentration on sport" (Harrison, 2003, p. 131), so they may redirect college athletes toward the (often unrealistic) dream of playing professionally.[20] These demands can forestall college athletes from preparing for a healthy transition out of sports (Hill & Lowe, 1974) because over-identification with the athlete role can impede college athletes' career maturity (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000; Brown & Hartley, 1998).

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[20] This risk may be heightened by rules and/or policies that could serve as a disincentive for coaches to encourage degree attainment and early attainment in particular. For example, the graduate transfer rule/waiver both rewards the academic achievement/degree attainment of an individual, but it may also potentially discourage institutional agents from graduating students early, because they may lose them: "But with more graduate transfers and possibly more transfers in general, coaches will be less likely to redshirt an athlete who is more likely to leave" (Infante, 1-25-12).

Exacerbating the problem, it has often been imperative that college athletes demonstrate their commitment to football—if they intend to maintain their scholarship, much less secure playing time—because NCAA athletic scholarship terms were one year and renewal is not guaranteed (Hakim, 2000).[21] Grant, Leadley, and Zygmont (2008) review recommendations that four-year athletic scholarships be reinstated, arguing that they might "give athletes more freedom to make academic decisions (e.g., choice of major) without fear of reprisal by a coach who controls their scholarship from year to year" (p. 147). One might hope that decisions so fundamental in shaping their college educations would be made by college athletes and reflect their personal interests and goals, but studies indicate that a large percentage of the Division I collegiate athletes (of those who even graduate) report being prevented from pursuing the major they wanted (Fountain & Finley, 2009).

Academic expectations. Another factor limiting college athletes' academic achievement is the tendency of institutional representatives and actors, as well as peers and others, to articulate and expect only the minimum academically (Benson, 2000; Fountain & Finley, 2000; Mathewson, 2000). Counseling college athletes about the explicit standards they must meet is necessary; however, *steering* them toward *only* achieving academically insofar as to maintain their eligibility delimits their potential to exceed requirements and eliminates the possibility that they will *excel* academically. Fountain and Finley (2009) analyzed academic clustering (defined as at least 25% of players on a team have the same major) of football teams in one conference

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[21] As of fall 2011, the NCAA passed a resolution allowing member institutions to extend multi-year athletic scholarship offers, along with larger grants-in-aid (to better cover living expenses, which have been shown to fall short of the true cost of attendance); however, these extended contracts are offered at institutions' discretion and affect only a small subset of college athletes.

seeking to explore whether clustering was effected by the racial demographics of a team, and whether white and minority players followed similar clustering patterns. Clustering is seen as evidence that college athletes have been *steered* into easy courses and majors in order to protect their academic eligibility. They found teams with 50% or more Black players were more likely to cluster, and to have more extreme clustering. Furthermore, whites and minorities generally clustered in different majors—only three out of the nine Black clusters were also majors white players clustered in, and Blacks graduated at significantly lower rates in at least one of those (Fountain & Finley, 2009). Fountain and Finley (2009), like Mathewson (2000), raise the concern that the specter of being penalized with a reduction in scholarships could lead to even more extreme clustering, as college athletes' remaining eligible becomes increasingly important to universities' self-interest and college athletes are more aggressively steered toward easier courses and majors, effectively leading them to "*major in eligibility*" (Davis, 1991).

Stereotyping College Athletes

Some suggest better rewarding and affirming college athletes' academic accomplishments as a way to encourage academic identification and achievement (Harrison et al., 2010; Mahiri & Van Rheenen, 2009), given that young men may develop athletic identities in response to the external validation sports provide (Messner, 1992).[22] Negative images, experiences, and feedback about academics are in stark contrast to the validation and gratification college athletes seem to receive for their athletic accomplishments (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1991, 1999; Messner, 1992; Sailes, 2000). Interventions like Harrison's Scholar-Baller™

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[22] Messner (1992) suggests participation and achievement in sports are highly gratifying for boys, not just because of the recognition and accolades they elicit, but because they serve as masculinity-validating experiences.

program, which emphasizes an integrated academic and athletic identity, may help more college athletes successfully negotiate academic and athletic commitments. Furthermore, qualitative studies of college athletes' experiences in revenue sports, such as Adler and Adler's (1987, 1990, 1992) ethnography of a high profile men's basketball team and Melendez's (2008) exploration of Black football players' psychosocial development at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), provide a glimpse of the intensely isolating experiences these men endure on campus, even as they are glorified. In fact, these effects are heightened by college athletes' hyper visibility as athletes on high-profile teams, as Adler and Adler (1999) pointedly enumerate, terming the resulting process, "the consequences of glory." In other words, stigmatization may follow college athletes through various institutional domains, playing a large role in their overall college experience.

Race-based stereotyping. There is ample evidence that genetic explanations for Black males' perceived athletic dominance have infiltrated the American popular imagination (Carter et al., 2010; Oseguera, 2010; Sailes, 2000; Sheldon, Jayaratne & Petty, 2007; Woodward, 2002). Pseudo-biological explanations of Blacks' 'naturally' superior physical abilities have become naturalized and are seldom examined critically, despite the barely-veiled corollary proposition that Blacks are intellectually inferior (Davis, 1990; Hawkins, 1995, 1999; Mahiri & Van Rheenen, 2009; Sheldon et al., 2007). As Sheldon et al. (2007) explain, "there is a danger in holding this idea of Blacks' inborn athletic superiority, because of the perceived inverse relationship between athleticism and intelligence (and hard work)" (p. 45).

Unfortunately, the effects of these pervasive beliefs extend into athletes' lives throughout college. Negative interactions on campus frequently reveal others' prejudices and assumptions regarding the academic ability and commitment of college athletes (Comeaux & Harrison, 2007;

Oseguera, 2010). Research demonstrates faculty members believe stereotypes about college athletes, and Black male college athletes in particular, as well as college athletes' awareness of being stigmatized (Comeaux, 2008; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995). Furthermore, Comeaux (2008) found faculty encouragement to attend graduate school was positively correlated with Black college athletes' GPA, and was the only significant faculty interaction variable. Comeaux (2008) suggests Black college athletes might avoid interaction with white faculty due to fears of being stigmatized. He calls for qualitative studies that explore faculty college athlete relationships and illuminate racial differences in interactions with faculty. The perceived rejection of their belongingness on campus and worth as a student, particularly by a faculty member, has the potential to be damaging to college athletes' nascent academic identities, and college athletes may fall back on their more developed talents and identity to cope with the failure, thereby working to further strengthen athletic identification (Adler & Adler, 1987; Clark, 1960; Steele, 1997). Due to this reality, athlete identity and academic identity should be considered in relation to Stereotype Threat (Nasco, & Webb, 2006; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007; Yopyk, & Prentice, 2005).

Academic Success

Given the obstacles college athletes face in balancing academics and athletics, academic success is evidence of an individual's navigational skills (Carodine et al., 2000; Harrison & Martin, 2012). Despite the difficulty inherent in juggling conflicting commitments, Harrison and Martin (2012) argue their Black male participants were able to successfully balance academics and athletics with support in terms of academic advising and time management techniques. Beyond navigating time constraints, Oseguera (2010) found that academically successful Black

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college athletes had—out of necessity—developed strategies to negotiate the persistent stereotyping they encountered.

In contrast to findings suggesting the "'recognition males received for athletic accomplishments may have encouraged them to see themselves as athletes only'" (Meyer, as quoted in Mahiri & Van Rheenen, 2009, p. 20), however, Martin and Harris (2006) found academically successful Black male college athletes had internalized *productive masculinities*. These productive masculinities redefined manhood in terms of being academically successful, a role model to others, and giving back to the community. Similarly, Bimper, Harrison, and Clark (2013) use Critical Race Theory (CRT) to explain the healthy athletic identities espoused by their participants, academically successful Black male athletes. A common theme in many of the studies of academically successful college athletes is that participants cite 'giving back' to their community as a factor motivating them to be successful (Bimper, Harrison, & Clark, 2013; Martin & Harris, 2006; Martin, Harrison, & Stone, 2012).

Conclusion: Gaps in the Literature

"Most importantly, future research should investigate scholar-athletes that project new paradigms, discourses, and representations about successfully balancing academics and athletics." (Harrison et al., 2010, p. 239)

Despite increased focus on the academic achievement of college athletes in both policy (Mondello & Abernethy, 2000) and research (Gayles & Hu, 2009; NCAA, 2001a; Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982; Upthegrove et al., 1999), the population of graduate(s) student athletes remains under-examined. Much of the literature focuses on academic failure or even uses deficit frameworks to explain the underperformance of certain subgroups of college athletes. In contrast, this study examines college athletes' academic success, from a degree attainment perspective.

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Research which situates college athletes' behavior and motivation in interaction with socialization processes has the potential to recognize college athletes' agency, while also avoiding 'blaming the victim' or absolving institutions of all responsibility for outcomes. Unfortunately, this research suggests college athletes' college experiences often perpetuate academic failure (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1991, 1999; Benson, 2000; Comeaux, & Harrison, 2007; Fountain & Finley, 2009). Research must continue to explore college athletes' academic experiences in order to discover best practices for encouraging academic success (Martin & Harris, 2006; Martin, Harrison, & Stone, 2010) and to uncover how even successful college athletes may be harmed within the current system (Oseguera, 2010).

Lastly, the absence of graduate student athletes in the research literature is a glaring omission. There have been studies of academically successful college athletes (e.g. Martin & Harris, 2006; Martin, Harrison, & Stone, 2010), including Oseguera's (2010) study which defined successful college athletes as having graduated, as well as a few studies nominally related to graduate student athletes (for example, Martin's [2008] legal article dealing with the graduate transfer rule, Mahiri and Van Rheenen's [2009] book exploring the experiences and trajectory of college athletes who became academic scholars *after* their athletic careers, and Harrison et al.'s [2010] analysis of reactions to ESPN's article on Myron Rolle). Nonetheless, no research has explored the experience of participants who are simultaneously college athletes and graduate students. Nor has research explored the larger phenomenon of college athletes who graduate with remaining athletic eligibility, much less their trajectories and decisions about whether to pursue postbaccalaureate or graduate coursework.

CHAPTER 3: Theoretical Frameworks

Four broad bodies of research (College Choice; Career Planning; Role Theory; and Attribution Theory) provide the theoretical framework guiding this study; additionally, Narrative Theory and Analysis function as a conceptual framework linking the study methods and theoretical frameworks. In this chapter, I address each body of research in turn and conclude by presenting the integrated theoretical framework guiding this study.

College Choice and Career Planning

College Choice and Career Planning are bodies of research defined by their topical scope more than a central theory; nonetheless, theories which were developed to make sense of the college choice and career planning processes are crucial to operationalizing and understanding the findings of this study. Both bodies of research have evoked theories regarding aspiration, planning, preparation, and, ultimately, decision-making. While each of these concepts is central to understanding the academic trajectories of participants in this study, of particular import is the way that one's *sense of self* (used interchangeably with *identity*) affects each step within the college choice and career planning processes.

To answer Research Question 2a, *What motivated, supported and/or facilitated participants' academic and athletic trajectories?*, I looked to the literature on college choice processes, which covers the development of aspirations, plans, and final decisions, as well as literature on the college transition and career planning (i.e. the transition out of college) and, in particular, literature on the transition out of sport. The college choice process serves as a larger framework for understanding how students develop educational aspirations and go about actualizing them. For example, the search and choice of a major and of a graduate degree program may parallel the traditional college choice process. In fact, these processes may be

particularly analogous because of athletes' relative lack of control over aspects of their initial

college choice due to the recruitment system (Letawsky, Schneider, Pedersen, & Palmer, 2003).

College choice. Hossler and Gallagher's (1986) influential three-stage model of college

choice divides the process into *predisposition, search,* and *choice* stages. During the

predisposition stage, which is closely aligned with the development of aspirations, students

decide whether they want to attend college. In the search stage, students are learning about

institutions and figuring out what institutional information is important. The choice stage is when

students decide what institutions to apply to and where to eventually matriculate. For the

purposes of this research, I am interested in college choice in terms of antecedents to college-

going and the development of aspirations (for college going and for degree attainment, including

postbaccalaureate aspirations). As a result, I primarily focus on the concept of predisposition.

Search and choice processes differ substantively for athletes as compared to the general

student body, particularly in terms of the considerable power of recruiting and its attendant

pressures in narrowing the search and ultimate decision (Adler & Adler, 1991; Anderson &

South, 1993; Letawsky et al., 2003; Ryan et al., 2007). In fact, even the predisposition of some

athletes may be shaped by athletics, specifically athletic recruiting; for a subgroup of athletes,

college may only have entered their *landscapes of choice* (Nairn, Higgins, & Ormond, 2007) as a

meaningful option because of their participation in athletics (Bilberry, 2000; Eitzen, 2003). For

some students, at least in terms of perception, athletics—and athletics recruiting—function as an

alternative pathway to college, one that may seem more realistic and/or welcoming of them than

academic achievement.

McDonough used a Bourdieuian framework to argue that schools and their ecologies

participate in the creation of a school culture in relation to college—a *college-going culture*—

which in turn affects students' expectations, i.e. *habitus*, and their college choice process (Bourdieu, 1979; McDonough, 1997, 1998). McDonough (1997) argues students' class delimited the kinds of colleges in which they thought they would be comfortable; they sought to be around other students like themselves, occasionally choosing less selective colleges as a result. Students' choices were dependent on their habitus—not just their sense of identity but, instead, their identity *in relation* to group membership and representation. Given the stigmatization of athletes within the academic realm, some college athletes may not feel welcome in higher-level classes, much less graduate courses, and similarly opt-out of the uncomfortable situation by choosing a less elite path. It then follows that previous research on habitus and college-going cultures may be appropriate for conceptualizing how other institutions (like teams or athletic departments) can create cultures of college attainment, in which bachelor's and graduate degrees are normalized and treated as within college athletes' *landscapes of choice.*

Career planning. College athletes are often inundated with the expectations of others including coaches, teammates, other students, and fans; they are often expected to prioritize football above all else. Conflict between academics and athletics is often framed as zero sum, so the "singular commitment required" (Harrison, 2003, p. 131) to excel athletically is viewed as incompatible with college athletes having other priorities (Harrison, 2003; Hill & Lowe, 1974; McLaughlin, 1986). "Coaches in particular are resistant to athlete involvement in other career-related activities, fearing that it will detract from their concentration on sport" (Harrison, 2003, p. 131), so they may redirect college athletes toward the (often unrealistic) dream of playing professionally. This career steering may forestall college athletes from preparing for a healthy transition out of sports (Hill & Lowe, 1974) and impede college athletes' career maturity (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000; Brown & Hartley, 1998).

Career maturity is measured by the ability to form realistic career plans and to adequately prepare for those careers (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000; Brown & Hartley, 1998). Mature career plans develop as a product of "self exploration and identity development" (Lally & Kerr, 2005, p. 276). Super (1957) also cited the importance of self-exploration to career maturity; however, other findings suggest that many high profile college athletes do not (or are unable to) engage in these processes of academic and intellectual exploration in their college careers, due to steering and regulations such as progress-toward-degree (Ahlgren, 2001; Fountain & Finley, 2009; Navarro, 2013). In the absence of career maturity and opportunities for self-exploration and development, identity foreclosure—defined as the narrowing of perceived career paths—often occurs (Ahlgren, 2001). Furthermore, Klieber and Brock (1992) found athletes invested in a professional career were more likely to have depression and other negative psychosocial reactions to career ending injuries, which they attributed to the *disruption of a life narrative* that participants had formed for themselves. In other words, because a college athlete's identity is often tied to his athlete role, the effect of a career ending injury has the potential to devastate not only his career plans, but also his sense of self. Klieber and Brock's (1992) findings explicitly connect that sense of self to athletes' personal narratives and imply the mutual reinforcement of narrative and identity that I also posit in my integrated frameworks (see Figure 1 on page 47).

Role Theory

Roles are socially constructed, defined by society, and necessarily performative (Goffman, 1967); nonetheless, "social statuses and social roles comprise major building blocks of social structure" (Merton, 1957, p. 110). A role-identity is contextual—defined as one's identity within a given role-context (as opposed to a more stable and global *sense of self* or

identity). A role is performed, which does not necessarily require buy-in, and is thereby distinct from identity. The concept of *role-set salience* indicates how closely linked one's identity and a given role-set are; a role-identity is a role that has identity buy-in. However, in certain circumstances, individuals may generalize one role-identity so it becomes the defining characteristic in their sense of self, a concept Adler and Adler (1991) labeled "role engulfment."

Role-set. A role-set is the "complement" (Merton, 1957, p. 110) or "complex" (p. 111) of various roles an individual must fill to occupy a given status, each role defined by a relationship with a member of the role set (i.e. a stake holder) and comes with expected behaviors attached. For example, to occupy the status of college athlete, individuals must play various roles in relation to members of the role-set, such as professors, coaches, academic support staff, teammates, non-athlete peers and others. "These role-set members often play dramatic roles in determining the salience of a student-athlete's academic and athletic identity" (Bell, 2009, intercollegiate, p. 19).

Many studies use Role Theory to examine student athletes' academic achievement (Adler & Adler, 1987, 1991, 1999; Bell, 2009; Benson, 2000; Chandler & Goldberg, 1990; Killeya-Jones, 2005; Settles, Sellers, & Damas, 2002; Woodruff & Shallert, 2008). For college athletes, especially those on high-profile teams, the demanding time commitments, intense proximity to teammates through various contexts (wherein they become the primary peer group), as well as the stereotyping they may be subjected to by outsiders, can reinforce isolation and over-identification with the role of athlete (Adler & Adler, 1999; Bell, 2009; Benson, 2000). Adler and Adler (1985, 1991) found student athletes enter with high academic aspirations and expectations, which are diminished by their socialization into both athletics and the broader campus culture.

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Despite many researchers applying the role-set terminology to the college athlete population, most look at role conflict broadly and either do not utilize the role-set concept as defined by Merton in 1957 or severely simplify it, losing the nuance. These authors see role conflict as the provenance of the individual, simply roles they must negotiate, and lose the structural element of Merton's conceptualization. Most who use *role-set* collapse the theory, failing to acknowledge the distinction between a status and a role-set; for example, *student* and *athlete* as separate statuses, each with own role-set. In contrast, I examine the *college athlete* as one compounded status. All college athletes occupy an inherently compound status wherein the two statuses of *student* and *athlete* are inseparable within the current system (in other words, a college athlete is a single status; however, there are many roles that those occupying the status must assume, and many role-set members they must interact with).

Adler and Adler (1991) acknowledge and address the structural elements of a role-set, but they reinterpret Merton's concept, asserting that a role-set is an individual's entire constellation of roles, instead of the set or "complex of roles associated with a single social status" (Merton, 1957, p. 111) an individual occupies. This distinction is important given that the structural elements of Merton's role-set theory function as they do only because all members of a given role-set are linked, not just by their interaction with the same individual, but because of their mutual interactions/affects on anyone occupying that given status. This link between members of the role-set underscores their responsibility to help negate or negotiate role-conflicts at the structural level—for example, they all need the college athlete to successfully negotiate the role-set (so structural solutions are to everyone's mutual benefit). In addition to multiple roles attached to a single status, it is possible to have multiple statuses, each of which has its own role-set—in that case, if there is a conflict between role responsibilities, the individual is more or less

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on their own, and must resolve or negotiate the conflict. In contrast, occasions of role conflict and role strain are more important within the conceptualization of a role-set because the conflict is inherent in the structure of one compound status (i.e. potentially no-win situation, because conflict built into the compounded status). Merton's (1957) conceptualization provides clarity:

> As long as members of the role-set are happily ignorant that their demands upon the occupants of a status are incompatible, each member may press his own case. The pattern is then many against one. But when it becomes plain that the demands of some are in full contradiction with the demands of others, it becomes, in part, the task of members of the role-set, rather than that of the status-occupant, to resolve these contradictions, either by a struggle for over-riding power or by some degree of compromise. (p. 116)

Merton outlined the "social mechanisms articulating role-sets" (i.e. the social-structural factors that mitigate conflict within a role-set), and these mechanisms prove particularly useful when applied to the example of college athletes. They are: 1. Relative importance of various statuses; 2. Difference of power of those in the role-set; 3. Insulation of role-activities from observability by members of the role-set; 4. Observability of conflicting demands by members of a role-set; 5. Mutual social support among status-occupants; and, 6. Abridging the role-set (Merton, 1957). Furthermore, "having to 'pass to play,' [wherein] academics [is] a means to get to participate in athletics" (Woodruff & Schallert, 2008, p. 42) perpetuates the compound role of *student-athlete*, and prevents "amputating the role-set" (Merton, 1957, p. 117) as a solution to role conflict. One consequence of positioning college athletes' academic responsibilities in this way is reinforcement of *athlete* as the primary role. When one role is framed as a means to an end, the role associated with the end is—or, is at least perceived as—more salient to the actor's 'real' identity, whereas the means is seen as a role performance in the interim, simply to reach the end.

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Frequently, football commitments not only conflict with college athletes' student role, these demands may make academic success virtually impossible for some college athletes, particularly those underprepared and/or underrepresented, as they adjust to college. Adler and Adler (1985; 1991) and Benson (2000) found early academic failure led college athletes to distance themselves from their student identity and role responsibilities. The detachment from academics—as college athletes grow to see the game as rigged—leads to increasing "role engulfment," wherein the athlete role subsumes and engulfs other aspects of identity. This *pragmatic detachment* in the face of seemingly insurmountable barriers to success is self-protective and serves as a "soft failure" (Clark, 1960) while athletic achievements are substituted for the lack of academic ones. These protective shifts in roles' salience for college athletes' might correspond to ego-protecting attributions, such as, "I didn't do that well academically, because my focus was on football," or even, "it doesn't matter how I do academically, I'm here for football." In the latter attribution, the speaker's future plans and sense of identity are both invested in athletics and the dream of an NFL career, not his academic achievement, which buttresses the pragmatic detachment from academic/student identity. This is yet another example of how over-identification with the athlete role can impede college athletes' career maturity (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000; Brown & Hartley, 1998).

Attribution Theories

Attribution Theories address the way(s) in which people interpret actions and events, in other words, how they attribute causation and infer meaning from whatever happened (Weiner, 1995). Attribution theory has been applied to topics as varied as the relationship of attributional style to self-efficacy, motivation, and achievement, and the effects of attributional ambiguity and stereotype threat. Attributions primarily vary along three dimensions: *locus, stability,* and

controllability (Heider, 1958; Trope, 1986; Weiner, 1995). *Locus* refers to whether the cause is external—also called *situational*—or internal (i.e. *dispositional*). Situational attributions are factors external to the actor, as demonstrated by the example attribution, "this student didn't score well on the SAT because her school was not good." Conversely, dispositional attributions are internal to the actor, and are seen when people impute facts about the actor from their behavior, such as believing "this student must be a hard worker to get such a high SAT score." *Stability* measures whether the cause is stable or changeable and the third dimension, *controllability,* depends on whether an actor can affect or control the cause.

Beyond those three dimensions, attributions can be divided into two categories: *observer-attributions* and *actor-observations* (i.e. *self-attributions*). The *fundamental attribution error* (also called the *correspondence bias* or *overattribution effect*) argues that people tend to attribute the actions (and especially failures) of others to internal dispositional causes because they are not privy to the other's internal thoughts and the context of their actions is not salient to the observer (or, in some cases, even known). As a result, people tend to overemphasize dispositional factors and believe that the actions and achievements of others depend on the qualities of that person and are not a product of the situation that he or she was in (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Heider, 1958). The *overattribution effect* is the tendency to ascribe the behavior of others to dispositional causes, even when there could be plausible situational causes (Jones, 1979; Ross, 1977). Moreover, Malle's (2006) meta-analysis of actor-observer asymmetry found that the effect depends on the nature of the occurrence: for negative outcomes/occurrences, actors tend to make situational attributions, whereas observers tend to make personal or dispositional attributions about the actor; the converse trend is seen in positive situations. He labels this a "self-serving

pattern in attribution" (p. 895) because the self is seen in the best possible light and others are consistently undervalued.

Observer-attributions. The attributions outside observers make about others' actions and outcomes carry different implications for one's self-image than those actors make regarding themselves. For the purposes of this study, I am primarily concerned with observer-attributions because of the indirect effects they have on actors' self-attributions, so my description of observer-attributions is limited to dealing with observer-actor asymmetry and the mechanisms of stigma.

Stigma. Majority group members have a tendency to overestimate their own abilities in comparison to a minority; as a result, the over-attribution effect may be especially likely to be applied to people of color, particularly by whites (Larwood, 1982), or even to college athletes by non-athletes. Romero and Graza's (1986) study analyzed observer attributions according to the race of the observer and the race of the actor. They found that the race of both the actor and the observer mediated how the observer attributed the actor's occupational outcome. In the case of minority students, the combined likelihood that majority group observers underestimate their ability *and* attribute their successes to situational or policy effects could cause students of color to be wary of being written off as undeserving of their successes. Furthermore, given the research, this guardedness seems reasonable.

Self-Attributions. Attribution theory argues that a strong sense of *self-efficacy* (i.e. the tendency to attribute one's own outcomes to controllable, dispositional causes) bolsters student achievement by motivating students (because they believe they can affect the outcome). Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons (1992) found that "perceived efficacy to achieve motivates academic attainment both directly and indirectly by influencing personal goal setting"

(p. 674) and supporting aspirations. This finding highlights the importance of aspirations in leading to achievement outcomes in terms of college choice and degree attainment, as discussed in the earlier college choice and career planning section. In particular, Zimmerman et al. found efficacy for self-regulated learning affected students' perceived self-efficacy for academic achievement and, presumably, their aspirations and actual achievement. This finding further supports a connection between students' emphasis on their agency and control (which are akin to self-regulation) at key moments during their academic journey and their status as high achievers.

In contrast to self-efficacy, *learned helplessness* is an orientation in which previous failures have led to the belief that success is unlikely or impossible, as well as out of one's control, and, therefore, there is no incentive to attempting a task (Diener & Dweck, 1978; Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003; Rholes, Blackwell, Jordan, & Walters, 1980). In analyzing the phenomenon, Diener and Dweck (1978) found that whether children focused on attributing the *cause of their failure* or *forward-minded correctives* was correlated to learned helplessness; in short, "helpless children focused on the cause of failure, whereas the mastery-oriented children focused on remedies for failure" (p. 457).

Because high self-evaluations (particularly of self-esteem and self-efficacy) are important to future motivation and academic success, many scholars have examined the apparent disjuncture between the high academic self-ratings of Black students and their relatively low academic achievement (Heilman, Block, & Stathatos, 1997; Walton & Cohen, 2007). One explanation for incongruity between self-ratings and outcomes is that *attributional ambiguity* may buffer individuals' sense of self. Attributional ambiguity is experienced in situations in which there are multiple plausible causes for another's behavior; the term is most often used in the case of minorities who "mistrust of the motives behind other people's treatment of them"

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(Walton & Cohen, 2007, p. 83) due to widespread stereotypes and stigma. Heilman, Block, and Stathatos (1997) refer to "performance information ambiguity," because feedback is potentially distorted by stereotypes, its reliability is unclear.

Whether group membership affected others' behavior towards oneself is often unknowable. However, the effect of an ambiguous interaction can be very concrete in terms of how a stigmatized individual interprets it and how that attribution affects him or her. Attributing negative behavior or feedback to prejudice can protect self-esteem by offering an explanation that is external to the stigmatized group member and outside of his/her control (Crocker & Major, 1989; Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003), thereby buffering "well-being in the face of negative feedback" (Hoyt, Aguilar, Kaiser, Blascovich, & Lee, 2007, p. 886). For example, college athletes may believe that others don't understand their situation and are biased against them because of perceived benefits, so those negative assessments may be summarily dismissed as based on a faulty premise and biases.

Stereotype threat. Stereotype threat is the "fear people have of being reduced to a stereotype" (Inzlicht, McKay, & Aronson, 2006, p. 262). Much of the research on stereotype threat has focused on the detrimental effect anxiety due to perceived bias can have on minorities' performance in evaluative contexts. Stereotype threat researchers have also posited that, as a result of their fear of confirming negative stereotypes, stigmatized individuals may actively work not to adhere to stereotypes or to demonstrate alternatives and "may become overly concerned with managing the impressions they project and try to suppress the concerns and emotions the stereotype raises" (Inzlicht et al., 2006, p. 263).

Academic performance is an especially high-stakes evaluative context, in which stereotype threat might be expected to surface. One of the ways stigma negatively affects

performance is that a member of the stigmatized group may distance his sense of self from the stigmatized arena (Steele, 1997). This "simple domain disidentification" is in fact an adaptive reaction to stigmatization, in which the stigmatized individual is "rescuing [sic] of self-esteem by rendering as self-evaluatively irrelevant the domain in which the stereotype applies" (Steele, 1997, p. 623). Thus, disidentification is akin to the idea of "pragmatic detachment" (Adler & Adler, 1991); both concepts convey that one way to neutralize threats to self-esteem is to "devalue the domains in which they feel devalued" (Steele, 1997, p. 623).

Inzlicht, McKay, and Aronson (2006) argue self-regulation is required to cope with stigma and prejudice. They assert that self-regulation is a limited quantity and dealing with stigma or threatening situations depletes these finite reserves of self-regulation, which may leave stigmatized individuals with fewer cognitive resources to devote to other projects. This cognitive load has negative effects on working memory and, ultimately, performance on evaluative tasks (Inzlicht et al., 2006; Stone et al., 2012). Interactions with out-group members may be inherently draining—regardless of whether one's group is stigmatized—because the potential for prejudice (or the perception thereof) activates "ego depleting" coping mechanisms. Not only are these interactions more draining for stigmatized individuals because of the power structure reinforcing them, a minority group member is also likely to interact with majority group members at a higher rate than members of the majority group interact with minorities (because of their numerical dominance), so these "ego depleting" interactions are much more frequent for minorities. Priming for a stereotyped identity has been shown to negatively affect college athlete academic performance, verifying that stereotype threat affects this already vulnerable student population (Nasco, & Webb, 2006; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007; Yopyk, & Prentice, 2005).

Affirmative action is a good example of a policy context that may lead to attributional ambiguity. Doverspike, Taylor, and Arthur (2006) found "the presence of a race- or sex-based policy gives non-beneficiaries or independent respondents an alternative explanation for any success achieved" (p. 41). Similarly, college athletes are often seen as beneficiaries of unearned academic advantages, such as lower admissions standards, financial support, and specialized academic support services, which may be seen as unfair advantages in a highly competitive setting. As such, college athletes' academic success is likely attributed to situational factors instead of dispositional factors in ways similar to that which Doverspike et al. (2006) described for other stigmatized groups. Both Malle (2006) and Summers (2006) concluded that the over attribution effect functions in such a way that minorities' "success will tend to be attributed to the policy rather than to the personal attributes of the beneficiary" (Summers, 2006, p. 911). In other words, observer bias from the over attribution effect is likely heightened when observing members of a stigmatized group—such as college athletes—within a salient context (in this case, the academic context). Resendez (2002) found that minorities hired under affirmative action were regarded as less competent and perceived to be hired for reasons other than merit, regardless of their actual qualifications. Illustrating the complexity of actor-observer asymmetry in an affirmative action context, Summers (2006) found that men thought that women promoted to management were less qualified; whereas, women thought the same only if they thought an affirmative action policy was in place, but judged the same female hires as qualified if they believed the company was anti-affirmative action.

The research literature suggests that affirmative action need not cause self-doubt for beneficiaries (Bowen & Bok, 2000; Doverspike, Taylor, & Arthur, 2006; Eberhardt & Fiske, 1994; Heilman & Alcott, 2001; Heilman, Lucas, & Kaplow, 1990; Moses, 2001; Stewart &

Shapiro, 1999), though that is one possible repercussion (Summers, 2006). Heilman and Alcott (2001) warn, "unless they are very clear about their task ability, the consequences of knowledge of the other's view of themselves as having been preferentially selected can be debilitating, promoting low self-efficacy and inhibiting performance" (p. 581).

Furthermore, because of stigmatization, potential beneficiaries of affirmative action and other policy interventions (for example, special admissions policies for athletes) experience ambiguity in terms of observers' attributions regarding their outcomes. Heilman and Alcott (2001) explain, "when women know that another views them as having benefited from preferential selection, they infer that the other has negative expectations of their competence" (p. 581). They found that "these inferences of negative expectations occur regardless of how capable the women regard themselves to be;" furthermore, they conclude, this awareness "of the societal stigma attached" makes minorities (in their study, women), "wary about how they are seen by others" (Heilman & Alcott, 2001, p. 581). As such, their study sheds light on the apparent paradox that persons with high self-esteem and high self-ratings sometimes experience stereotype threat, finding that the two are not incompatible (Heilman & Alcott, 2001).

Thus, research justifies the reasonableness of a fear of being assumed to be unqualified, despite success, when the context lends itself to attributional ambiguity; even those studies demonstrating a connection between affirmative action and diminished self-esteem or self-efficacy generally attribute the relationship to stereotype threat or insecurities about others' attributions, not a direct negative effect of affirmative action on stigmatized groups, but an effect mediated by perceived observer-attributions (Heilman & Alcott, 2001; Summers, 2006).

Narrative Identities and Role Identities

Roles and narratives both influence identity, they are co-constitutive (Riessman, 1993; Sfard & Prusak, 2005) (narratives are discussed in more detail in the next chapter). The stories we tell about ourselves—to ourselves, as well as to others—in order to establish a coherent and cohesive identity, as well as the roles we fill (i.e. our behavior, in the context of society), shape our sense of self and are influenced by our pre-existing sense of identity. In other words, personal narratives and our role performances each reflect *and* shape who we are. Therefore, the roles we fill and our personal narratives inform each other in an iterative process. Neither is static nor pre-exists the other; instead, they interact with and affect an individual's ever-evolving sense of self.

Chapter Summary

College Choice and Career Planning are bodies of research defined by their topical scope more than a central theory; nonetheless, theories which were developed to make sense of the college choice and career planning processes are crucial to operationalizing and understanding the findings of this study. Both bodies of research have evoked theories regarding aspiration, planning, preparation, and, ultimately, decision-making. Each of these concepts is central to understanding the academic trajectories of participants in this study; of particular import is the way that one's *sense of self* affects each step within the college choice and career planning processes. Previous research has explored how roles and role-sets affect self-concept, actions, and outcomes, as well as the interactions between roles. Roles are socially constructed and defined, as well as performative (Goffman, 1967). A role-identity is contextual—defined as one's identity within a given role-context (as opposed to a more stable and global *sense of self* or *identity*). Attribution Theory addresses the way(s) in which people interpret actions, both their

own actions and those of others, and how they attribute causation and make meaning of events (Weiner, 1995).

Integrated theoretical frameworks. These four frameworks inform this study in several important ways. "Who you are" (i.e. your *sense of self* or *identity)* is constructed through 1. what you *do* (and your corresponding *roles*), 2. *why* and/or *how* you do it (questions you answer with attributions), and 3. the personal narratives you weave. People reveal their attributions through narratives, a narrative can make the link between what happened and why or how it happened, and its meaning. All attributional statements and beliefs take a narrative form (though it might be a rudimentary narrative), whereas not all narratives involve explicit attributions, especially not causal attributions. However, looking at narratives can provide insight into a participant's causal attributions, and these attributions matter because attributions affect our future actions and sense of self in many ways, as evident in the research literature. The concept of *salience* also has bearing here. The more salient a factor is, the more likely that people will view it as a causal factor. For example, if you are in a setting in which being an athlete is salient, the attributions you've made about yourself in that context become more significant—if you think you achieved athletic success through hard work, you'll probably demonstrate a sense of self-efficacy in approaching future athletic endeavors, but that might not carry over to academic endeavors. Ultimately, as should be apparent in Figure 1, each component of one's identity collectively feeds into his college choice and career planning processes, as well as his future plans and actions.
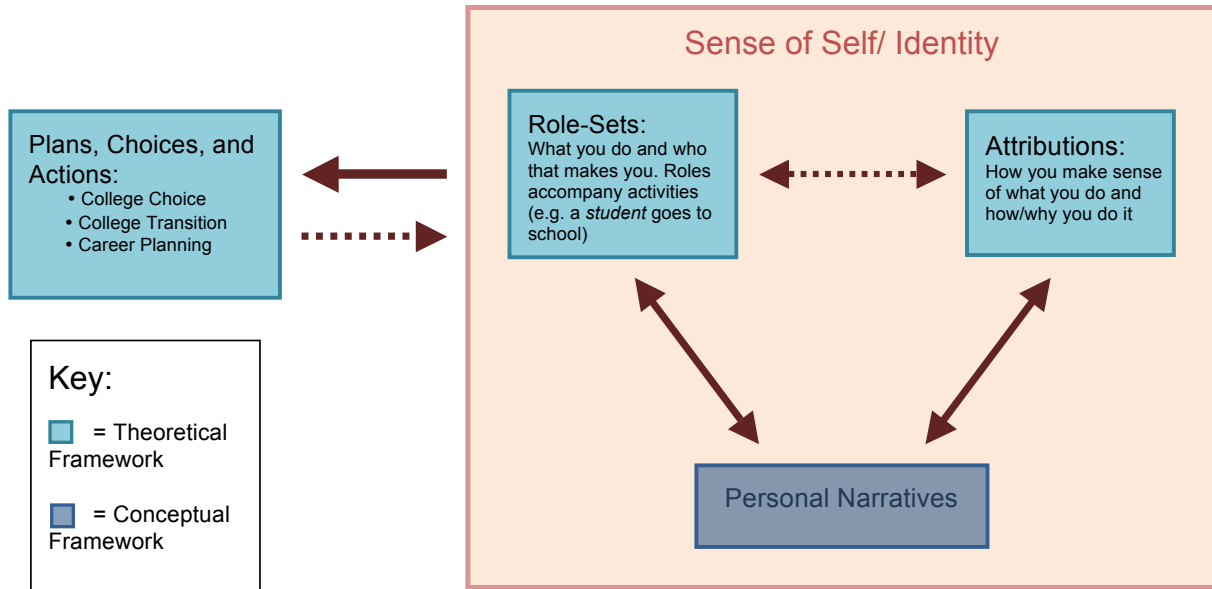
Figure 1. Relationship between frameworks. This figure illustrates how the theoretical and conceptual frameworks relate to each other.

CHAPTER 4: Methodology

This study follows former Division I football players who earned a bachelor's degree and began postbaccalaureate coursework within their athletic eligibility, as well as players who are currently doing so. Data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 11 participants. Interviews were conducted over the phone; this method of data collection was chosen because of several advantages, which are discussed in more depth below. Open-ended interview prompts (the complete interview protocol can be found in Appendix A) address three research questions:

1. What were participants' lived experiences as graduate(d) student athletes?

   a. How did participants navigate those experiences and balance their various roles as graduate(d) student athletes?

2. What motivated, supported and/or facilitated participants' academic and athletic trajectories?

   a. *How* were participants able to pursue these trajectories?

   b. *Why* were they motivated to do so?

3. How did participants make meaning of their graduate(d) student athlete status?

4. Were these decisions, processes, and/or experiences moderated by race? If so, how?

This narrative-based inquiry uses the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) and is rooted in the tradition of phenomenological research. The intent of the constant comparative method is generating theory more systematically by "plausibly suggesting (not provisionally testing) many properties and hypotheses about a general phenomenon" (Glaser, 1965 p. 438). Similarly, phenomenology, which is both a methodology and a philosophy (Creswell, 2009, p.

13), calls for the holistic examination of phenomena, due to the belief that they are intricately related. As a result, "understanding them requires looking at a wide sweep of contexts: temporal and spatial, historical, political, economic, cultural, social, and personal" (Schwandt, 1994). This chapter broadly covers the methodology undergirding this research study, including: the population of interest; the position of the researcher; the conceptual framework, the data collection methods, such as the rationale behind phone interviews and how the interview protocol was developed, recruitment, and the actual sample of participants, as well as the data analysis strategy.

Population of Interest

Beyond my personal ties,[23] one might reasonably ask why study graduate student athletes in football to the exclusion of graduate student athletes in all other sports? The reasons for focusing on football players in particular are both methodological and analytical. The specificity of selection criteria should enable this study to analyze participants' individual experiences in the contexts of (a) the broader phenomenon of graduate student athletes, (b) the range of experiences within the phenomenon, and (c) the larger system that served as its antecedent. I foreground college athletes' lived experiences in this study, as well as their agency within those experiences.

Methodologically, given my interest in understanding whether race moderates these men's experiences, the strict selection criteria—which dictates not only which sport participants play(ed), but also their gender, and to some extent their level of athletic (D-I) and academic achievement (earning a bachelor's degree in four years or less)—will make racialized patterns clearer and thereby add to the validity of my analysis of RQ3. In contrast, Woodruff and

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[23] Discussed at length in the section *Locating Myself*, beginning on page 55.

Schallert's (2008) study of college athlete motivation had a sample of only nine participants—within which three racial/ethnic categories, differing levels of academic achievement, and both genders were represented. Controlling variance on some dimensions of identity that are less germane to my research questions is all-the-more essential to data quality because not only do in depth qualitative methods necessitate a small sample size (11), but to recruit even that small number of participants I included students and/or alums from six institutions, each of which undoubtedly affected participants' experiences.

Revenue sports are in many ways distinct from non-revenue sports, as are the experiences of the college athletes who play them (Adler & Adler, 1991; Byers, 1995; Emerick, 1996; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Mitten, 2000; Upthegrove et al., 1999). Given that these experiences are so qualitatively different, a study of athletes in both revenue and non-revenue sports would more likely reveal how incomparable these students are than enable in depth exploration of the phenomenon in terms of lived experiences.

However, the argument for narrowing my focus to college athletes in either revenue or non-revenue sports fails to explain why I did not then choose graduate student athletes from Olympic sports or from *all* revenue sports (i.e. why I did not include basketball players). The most practical retort to either alternative is pure math: football recruits, gives scholarships to, and maintains on team rosters, more athletes annually than any other college sport (NCAA, 2011, Participation report). In 2009-2010, 66,313 athletes participated in NCAA football, 26,325 of who were in D-I football, out of a total 249,307 NCAA athletes, and 90,837 D-I athletes (NCAA, 2011, Participation report, p. 68).

A secondary reason to exclude basketball players is the rarity of this level of academic achievement, and especially degree attainment, by male D-I basketball players, historically (for

example, in 1990, D-I male basketball players had a 5-year graduation rate of 32%, compared to D-I football's rate of 47% [Davis, 1991, p. 753]).[24] Both NCAA eligibility requirements and NFL rules set the stage for the phenomenon of graduate student and postbaccalaureate participation in athletics. Unlike basketball and the NBA, football players must wait three years after their high school graduation to enter the NFL draft (NCAA Memorandum, 2010). As a result, collegiate football is not susceptible to players opting out of higher education in favor of going straight to the pros, as basketball players often did prior to 2007, nor to the 'one-and-done' phenomenon that collegiate basketball has experienced since 2007, when the NBA instituted a rule requiring players to be one year out of high school before entering the draft.[25] Presumably, all football players enter college intending to persist for at least the three years before they can enter the NFL draft, in which time it is possible for many to earn a bachelor's degree (an exemplary case, Myron Rolle graduated in two and a half years and was already working toward a graduate degree when he was named a Rhodes scholar, see Harrison, Lawrence, Bukstein, Janson, & Woodle, 2010).

The sheer number of participants in D-I football provides a large universe of possible participants; in 2009-2010, 26,325 college athletes participated in D-I football as compared to

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[24] In 2006-2007, the only year in which the Graduate Transfer Rule was unrestricted, a total of 112 graduate student athletes transferred; however, only 25 were in revenue sports, 16 of who competed in football (Martin, 2008, pp. 120-21).

[25] ESPN's Katz (2008) quoted faculty athletic representatives as saying the one-and-done rule "probably generates a lot of one-year kids that don't want to be in college," and "is against the real academic success and integration and the academic life of a university," which led one to conclude the rule "is disruptive to the college program, coaches and recruiting."

the 5,182 D-I men's basketball players (NCAA, 2011, Participation rates report, p. 134, p. 132).

Another result of football's largesse is my participant population has football in common with

the largest group of college athletes within any one sport,[26] and may offer particular insight into

bettering their academic experience. The high percentage of football players who are Black also

makes a racially diverse sample (with a plurality of Black and white participants) feasible.

Furthermore, the disproportionate representation of Black males among college athletes, coupled

with their extreme under-representation in the college student population as a whole, means a

large percentage of all Black males in college are athletes (for example, Person and LeNoir

[1997] used the statistic that one out of nine Black men in college was an athlete to explain the

broader applicability of their findings).

The racial demographics of participants in D-I football are also important to the goals of

this study analytically. "In 2009-10, for the first time, the highest percentage of football student-

athletes in Division I was Black (45.8 percent) followed closely by white football student-

athletes (45.1 percent)" (NCAA, 2009-10 Student-Athlete Race/Ethnicity Report, p. 5). This high

concentration of Black college athletes in D-I football (and D-I basketball, which is 55 percent

Black), is in contrast to the 18.7 percent of all NCAA athletes who are Black, and is indicative,

in the case of football, of Black college athletes clustering not only within the sport, but also at

the highest level of competition.[27] Football's racial demographics provide an opportunity to not

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[26] A total of 66,313 athletes participated in NCAA football in 2009-2010, the next most populous men's sport

overall was baseball (30,365 college athletes), whereas outdoor track and field was second to football in terms of the

largest number of D-I participants with 10,812 (NCAA, 2011, Participation report, p. 134, p. 132, & p. 170).

[27] Black men comprise 42.2 percent of D-II football players, and only 16.7 percent at the D-III level (NCAA, 2009-

10 Student-Athlete Race/Ethnicity Report, pp. 9-10). This steep decline in participation may indicate that Black

only better understand Black college athletes' experiences, but also to examine the lived experiences of the white college athletes who comprise a plurality of D-I football players, and who are so rarely studied (at least not as 'raced,' instead they are studied by default when researchers ignore race). Participating in a sport that is increasingly associated with Black masculinity and athleticism, especially at the highest levels, likely affects white football players' college experiences, their sense of academic as well as athletic identity, and the meaning they make of race.[28]

The recruiting structure and, arguably, the philosophy of collegiate football--and to a lesser extent the NFL—reflect the adage *football is a game of replaceable parts* (Fountain &

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college athletes are using (or at least trying to use) sports as a means to an end—wherein participating is a path to college access/a scholarship, and/or to being drafted as a professional. Because D-III participation does not provide athletic scholarships, and is a relatively unlikely springboard to a professional career in the NFL or NBA, participating at that level would be nonsensical if sport was seen as solely a means to a different end. Therefore, the relative paucity of black collegiate athletes competing in D-III football could be evidence that Black athletes are particularly likely to hold this means-to-an-end ideology regarding athletic participation (especially given football's high physical tolls). It should be noted that whereas Harrison (2006) advocates using sport as a means to an end, and as a spring board to graduate school specifically, Mahiri and Van Rheenen (2009) problematize the narrative of sports as a means to an end. Mahiri and Van Rheenen (2009) note that sports frequently circumscribed participants' academic aspirations and identities, and juxtapose the 'means to an end' understanding of the body with the luxury of viewing sports as an avocation, as many white and/or advantaged communities do (and which helped make Van Rheenen's "choices about prioritizing academics over athletics less conflicted" [p. 39]).

[28] Because of the dearth of scholarship on white college athletes' racialized experiences, I do not have any well-founded hypotheses about what specific topics or themes may be raised in the course of this study. However, I am approaching the study cognizant of the gap in the literature and how it may have marginalized, silenced, or diminished the accomplishments of this generally-privileged population.

Finley, 2009; Mahiri & Van Rheenen, 2009).[29] Large numbers of college athletes are relegated to

the bench for much of their college career due not only to extreme competition for playing time,

but also because of the sport's high instance of serious injury (Harrison, 2003; Kleiber & Brock,

1992;[30] Mahiri & Van Rheenen, 2009; McKee et al., 2010). Sustaining an injury may result in

temporary periods in which a college athlete cannot play and is therefore able to focus more on

academics, or may prematurely end his football career. These incidences may underscore the

importance of having a 'backup' plan for life after football (Mahiri & Van Rheenen, 2009),

making participants in the sport particularly attuned to how precarious a professional career is.[31]

Additionally, emerging data has reshaped our understanding of how brain damage accumulates

in a sport like football, and what its lived consequences are (Boston University, 2009a, 2009b;

Masel & DeWitt, 2010; McKee et al., 2010; University of Texas, 2010). This brain damage

research is likely particularly salient to the population I study: these men are essentially investing

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[29] This is reflected in the perceived need for the NCAA to recently regulate "oversigning" in football, which "was done in anticipation that some of the recruits would not qualify academically or would drop out for another other reason. Because the rules limit the number of student-athletes on scholarship, current or prospective student-athletes could find their scholarships were no longer available." From
http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/Issues/Recruiting/Football+Recruiting accessed 5-14-11.
http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/Test/Issues/Recruiting/Football+Recruiting updated March 9 2012, accessed 6-20-12

[30] Klieber and Brock (1992) found athletes invested in a professional career were more likely to have depression and other negative psychosocial reactions to career ending injuries, which they attributed to the *disruption of a life narrative* that participants had formed for themselves.

[31] The NCAA estimates that only 1.7 % of collegiate football players (which represents .08% of high school players) will play professionally (NCAA.org).

heavily in their brains, an incredibly fragile resource that is put at risk by the same sport which provided many of them the opportunity to access higher education and thereby invest.

Locating Myself: Position of the Researcher

My initial interest in this phenomenon, and the experiences of the young men at its center, was sparked when one of my younger cousins earned his Bachelor of Science degree as a redshirt junior and prepared to begin graduate coursework during his fifth year of eligibility, playing D1 football. Having transitioned into graduate school straight out of undergrad, I was struck by the awkward symbolism of walking in graduation and then returning to the same school and team, with very little reminder of how fundamentally one's student status had changed in the interim. I knew one narrative that explained my cousin's educational trajectory: in his case, according to the accepted familial narrative, the decision to redshirt and use all five years of his scholarship eligibility to access graduate coursework was premeditated (before he even entered college), strategic, and supported by an extended family that places a high premium on academic achievement and degree attainment. However, I was haunted by further questions and my inner-social scientist wondered how representative is his story? It felt impertinent to harass my younger cousin with the myriad questions I had about his personal experience,[32] and his story alone could not satisfy my need to contextualize his narrative within the wider phenomenon and system that enabled it.

Qualitative research recognizes the researcher as an "instrument" or "tool" for data collection and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998) and demands that we consider the way(s) a specific researcher affects a given study. I chose this population for many reasons,

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[32] As the study has developed, I did enlist his expertise as an informant.

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explored in greater depth in the "Population" section of the Methodology chapter; however, my own identity, experiences, and worldview also influenced the choice. My father played football at the University of Michigan in the early '70s and went on to play for several NFL teams (albeit before my lifetime), and three of my cousins played D-I collegiate football and have made the transition into the NFL during this research study. My earliest memories include running around a football field to demonstrate play formations to the high school team my Dad coached, as well as accompanying him to the 49ers' training facility in Santa Clara, where their head athletic trainer attempted to relieve the pain of injuries then almost two decades old (which my dad sustained in college, during the trainer's tenure at Michigan). Given the way football has shaped my perspective and personal history, as well as my close ties to indisputable football insiders, my perspective is—partially—that of an insider. Through my direct connections, not to mention others' acceptance of me as an insider 'from a football family,' I enjoy somewhat privileged access to this participant population. This access and credibility was central to my original recruitment strategy and my belief in the feasibility of my work (although its importance waned during the research process, as discussed in recruitment, beginning on page 64).

My racial identity both highlights and obfuscates, in turn. It was inconceivable to me that any person could be as 'unraced' as some white participants reported, because my racial identity is central to my sense of self. Exacerbating my surprise was that my pilot interviewees were all Black (one was Black-white biracial) because of my personal networks, unfortunately, this meant that the protocol could have been better adapted for broaching race and related topics with white participants.

My familial connections make the success of football players, and their experiences on and off the field, personally salient. For example, new findings which fundamentally change our

understanding of how traumatic brain damage accumulates and what its lived consequences are matter to me on a very personal level: as the specters of dementia, depression and other terrifying implications for my father's health present a looming threat to my family (Boston University, 2009a, 2009b; Masel & DeWitt, 2010; McKee et al., 2010; University of Texas, 2010). I have tried to be conscious of this salience and its affect on my perspective throughout this study, and I have written reflective memos during the research process, in order to provide transparency and assist me in separating findings from my own biases (Maxwell, 2005).

In contrast to my individual status as an insider, and despite my personal sense of affinity with this population, my gender marks me as an outsider and was a necessary consideration as I designed and implemented the study. As a woman, my exclusion from much of football's culture is undeniable (Foley, 1990; Gems, 2000; Hartman, 2003; Messner, 1992). I prepared myself for gate-keeping questions, which participants used to test my knowledge and determine whether I was sufficiently knowledgeable to merit candor (Stephens, 2007). Furthermore, as a woman in her mid-twenties, participants may relate to me according to any one of various available social scripts (Goffman, 1967). Because of this, I endeavored to simultaneously make participants comfortable, gain their trust, and firmly establish myself in the role of a professional researcher. I chose to conduct interviews over the phone in order to reinforce this role and develop a positive researcher-subject relationship (Stephens, 2007), in addition to the other benefits of the mode (discussed at greater length in the *Interview Methods* section, beginning on page 61).

I am ambivalent about intercollegiate athletics, given the potential for conflicts of interest between academics and athletics. However, my ambivalence does not lead to stasis, it drives me to want to understand success within the system, as well as how to expand on that success. For me, acknowledging the potential for conflict and even the reality of specific tensions does not

cast doubt on the possibility that college athletes can successfully integrate their athletic and academic identities into one productive scholar athlete identity, it simple means we still have more work to do.

Conceptual Framework: Narrative Theory

Narratives are defined as responses that feature "emplotment" and are "storied" (Holt, 2010); in other words, responses which take the form of a coherent narrative arc. The beginning and end of narratives are often signaled by entrance and exit talk (Riessman, 1993, 2001) and narratives are distinct from other kinds of talk (like question-and-answer or other turn-taking exchanges). Narratives about the self, "personal narratives," are central to identity development because they define what kind of person one is, as well as delineating what kind he is not (Sfard & Prusak, 2005); "individuals recapitulated and reinterpreted their lives through story telling" (Riessman, 1993, p. vi). In the process of narration, speakers "reveal aspects of who they are— they engage in identity claims with regard to how they would like to come across as well as in terms of potential answers to the who-am-I question" (Bamberg, p. 102). As a product of this narration, speakers are "agentive self-constructers" (p. 106).

Furthermore, Sfard and Prusak's (2005) narrative theory of identity explains, "identity features prominently" whenever one addresses the question of how "collective discourses shape personal worlds" (p. 15). In other words, a nascent personal narrative also interacts with a canon of narratives; individuals chose from amongst the familiar narratives and try to act in ways that reaffirm those narratives as applying to them (for example, casting themselves as the hero in a personal narrative that follows familiar heroic arc). As a result, narrative "stories often shape, rather than simply reflect, human conduct" (Riessman, 1993; Rosaldo, 1989, p. 129). We try to reframe our past behavior in flattering narrative molds, but we also strive to act in accordance

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with the roles we've already embraced and come to identify with (for example, if one sees themselves as a hero, he will likely attempt to react to future challenges in a way he thinks is consistent with his hero identity, rather than capriciously shifting his identity then reassessing the narrative).

Bamberg (2012) argues individuals negotiate three dimensions in forming a coherent identity through personal narratives: 1) constancy and change over time (diachronic identity navigation); 2) sameness versus difference (belonging v. individuality); and 3) agency (the "agency dilemma" of whether to portray oneself as agentive or victimized). Bamberg (2012) looked at a series of "small stories" in relation to each other (i.e. a set of mini-narratives in interaction) and found that individuals offer "accounts of their lives in the form of integrated narratives" (Bamberg, 2012, p. 103). These integrated narratives are a primary way in which individuals are able to establish diachronic continuity or discontinuity. In other words, telling a series of related 'small stories' is a strategy narrators use to demonstrate their change and growth over time or the constancy of their identity—frequently, integrated narratives portray a balance between the two (Bamberg, 2012).

Mahiri and Van Rheenen (2009) used participants' life history narratives to analyze their individual paths from scholarship athlete to academic scholar, and emphasized moments in which participants made "an intentional turn of events" toward bridging the "breach between their sense of themselves as becoming scholars and ways that school and society worked to constrain them as athletes only" (p. 7). The authors refer to this process as "turning to reveal oneself" (p. 46), and make sense of the interplay between powerful structural influences and participants' considerable agency by explaining "individuals move in prescribed ways but turn intentionally to announce their individuality" (p. 48).

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Application to the current study. This analysis looks at the "what" of narratives rather than the "how," focusing on the themes within participants' narratives more than the narrative production itself (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012). I asked each participant to frame his own narrative by beginning with this broad line of questioning: "… can you start by telling me about **how you came to** take postbaccalaureate/graduate courses while playing football?" Narrative-based inquiry is a particularly appropriate methodology given that role theory and attribution theories provide the inductive theoretical framework for this study (Adler & Adler, 1987). Participants' narratives are texts through which they define their identities and roles, and were analyzed using a narrative analysis lens.

As interviews progressed, I asked both analytic and topical questions (Stake, 1995), but the tenor of the interview was set by each participant's narrative response to the first question. After that initial response, the interview protocol loosely followed the three themes Seidman (1991) proposes for phenomenological interviewing. Although Seidman (1991) recommends three distinct interviews, I used his themes to structure a single, in depth, interview with each participant. The interview protocol was developed in an iterative pilot-testing process with three former collegiate football players (all of whom enrolled in graduate programs after college, though they were not simultaneously enrolled), and refined the protocol after each pilot. This process allowed me to anticipate participants' likely interpretation (and, in some cases, misinterpretation) of questions, as well as hone my proficiency making connections between the topics of interest and to practice probing tactics on men with demographic characteristics similar to participants. By the third pilot test, the questions were clearer, the flow from one topic to the next more natural, and the timing under the target length of forty-five minutes per interview. The entire protocol can be found in Appendix A, beginning on page 203. Although my analysis relies

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more heavily on the constant comparative method than strict narrative analysis techniques, the protocol elicited narrative data and my methods throughout, as well as my analytic strategy, were influenced by my understanding of narrative theory.

Interview Methods

Telephone-based interviews have traditionally been considered a last resort data collection method, used only for convenience when face-to-face interviews are unfeasible (Novick, 2008). Novick's (2008) comprehensive review of methodological research on the use of telephone interviews in qualitative research found a widespread "implicit" bias against phone interviewing (p. 394). Among the most serious arguments against phone interviews is the charge that they may silence commonalities between interviewer and participants, and this silencing can impede the development of rapport as compared to interviews with "physical presence, which tends to be more intimate" (Creswell, 1998; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009, p. 7; Sellen, 1995; Shuy, 2001).

Recent scholarship has challenged the taken-for-granted assumption of the superiority of face-to-face interview methods (Holt, 2010; Novick, 2008; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009; Shuy, 2001; Stephens, 2007). Scholars have noted the particular benefits that phone interviews may offer researchers in terms of practical concerns such as flexibility in scheduling interviews (especially with a busy and geographically dispersed population), financial feasibility, lack of time spent traveling, and a controlled environment for the researcher (Stephens, 2007; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). In fact, Holt (2010) argues telephone interviews should be "seriously considered as a preferred alternative" (p. 113) for some populations and research topics, not just a second-best option. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) find no difference between data gathered via phone and face-to-face interviews and note that the "desire to be discreet" (p. 115) may be a

motivation for participants to do phone interviews. In particular, their analysis examines the depth and quality of the data content, with the goal to "maximize quality while minimizing imposition on respondents" (p. 109)—an especially relevant goal given Burnard's (1994) observation that "face-to-face interviews do not allow the interviewee any 'escape'" (p. 68).

Whereas in-person interviews may help develop rapport by highlighting commonalities between interviewer and interviewee, phone-based interviews may benefit from the converse effect, wherein differences are muted and mitigated by the physical and metaphoric distance, enabling rapport to develop in spite of differences (Holt, 2010; Stephens, 2008). Conducting interviews over the phone may take some focus off my demographic characteristics; because we will only interact verbally, physical differences such as race, age, and even gender, to some extent, may be less salient.

In addition to the aforementioned benefits, Holt (2010) reports that the medium of phone interviewing helped to differentiate her interviews from the intrusions and "gaze" of other professionals that her study population (parents of students who'd been in the juvenile justice system) had prior experience with, such as social workers, psychologists, and police. The participant population in this study is in many ways less vulnerable than those in Holt's work; however, intercollegiate athletes are also likely to experience intrusions by multiple others who hold significant power over their lives. In these interactions with coaches, the NCAA, the media, fans, and others, participants may face interviews or similar questioning; however, these interviews are often high stakes (in the sense that there may be right and wrong answers which lead to consequences) and may encourage participants to believe they have to be circumspect in interview situations. As such, there is a need to differentiate the interviews I will conduct for research purposes from those other interactions, and especially from experiences with interviews

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for the media. In this way, the 'strangeness' (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004) of a phone interview actually works to benefit the study.

Despite the oddity of this mode for interviewing, participants are accustomed to speaking on the phone, a medium that mutes body language. Participants know they cannot fall back on non-verbal cues, which creates a "need for full articulation" (Holt, 2010, p. 116). The result is interviews in which participants expand on and clarify their points, making the data richer (Holt, 2010). In the case of coded language, terminology, and "shared" understandings, which I may not share with participants, the phone offers me more latitude to probe participants without potentially undermining my legitimacy. Furthermore, the introduction script of the interview protocol for this study subtly educates the participant about the phone interview process, thereby guarding against potential limitations of the medium.

Finally, Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) suggested that data quality may benefit from researchers' ability to focus and facilitate effectively during phone interviews, whereas they found it "more difficult to keep track of areas to probe with face to face participants" (p. 114) due to distractions in the physical setting. The medium of the phone may lend itself to "less frequent, but more directive, shaping" (Stephens, 2007, p. 211) by the interviewer. This can affect the tenor of the conversation and encourage participants to share in depth narratives, as opposed to shorter answers. Novick (2008) noted that some research suggests that the silences inherent in phone interviews may provide opportunities for participants to collect their thoughts and expound on their point, whereas in a face-to-face interview the interviewer would have jumped in to probe (effectually cutting the participant off and thereby limiting the quantity and quality of data collected). The synchronicity between my interview style and the strengths of the

mode enabled me to use "mode-specific tactics" (Novick, 2008, p. 396) for eliciting high quality data and made phone interviews the most appropriate choice for this study.

Recruitment. I used mixed purposeful sampling (Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2001) to recruit participants who had begun postbaccalaureate coursework during their NCAA eligibility and to ensure I reached a racially diverse sample. Stratified purposeful sampling lends itself to comparisons between subgroups, such as different races (Patton, 2001). Snowball or chain sampling is a method in which informants identify additional participants; snowball sampling is appropriate for this study because the population of interest is hard to identify and contact, as well as generally closed to outsiders (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2001). I utilized my extended network to foment snowball sampling (Patton, 2001); recruitment began when I email contacts connected to collegiate athletics and/or football in order to request their assistance in recruiting for my study. I then contacted men believed to fit my participant criteria, in order to explain the study and invite them to participate.

I anticipated that a relatively high percentage of contacts would matriculate into the study, due to the paucity of opportunities to discuss these topics and experiences (which positively reflect on participants, so discussing them would likely be affirming and help to reinforce positive identities) and because of participants' anticipated desire to counter stereotypes by representing academically successful student athletes in this study. Unfortunately, potential participants did not matriculate into the study at nearly the rate anticipated and recruitment methods had to be revised. My revised recruitment strategy enabled me to reached out to the academic support staff for athletics at universities with high graduation success rates;

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these staff members informed eligible current and/or former football players of my study and, if one wanted to participate, put us in touch with each other.[33]

At the conclusion of each interview, I asked the participant if he knew other potential participants and, if so, requested that he forward information about my study on to them. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. I offered each participant the opportunity to review the transcript of his interview to ensure it was accurate and reflected his views, and as a second opportunity for participants to address any confidentiality issues. These *member checks*, addressing whether data required confidentiality, were especially important to this study because some of the data had the potential to make participants unavoidably identifiable and participants had awareness of revealing details that may have seemed relatively uncontroversial to me (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Maxwell, 2005). Two participants responded to explicitly approve the transcript; other participants either declined to review their transcript or implicitly approved the transcript they received.

The average interview time was just under an hour (59.3 minutes), with a large variation—the longest interview was an hour and 40 minutes. The two shortest interviews (30 and 34 minutes) were with participants who were in season at the time. All participants were assigned pseudonyms; furthermore, whenever their institutions are mentioned I use acronyms for institutional pseudonyms. To further protect confidentiality, where I discuss specific individuals' playing positions, quotes and anecdotes are scrubbed of even pseudonyms. I do discuss

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[33] This was the only contact I had with academic support staff; however, this recruitment method may have served as a self-selection factor in terms of oversampling participants who had positive relationships with academic support staff, or inhibiting participants' disclosure of negative assessments of support services due to a perceived connection between the researcher and staff.

participants' graduate and undergraduate degree programs because this information is essential to my study, preserving these identifying details was a priority and I excised other information in order to protect confidentiality while maintaining this relevant information about participants (often combinations of information pose the largest threat to confidentiality).

Participants.[34]   The final sample of participants included 11 young men, of whom five identified as Black, five as White, and one as Pacific Islander (PI).[35] Participants hailed from six

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[34] A note on sample size: my study's sample size is comparable to many of the in depth qualitative studies of similar populations (with the exception of the Adlers' five-year participant-observer-ethnography). For example Mahiri and Van Rheenen (2009) studied six participants, and Woodruff and Schallert's (2008) study of college athlete motivation had a sample of only nine participants—within which three racial/ethnic categories, differing levels of academic achievement, and both genders were represented.

[35] Because this study included only one PI participant, I do not examine the race of the PI participant. To protect his confidentiality as the sole participant from his ethnic/racial group, I do not label the races of the white or PI participants at any point. When I discuss Black participants' distinct experiences, if there is a comparison, it is to white participants and the PI participant is excluded from those analyses. I decided that it would be inappropriate to collapse the PI participant in with Black participants and discuss them as "athletes of color" because 1. the PI participant's voice and experiences sound qualitatively different than that of Black participants, whose narratives overlap intra-racially in important ways, and 2. a comment from a white participant (discussed in the footnote 40, and on page 85-86) convinced me that PI and Black athletes might face disparate racial climates within college athletics. Obviously, the PI participant is not white, and it is not my intention to collapse him with white participants—it is an imperfect solution, but scrubbing these participants' racial identifiers throughout the analysis was the best way to protect his confidentiality without distorting his experience. I do not intend to reify the normalizing or "racelessness" of whiteness—white players lived equally raced lives, at the minimum, in terms of the privilege of their race being normalized. I did not similarly scrub the race of Black participants because of my desire to provide that context to readers wherever possible without compromising participants' confidentiality.

Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) universities, which represented five conferences. Most

institutions were represented by a single participant and the most participants from one

institution was four.

Table 1

Participant Sample

Participant Pseudonym	Race	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program	Academic Progress (At time of interview)
Alec		Criminal Justice	Exercise Science	Completed Masters within eligibility
Braeden		Political Science	International Security	Just started MA courses
Carlton	Black	Human Development and Family Studies	Applied to Sociology master's	Graduated with 2 years remaining eligibility; beginning grad school the next semester
Cliff	Black	Psychology	Educational Psychology	Midway through 2 year MA (returned post-NFL attempt)
Darius	Black	Sociology	Undeclared	Graduated, taking postbaccalaureate coursework (aspires to a graduate degree)
Ellison	Black	Criminal Justice	Criminal Justice	Just completed 2 year MS (returned post-NFL)
Myles		Family Studies	Business Administration	Midway through 2 year master's degree
Ryan		History	Undeclared (leaning toward Higher Ed Admin)	Graduated, just beginning graduate coursework (not yet enrolled in degree-granting graduate program)
Tevin	Black	Human Sciences	Did not intend to take graduate courses	Graduated, taking postbaccalaureate coursework
Toby		Public Policy	Humanities	Midway through 1 year MA
Zach		Education	Higher Education Leadership	Midway through 2 year MA

Due to the selection criteria, all participants had graduated with a baccalaureate degree at

the time of interview; of those, two had completed their master's degrees, five more had started

graduate coursework toward a master's degree, and four had not taken graduate coursework at

the time of our interview. One of the two who had already completed his master's was able to do

so within his scholarship eligibility (by compressing a two year program into two summers and

one academic year of coursework); he was the participant farthest removed from school, having earned his master's in the Spring of 2010 and being interviewed in Spring 2012. The other master's recipient had returned to finish his MS after playing two years in the NFL, he earned his master's about two months prior to our interview. Three of those in the midst of graduate programs were still playing collegiate football, the other two participants had exhausted their athletic eligibility while completing the first year of their Master's programs: one took a year off in an attempt to enter the NFL (he bounced around on practice squads) and was back to finish his master's at the time of our interview, the other was embarking on a two-year religious mission, but fully intended to return to his alma mater to complete his master's degree in 2014-2015. Of the four participants who had not started graduate coursework at the time of their interview, one did not intend to take any graduate coursework, one was unsure whether he would take graduate courses while eligible (though he intended to pursue a graduate degree later in life), and the other two had realistic plans for enrolling in (and likely completing) degree-granting graduate programs during their scholarship eligibility (each had at least a year and a half of eligibility remaining).

All participants had used a redshirt year, thereby gaining a fifth year of scholarship eligibility; however, using a redshirt was not necessarily premeditated or related to degree aspirations. For example, three participants unexpectedly used a medical redshirt because of injuries during a season in which they had expected to play. All participants received an athletic scholarship for at least part of their career and most were originally recruited as scholarship athletes; however, one participant was a preferred walk-on who later earned a scholarship and

the starting position.[36] One participant entered an "academy" for one semester between high

school and college, which his parents paid for out of pocket.[37] All participants stayed at their

original higher educational institution for graduate or post-baccalaureate work; in other words,

players using the graduate transfer rule are not represented in the sample, nor are players who

began their college careers at community colleges. Two participants' master's programs were

largely online.

Data Analysis

The data analysis strategy is aligned with the mode of data collection (Holt, 2010), in that

my interest in narrative analysis is well served by phone interview data, which "stays at the level

of the text" (Holt, 2010, p. 115). Similarly, Kvale (1988) asserts, "interview research considered

as a narrative supports a unity of form between the original interview situation, the analysis, and

the final report" (p. 104). Data analysis relied heavily on interview transcripts; however, analytic

memos created throughout the research process added by examining impressions, themes and

nonverbal data about interviews—such as tone and hesitancies. I used what Glaser (1965) terms

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[36] This participant's parents were able to pay for his first two years of undergrad, after which he earned a full

scholarship. He described his experience as a walk-on as giving him a "chip on my shoulder" and serving as

motivation to prove himself both on and off the field. Furthermore, being a walk-on convinced him that he was

admitted to his elite private institution because of his academic prowess and bolstered his academic identity.

[37] This participant was temporarily declared academically ineligible by the Clearinghouse (according to him, his

high school counselor sent only his partial transcripts), and the institutions that recruited him had filled their rosters

by the time the error was corrected. He was a middling student in high school and very well may have benefitted

from the intensive academic preparation and military structure provided by his months at the preparatory academy,

but his sense that his tenure there was a mistake and he was not there because of academic difficulties (in contrast to

his peers) also helped develop his academic identity, which was previously lacking.

the second rule of the constant comparative method: "*stop coding and record a memo on ideas*" (p. 440, emphasis in original) whenever conflicted over whether to ruminate further on one category or delve back into the data more broadly. Analytic memos helped me draw connections, explore themes, and analyze the data as new themes emerged; reflective memos supported my effort to be self-aware about what I brought to the research process and the ways it might affect my actions and interpretations (Maxwell, 2005).

Data analysis was both inductive and deductive: a "continuous, iterative enterprise" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12), wherein I constantly reexamined and reshaped my methodology and analyses as I learned more. For example, the follow up questions in my interview protocol evolved to better probe emergent themes and my coding scheme developed and changed as I utilized my preliminary analyses to inform it.

Analytic strategy. I used Dedoose, a web-based tool for data management and coding, to facilitate the analytic strategy described in further depth below. Miles and Huberman (1994) insist "qualitative analysis needs to be well documented as a process" (p. 12); similarly, Kvale (1988) cautions, "every phase in an interview project involves decisions which provide constraints in the later phases of the project" (p. 91), so transparency about those choices is essential. I've taken these suggestions to heart, hopefully not at the expense of losing my readers in the minutia of analysis! The study design was influenced by previous research and existing theories (see Review of the Literature and Theoretical Framework chapters). The inductive and deductive strategy of analysis considered these frameworks and, in fact, used them as a starting place for analysis; however, the analysis is also grounded in the data, which is particularly important given how little we know about this subset of the college athlete population. I began with a preliminary "start list" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58) of broad codes based on topics

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and themes that my theoretical framework and research literature suggested might be fruitful. These broad codes tended to be content or topical categories, rather than being interpretive or thematic. The initial list included: SES; Role Conflict; Teammates/Other College Athletes; Stereotyping; Race; Student Services; Professors; Family—facts; Family—interaction/influence; Career goals; Athletic Identity; Academic Identity; and College choice. Along with these broad categories for coding the interview content, I also coded for discreet narrative responses, organized by the prompt (e.g. narrative responses to the first and last interview prompts, coded "Q1" and "closing narrative," respectively), in order to isolate these incidents for a more in-depth narrative analysis process later.

This coding scheme helped me get a sense of data as a whole and served an indexing function (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Huberman & Miles, 2001). Additionally, I used the initial code categories as my starting point for Glaser's (1965) *constant comparative method* of data analysis. He described the constant comparative method as "joint coding and analysis" (p. 437), wherein, during coding, the researcher compares each incident with the other incidents previously coded in the same category, and these comparisons begin to reveal theoretical properties of the category. Thus, I used Glaser's (1965) constant comparative method to develop new topical and thematic codes, to group related codes within "parent codes," and to further refine my initial coding scheme. I then recoded, using the new coding scheme, within Dedoose. As coding continued, I coded for narratives according to their topical content (e.g. narratives about participants' transition to college or about being stereotyped). As the iterative analysis continued, the initial coding scheme developed in response to the data (for the final list of codes, see Appendix B, on page 208).

Analysis and Organization of Findings

When this study was conceptualized, the research questions about trajectory, motivation and support came first, seen as a decision process that preceded their college experience as graduate student athletes; however, during the research process, it became apparent that even for those athletes who had mapped out this path for themselves very early on, their college experiences had a crucial impact on their persistence and eventual degree attainment. Furthermore, for several participants, their trajectory was inseparable from their college experience, with neither pre-existing the other, but instead their path and experience mutually evolving. In deference to this finding, this dissertation is organized around the reordered research questions.

Chapters 5 and 6 address the first research question, *What were participants' lived experiences as graduate(d) student athletes?* Out of the many college experiences participants recounted, two major themes emerged and frame these two chapters: *Stereotyping* and *Time*. The discussion section of each chapter addresses research question 1a. *How did participants navigate those experiences and balance their various roles as graduate(d) student athletes*? The theme of *Earned Autonomy* is present in both discussion sections, as are lesser themes. Chapter 7 primarily responds to the second research question, including it sub-questions, and begins to answer the third research question. Chapter 8 picks up where Chapter 7 leaves off in answering research question three and revisits question 2b, *why were participants motivated to pursue this trajectory?* Chapter 9 integrates findings from each chapter to form a fuller picture of participants' trajectories of experiences, as well as the larger phenomenon, concluding with implications for theory, policy, and practice.

CHAPTER 5: Stereotyping

The stereotyping theme frames participants' college experiences in several important ways. Participants entered college with preexisting understandings of what it meant to be a college athlete and often prevalent stereotypes helped shape those expectations. Participants' exposure to stereotypes about college athletes preceded their own college experiences and may have even contributed to their surprise at the realities of the time and academic pressures (discussed in the next chapter). Findings reveal participants were acutely aware of the stereotypes lobbed at them, as well as strategic in how they interacted with both stereotypes and the people who stereotyped. However, participants' success in exerting control over their own images varied. After an introduction to the prevalent stereotypes participants discussed, this findings chapter is organized into the following sections: *stereotyping incidents: non-athlete peers, stereotyping incidents: faculty, negotiating stereotypes,* and *graduate status as counterproof* (please see the graphic representation of quotes for this chapter on pages 94-95).

Participants described facing stereotypes and assumptions about college athletes throughout their college years. These stereotypes relate to everything from how college athletes allegedly treat women, how they dress, their socio-economic background, and their (lack of) academic promise and motivation. In regards to academics, the stereotyping participants encountered generally fit into one or more of the following three tropes: first, 'student-athletes' were intellectually inferior; second, they were primarily enrolled in college for athletic reasons (rather than academic ones); and, third, 'student-athletes' received special privileges which smoothed their academic paths. These three stereotypes are distinct but interwoven and mutually reinforcing.

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The best known of these tropes is the "dumb jock;" as Braeden articulated, "a lot of people assume that, being a football player, you're big, dumb, and stupid." Both Ellison and Toby reference that, as college athletes, they are assumed to be less intelligent than their non-athlete peers; however, they tie this observation to how athletes are admitted into college and thereby establish there is stigma associated with 'special admission.' Toby shares that other students "might not believe that [college athletes are] as smart as they are, because football players in general are given a little more leeway in terms of what kind of grades they had in high school and test scores and whatnot." Similarly, Ellison explains, "other students definitely stereotype, you know, not just football players, but athletes, as far as being not being as smart or not working as hard as some of the other students, you know, people who just got into school regularly." However, in contrast to Ellison who lumps hard work in with intelligence, Toby distinguishes between the two factors, saying, "I'm not saying all the guys on the team are geniuses, but I also think they try hard and they want to do well, which there's a lot to be said for that." In doing so, Toby picks his battle, demonstrating his belief his teammates' caring and trying hard is more important than their raw intelligence. This framing reveals the ethos that hard work and preparation beat all else, which is unsurprising, given the prevalence of similar adages in competitive athletics.

Further, by linking admissions "leeway" (Toby) and the assumption of inferior academic ability, participants pinpoint a tension reinforcing the three academic stereotypes: if underprepared students are admitted because of their athletic prowess, the admitting institution has a responsibility to support them with the academic scaffolding to succeed (not to mention they must meet the NCAA mandate that academic counseling and tutoring services be provided

for athletes, which was approved in 1991). Darius recognized the inherent conflict and how it places underprepared college athletes in a no-win situation, saying:

> I think that's problematic: when you're recruiting athletes—especially hard schools—when you're recruiting athletes and they're not *student*-athletes and you put them in a hard school, or a hard class, I don't think it's their fault that they're there, I think you put them in a hard situation.

The problem is complicated by the fact academic support systems are likely interpreted as confirming and reinforcing the belief college athletes are not intellectuals, as well as the third stereotype about college athletes: that their academic success is all but guaranteed by over-active support systems.

Let us return to the second trope, the assumption academics and/or education are not college athletes' primary motivation for college attendance, which has the power to negatively affect college athletes' interactions with both professors and non-athlete peers. Toby reports "a lot of people just assume athletes aren't interested in their class; they're just there to play football… a lot of teachers make assumptions about players, and some students make assumptions as well, that football players don't care about their grades." Because effort and personal investment in one's education are viewed with respect by others, being perceived as someone engaging in these behaviors cultivates goodwill and may spur others' help; conversely, a lack of effort and motivation is particularly damning, especially with educators. As a result, faculty may spend less time on a given student's work if they believe he is an indifferent pupil (as evident in Toby's example on page 80).

Further, the stereotype leads to skepticism of college athletes' motives and can cause observers to second guess even successful students and seek out alternative explanations for their

success (Doverspike et al., 2006; Resendez, 2002; Summers, 2006). For example, in his Master's program, Cliff faced questions about whether the program was simply a placeholder on his path to the NFL, which explicitly questioned his educational commitment and revealed peers' skepticism of an elite college athlete's academic motivation and degree aspirations. Cliff explained that the peers in his MA program who knew he was still playing football "were just like, 'wow'… and they'd ask like, 'what do you want to do with your degree?' or 'do you just want to make it to the NFL and then just not continue your Master's degree?'" As a result of this routinized questioning, Cliff felt the need to insist he is someone who finishes whatever he starts; in doing so, he ties his identity to this assertion, correctly sensing the questions' negative insinuations about his character and skepticism, which he wishes to refute.[38]

The third trope, the belief college athletes' path is gilded because they receive special privileges and therefore don't have to work at anything other than athletics, is the most destructive and frustrating of the stereotypes because it provides an alternative explanation for any academic success college athletes achieve, denying them both agency and accolades. Cliff and Myles enumerated "the stereotypes about athletes: that we're babies, that we're spoiled, that we have nothing to complain about because everything—school—is paid for… this is the attitude of both faculty and just general students" (Myles);

> Judged or stereotyped…? Yeah, yeah, I'll have to say yeah, because I think a lot of times student athletes get a negative reputation as far as they think that—well, I'm not going to say "they," but some people—think that just because you're student-athlete that a lot of

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[38] This skepticism is part of why Chapter 8 is devoted to the alignment of graduate(d) student athletes' career goals and their education plans.

the times people do your homework for you or you don't have to work hard, or, you

know, basically things are just given to you. (Cliff)

The stereotypes Myles and Cliff identify weighed heavily on participants because they worked

very hard to consistently balance academics and football, yet that hard work was dismissed and

its positive outcomes cheapened in the eyes of those who believed the trope (Crocker & Major,

1989). As a result of this systematic process of invalidation, Braeden felt, "I've definitely been

stereotyped and almost marginalized, I would say, being a football player."

Stereotyping Incidents: Non-athlete Peers

Participants' accounts often implicated non-athlete peers in stereotyping; however,

participants tended to be more able and willing to disregard stereotyping from the general student

body than stereotyping from faculty members. For example, Cliff described "a minor altercation"

during undergrad in which a classmate made several accusations "referring to a paper that I spent

a pretty extensive time on and put my hard work into," such as, "'you guys have people that can

do your work for you,' basically, and 'you didn't spend time on that paper.'" Although Cliff's

frustration is evident in his words, he was able to write off the accuser as "really jealous" of the

higher grade Cliff earned on the paper and thereby Cliff avoided internalizing the situational

attribution his classmate provided for his success. Similarly, Myles denounced stereotypes,

saying, "it's really shortsighted that [other students] felt this way, that they thought this way,

because they wouldn't survive one day in the shoes of the student-athlete, not one day." Like

Myles and Cliff, many participants dismissed or countered stereotypes in the same statement in

which they identified them; in other words, participants didn't just state stereotypes or incidents

with stereotyping, they reflexively combat their legitimacy. This serves to protect their sense of

self-efficacy and self-esteem by offering an explanation that is external to the stigmatized group

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member and outside of his control (e.g. the observers' jealousy or a lack of understanding) (Crocker & Major, 1989; Hoyt et al., 2007; Major et al., 2003).

Although a lack of understanding is arguably something within participants' control, several participants acknowledged the limitations of their ability to change minds, and consciously chose to instead focus on what they perceived as more worthwhile pursuits than arguing the point (such as *demonstrating* their commitment to academics or focusing on convincing faculty rather than students). For example, after denying he'd been stereotyped, Tevin made the caveat, "there's some people that are like 'he plays football, he's a player, he's… just whatever.' But there's always going to be people like that, but you kinda just have to block it out." In other words, participants did what they could to avoid confirming stereotypes, then coped by ignoring whatever stereotyping continued and reconciled those seemingly contradictory responses by believing outsiders did not or could not understand what it's like to be a college athlete. Exemplifying this internal negotiation, Alec recalled an ongoing series of adversarial debates about pay-for-play that took place in his Exercise and Sport Science Master's program:

> the people who just did not play sports, they just didn't understand the commitment and, you know, the time that goes into something like [competing at the college level]. … [whether to pay college athletes] was a huge, huge argument in grad school. It was always the athletes against the non-athletes, and the non-athletes thought that they should have no money, but that's just because, in my opinion, that they just really don't understand what goes into being a student athlete.

Alec argued non-athletes simply did not understand the experience of college athletes, thereby giving his adversaries the benefit of doubt that they would agree, if they only understood the real situation. This stance also enables Alec to dismiss their viewpoint without actively vilifying non-

athletes. The belief that people did not understand, and were biased against them as athletes, buffered participants from prejudice, because they could dismiss this feedback as ill-informed, instead of a valid criticism (Crocker & Major, 1989). This belief allowed participants to negotiate negative messages without letting them undermine their academic identity. There is likely a second factor reinforcing the tendency to respond to peer stereotyping this way: participants' time constraints collude with stereotypes so they may not bother to confront inconsequential assumptions, instead choosing to limit their social circles. This is a different, more concrete, protectiveness over their time and emotional energy, in addition to the protectiveness of their ego and self-image.

Stereotyping Incidents: Faculty

Despite accounts which often implicated non-athlete peers in stereotyping, participants were more likely to discuss and be troubled by stereotyping incidents that occurred in class or involved professors, with Toby going as far as to assert stereotyping was "most obvious with teachers." Participants tended to be more able and willing to use relatively passive methods for coping with the stereotyping from peers, such as simply disputing its validity or ignoring it, whereas stereotyping from faculty members was not only "obvious," it also portended negative consequences. As a result, college athletes felt compelled to address faculty stereotyping in more proactive ways, in order to protect themselves from discrimination. Tevin explained this common thought process:

> I feel like, just being a student athlete, more than anything, you know, you walk into a
> class and you know the teacher will automatically have—some teachers—will
> automatically have an opinion of you because you're a student athlete, so they think that

you don't work for anything, that everything is just given to you, I feel like that can kind

of hurt you in a way and you have to kind of like prove them wrong.

Tevin's response indicates a perceived obligation to engage with the stereotypes of faculty

members, in order to dispute them, which is a burden participants felt heavily and is discussed at

further length in the section *Onus to Disprove*.

Providing a more concrete example, Toby recounted this incident:

I had a teacher my freshman year who—he knew I was a football player—and I handed

in a paper, and I got the grade back: there was *nothing* written on it—most of the class

had stuff written all over their papers, all I had was a grade. (Emphasis in original

inflection)

When Toby asked for constructive feedback, his professor "ended up handing it back to me with

a much higher grade, with all this work on it." In this case, if Toby had not advocated for

himself, not only would his professor's inaccurate assumptions about his engagement in his

education have remained unchallenged, he also would have gotten a lower grade than he

deserved. Myles' answer to whether he thought he'd been judged or stereotyped during his

college career further highlighted the real-world consequences of faculty stereotypes, he

responded:

I probably was, but I didn't feel like I was. Nobody treated me differently. In actuality

though, in undergrad… there were some Gen Ed teachers who were very… I want to say

'rude' to the athletes. They were very, very rude to us, you know, they kind of caused a

lot of problems for us.

So, although his first instinct was to deny stereotyping, Myles recalled discriminatory behavior

likely stemming from stereotypes, which is actually a stronger statement than just being

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stereotyped. This distinction may explain why participants focused their criticism on faculty stereotyping: these incidents were treated more seriously because faculty members hold very real power.

Furthermore, football and basketball players may be especially visible and identifiable as athletes in classes due to their physical size, the potential racial disparity between revenue athlete populations and the rest of a given student body, and their fame on campus, as well as other markers, such as wearing athletic gear or arriving en mass from team events; this visibility is often heightened by counseling athletes into the same courses and clustering in certain majors. All of these factors collude to make athletes easy targets for stereotyping. Darius recounted:

> I've been in classes where I've been addressed as 'the football players' or 'the guys who sit here'… I've definitely been stereotyped before, on numerous occasions…. one example is where football players would walk in late all the time and I guess that would be disruptive and I guess the teacher was like, 'okay, the football players are always doing this and that…' I'm obviously a football player, so I was kind of included in that. All students—not every student is on time, there's always students that walk in late, but when you get a group of students walking in late and they're part of the same group, you know, they're going to be targeted, so it kind of takes away my credibility in terms of when I can come to class and how long I have to stay in class…

Darius' example demonstrates that even when the grouping seems relatively benign (as opposed to being borne of blatantly negative stereotypes), faculty conflating student athletes into a monolithic group still has the power to "take away his credibility." This in turn effects his autonomy by instilling in him a sense of responsibility for disproving the stereotype in order to be seen as an exception amongst his group; in contrast, someone who was not perceived as a part

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of a distinct group can 'fly under the radar' and may not be called out for the same behavior or, at the least, would not be seen as representing a group, nor confirming a stereotype, even if they were caught in the same offending action (in this case, being late to class). As a result, Darius feels the need to adjust his behavior (he may become hyper-vigilant about punctuality) because stereotype confirmation is a severe additional consequence to a misstep by an athlete (Steele, 1997).

Taking classes with large enrollments of athletes heightened Darius' sense of being monitored, both because of the increased visibility of his athlete status (to other students and to professors) and because the athletic department was more likely to "class check" attendance in courses with more athletes enrolled (or with more athletes enrolled who were struggling academically). These parallel consequences added to his and other participants' determination to avoid courses with a lot of athletes enrolled and to not wear athletic gear, tellingly, these participants' coping strategies echo those enumerated by Oseguera (2010).

Negotiating Stereotypes

Disrupting overgeneralizations. In addition to their overall awareness of stereotypes, in several cases, participants also acknowledged their partial internalization of those stereotypes, with many acknowledging other athletes who acted in confirmatory ways. Ultimately, each participant contested stereotypes relating to college athletes' academic achievement when they were directed at them personally; however, the extent to which they bought into the validity of stereotypes for describing *other* college athletes varied greatly. For example, Myles shared:

the stereotypical athlete is obnoxious, he comes into class late, sits in the back, he's got his earphones in, he's distracting… and, I mean, I'm not gonna lie—if I was a teacher

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and I saw that, that would rub me the wrong way. But the fact is, not every athlete is like

that, some athletes sit in the front, some of us contribute to the class in a positive way."

Tevin similarly carved a distinction between himself and those feeding into stereotypes, saying,

"I know a lot of student athletes that don't go to class, but I'm in class every day, like *I don't*

miss class." Despite confirming that stereotypes about student athletes were sometimes true, the

way Myles and Tevin (as well as several other participants) frame the distinction, 'some athletes

might do *x*, but not all of us do,' actively combats monolithic stereotypes of college athletes and

beseeches the listener to consider them as individuals.

Several participants expressed muted frustration with other athletes whom they perceived

as reconfirming stereotypes, explaining those stereotype confirmations ultimately made it that

much harder to personally be seen outside of prevalent stereotypes, much less effectively combat

them. For example, Ellison lamented that despite his efforts to change professors' negative

opinion of athletes, "sometimes there'd be other players in the room who would make it worse

and the teachers would hate us even more." Like Ellison, participants tended to combat

stereotypes by acting as a counter-proof and role model instead of directly addressing

teammates' confirmatory behavior—offering credos about their individual responsibility not to

contribute to stereotypes.

Often participants attributed a perceived lack of stereotyping to their behaviors, which

contradicted or invalidated stereotypes. Ellison felt his academic success inoculated him against

the second stereotype about college athletes' lack of academic motivations, saying, "my grades

were good enough to where nobody really, nobody ever really questioned whether I wanted to be

in school or if I was there for the right reasons." Similarly, Tevin again cited his impeccable

attendance record as evidence his behavior limited other's ability to stereotype him: "I'm always

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in class, so it's kind hard to stereotype me if, you know, I don't make a big scene out of myself in class. I sit there and take notes or whatever." As proactive as this framing may be, it also places the responsibility to disprove stereotypes on college athletes, instead of holding institutional factors or those actively stereotyping and/or discriminating against athletes accountable.

One white participant, who was especially calculating in how he presented himself, attempted to introduce himself to people as an individual before he was associated with the football team and attendant stereotypes. He described how, when he meets new people:

I usually wait for them to make some comment like, 'oh, you must play sports' or 'you must play football,' I never say I play football; I try not to wear football clothing… I would rather people not just assume that me playing football means that I'm a certain type of person.

However, when I asked him whether he was "readily identifiable as a football player walking around campus," he responded wryly, "I mean I'm big and I work out a lot [laughs], so I think most people probably assume that I play sports, but I wouldn't say l look like the general type of football player, no." In other words, regardless of how they cultivate their images, sometimes, the sheer physicality of football players singles them out. This participant's strategy for dealing with his visibility echoes Oseguera's (2010) finding that one of the ways high achieving Black student athletes react to stereotyping is to "disguise athletic identity" (p. 316). However, this particular participant is unmarked in an important way: he is white. Findings from this study demonstrate that negative stereotyping about student athletes affects white college athletes as well as athletes of color and deserve further research attention. Nonetheless, race-based stereotypes persist and uniquely effect Black college athletes, influencing their college

experience as well as the ways they negotiate stereotyping (these phenomenon are examined in more depth in the next section, *Negotiating race-based stereotyping*).

According to this same white player, "with football there's a connotation of a certain kind of attitude, I have never—I don't think—that I've ever given that off to people," but some teammates did. In fact, he felt he understood the origin (and validity) of some negative stereotypes of football players better after being on a diverse college team, because he attributed the negative behavior to the Black players on the team:

> the connotation of being on the football team like you treat women a certain way or you act a certain way... I think that comes a lot from the African-Americans on the team— don't get me wrong, there's really a lot of good ones, a lot of smart ones—but the majority of them, at least in my experience, have been: not very good at school, have not tried, have not sought help, have not been respectful towards authority, and have not treated women well, have gotten in trouble with the law, so it kind of brings an overall better understanding of both sides and it kind of brings an understanding of why there are such stereotypes…

This participant went on to mention his Polynesian[39] teammates and praise Pacific Islanders as "some of the nicest, most down-to-earth people ever: they're so family oriented, and they are probably the best cooks *on the planet*" (emphasis in original inflection).[40] The first thing to note

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[39] *Polynesian* was the term he used, whereas I tend to use the term *Pacific Islander* because it encompasses Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian peoples.

[40] As discussed in footnote 35 in the methods chapter (on page 66), this white participant's racial dichotomization, combined with the distinct racial views expressed by the one Pacific Islander participant, convinced me that it would be inappropriate to collapse him in with Black participants and discuss them as "athletes of color." Not only did the

about this passage is the facility with which this participant makes a damning and, frankly, racist, opinion sound fairly reasonable. He hedges and makes exceptions to his generalizations, but his overall message is still: *spending time with Black athletes convinced me that there is validity to the negative stereotypes about college athletes, but these stereotypes are being unfairly applied to all athletes*. Furthermore, his hedging produces a problematic dichotomizing of Black and Pacific Islander athletes. These divergent perceptions deserve further research in more targeted studies and raise intriguing questions (for example, within college athletics, are Pacific Islanders positioned as a 'model minority' in contrast to Black athletes?). Additionally, this quote highlights that race-based stereotypes seem more likely to extend to character, not just academic ability and/or motivation: negative stereotypes about white college athletes assert they are "dumb jocks" or "meatheads," whereas Black athletes are even more visible on campus than their white counterparts and face more damning stereotyping about male chauvinism and criminality, in addition to race-based pseudo-biologic indictments of their intelligence (Hawkins, 1996; Woodward, 2002), all of which is layered atop the dumb jock and meathead stereotypes. However, what is most relevant to this dissertation is that this white participant's resistance to stereotyping is more about disaggregating by race, in order to 'more accurately' stereotype, than actually combating the validity of negative stereotypes about college athletes. This is the downside to fighting stereotypes by 'disrupting overgeneralizations:' it is a fight with narrowly delimited boundaries—arguing *some of us* don't belong in the negatively stereotyped group, not that *the stereotype itself* is incorrect and/or unjust.

PI participant's voice and experience sound qualitatively different than that of Black participants, whose narratives overlapped in important ways, this one racist comment reveals that PI and Black athletes might face disparate racial climates within college athletics (and there is little to no literature with which to hypothesize).

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Negotiating race-based stereotypes: Perspective of Black participants. When asked whether they had "been judged or stereotyped during [their] college career," most participants gave examples evoking their athlete status more than their race; however, Black participants also reported racialized stereotyping. Whereas participants overall felt the need to disconfirm stereotypes individually by being seen as an exception to the 'rule' (and leaving the stereotype unchallenged), participants of color also expressed awareness of their status as representatives of their race (to outsiders) and potential role models (to group members); this representative status extended beyond student athletes to other Black students generally. As a result, stereotype disconfirmation was of added import to participants of color. When asked how race affected his college experience, Ellison explained, "maybe I was just motivated to be a successful, you know, Black person in college, just because you know that doesn't always happen." He then acknowledged he was from a relatively privileged background, saying, "I wasn't rich or anything, but I wasn't trying to beat the odds or anything like that when I was growing up... Like I said, my expectations were to always graduate college, from my family and from everybody else." However, Ellison's relative privilege didn't release him from the perceived responsibility to give back; in fact, the opportunities he was given furthered his sense of obligation to positively represent Black men in college. He recognized he could inspire others, as well as serve as an exception to popular narratives about Black academic failure. For Ellison, it was not a matter of race inspiring him to overcome his own difficulties, but instead his sense of racial solidarity made him want to provide a counter-narrative.

In contrast, Carlton and two other Black first-generation college students in the study, Tevin and Cliff, described their respective backgrounds as motivating them in more immediate terms than Ellison did. Carlton saw disproving race-based stereotypes as a challenge he had to

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meet, "being an African American, you're… To society, you are a failure if you don't prove yourself." Whereas Ellison's desire to positively represent Black men in college came from an altruistic conception of counter-narratives, Carlton described the negative effect of stereotypes in more personal, concrete terms. As a result, experiencing Stereotype Threat was more of a personal indictment to Carlton than Ellison. Whereas Ellison might think, 'they aren't talking about *me*, but people *like* me… and that's wrong and I want to help change it,' for Carlton, there was no mistaking that they were impugning him personally, attacking his core identities. Carlton responded by evoking his resilience, explaining he felt race:

> helped my experience, because that's what motivated me: I wanted to prove people wrong. It's like sometimes walking into class and the professor looks at you like you're automatically not smart enough or you're going to ask for help or you're gonna fail this course and then, when they hand your paper back and you've made like a B or an A and all of a sudden you feel that sense of respect coming from him—or her.

Part of the power in the above quote is also in how Carlton self-edits his assumption about the gender of a hypothetical professor, suggesting he has taken to heart his advice about not over-generalizing, even in terms of unrelated stereotypes. However, despite the insistence of Carlton and other participants that stereotyping motivated them to perform better, Stereotype Threat research suggests their awareness of stereotyping still takes a cognitive toll (Steele, 1997). Participants' resilience may be real, but their desire to disprove stereotypes is also a measure of their domain identification, meaning they are potentially vulnerable to Stereotype Threat. Lastly, although Black participants may have had different reasons to dispute and/or disrupt stereotypes than their white counterparts (e.g. whether to individually be exempted from the generalization or to positively represent their race), the disruption itself and the tools participants employed to

disrupt are strikingly similar. In particular, participants honed the ability to position their graduate student status as a counterproof to negative stereotypes about college athletes.

Graduate Status as Counterproof

Graduate school offered participants the opportunity to be known as a student, in addition to their (public) athlete identity. Interestingly, several participants contrasted their experience as graduate students with the stereotyping and prejudice they encountered while they were undergraduate students. Participants intimated they'd moved past situations in which they were likely to be stereotyped, either by being an "existence proof"—i.e. disproving stereotypes by their very presence in grad school—or due to the opportunity to be known for who you are in discussion-based graduate courses, especially as a student, instead of typecast.

Toby describes graduate school as offering the opportunity to "prove to students that you actually care about courses and want to do well," due to the structure of coursework (e.g. smaller class sizes, more class discussion and group work). Graduate courses enabled participants to clarify who they are as students; as a result, Toby paraphrased his peers as saying, "'oh, this person is maybe a little more intelligent and likes school more than I had anticipated.'" Toby explicitly compared stereotyping in his graduate and undergrad courses, explaining that because of the structure of graduate courses, "stereotypes about athletes kind of get dismissed." Similarly, Myles reported his fellow MBA students were focused on their own intellectual development, so:

> all that petty stuff, that goes out the window 'cause at the end of the day they're old enough, they're mature enough, to realize that 'what Myles is doing, how he's being treated, has nothing to do with me and my future.'

As a result of these shifts, participants reported less stereotyping in graduate courses and experienced them as less repressive settings where they had opportunities to be known as a

student without undue energy going to the negotiation of stereotype threat. As a result, negotiating multiple role-identities became easier and less contested.

In fact, when asked what he would tell younger athletes considering entering graduate school within their eligibility, Ellison noted that one of the many reasons to do so is to assure others you are a serious student:

> I would say, "do it," definitely. Definitely these days, just because it's so hard to get a job these days and any type of extra education that you can get, would be amazing as far as being able to put it on your resume and things like that. **If anything, showing people that you are committed, that you do want higher education.** Especially if you can do it while you're eligible to do it, I mean, why not? (Emphasis added)

Ellison's advice mirrors Toby's observation graduate school offers the opportunity to "prove to students that you actually care." These quotes reveal a clear-eyed concept of the credentialing function of higher education, as well as awareness of the relevance of observers' attributions about their motivations. Several participants understood that stereotypes about student athletes (and the support services they receive) were often used to undermine their achievements (Doverspike et al., 2006) and deployed their graduate status as a way to certify how serious they were about school and thereby disrupt negative stereotypes.

Invisible graduate students. Despite the potential for graduate student athletes to disrupt prevailing negative stereotypes, one unexpected finding was that their graduate status was not always widely known within the university. Although the media routinely refer to graduate student athletes by the misleading term "fifth-year seniors," it is notable that both teammates and graduate student peers were often unaware of graduate student athletes' presence amongst them. This has implications in terms whether graduate student athletes are "trailblazers" and role

models within their teams, as well as for their potential to disrupt stereotypes on campus. For example, many of Cliff's graduate student peers thought he was a *former* football player, or did not know he had played at all. Cliff's story had the potential to make his graduate student peers reassess any stereotypes about college athletes' academic motivation and ability; however, this potential was thwarted by his invisibility.[41]

Invisible graduate students within the team were even more common. Toby discussed not realizing how many of his teammates were in graduate programs until he was in the position to join them, "it's difficult to tell, as well, unless you ask them. Because you're not going to class with them, I don't know what classes they're taking... they're not going around telling people 'I'm going to a *graduate school* class'" (emphasis in the original inflection). Both Toby and Myles discussed being put in contact with former graduate student athletes only when they were about to graduate with remaining eligibility. While their discussions with former graduate student athletes were affirming and encouraged them to pursue a graduate degree rather than just postbaccalaureate coursework, each participant had to navigate the entirety of their undergraduate career before those role models were available to them. By the time Myles spoke to team alums who had pursued a Master's while playing, "it wasn't advice; it was more motivation like, 'this is the benefit of doing what you want to do.'"

Myles identifies the need for role models and mentoring to demystify the grad process, particularly applications, saying, "I wish more football players, or more Division I athletes in

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[41] To be fair, participants have also earned the right to blend into a classroom and be recognized as students; furthermore, as long as participants risk facing renewed stereotyping when it is known that they are current football players, it's understandable that they might choose to stay under the radar. But this causes a bit of a catch-22, wherein disrupting stereotypes risks opening oneself to stereotyping.

general, would have gone down the same road I did and finished early and started a graduate program while on the university's dollar, it would've helped me a lot." Braeden shared that his desire to be a role model grew out of the lack he experienced; being a role model became part of his identity in the process:

> I think the first person that I knew of to graduate early, I think was a year ahead of me, so I was already kind of going down that path…. so there wasn't anybody for me [to look up to], so I would like to be that person…

Furthermore, Myles felt that if graduate student athletes on the team (or former ones) were visible earlier in athletes' college career, more college athletes would be inspired to strategically pursue a curriculum that would allow them to begin graduate school. Myles discussed his initiative in making graduate school "a reality," describing how proactive he was, not only in terms of the concrete steps he took to graduate early and start graduate school, but also in *conceptualizing* the opportunity. Initially, this quote seems like (yet another) ode to personal responsibility, but then Myles links the dearth of graduate student athletes to their lack of awareness of the opportunity, which is a structural issue more so than a personal failure.

> … I had to figure out how to make this happen. I had to figure out how to make this idea become a reality: that I was going to finish school early and start my graduate program, and that was an undertaking on my part. I feel that if my teammates were exposed to the idea earlier, and their parents were exposed the idea earlier, I feel that there'd probably be a little bit more Division I athletes doing what I'm doing right now.

These participants' experiences reveal inefficiencies in the current system, each participant felt he was on an uncharted path and he needed to invent the map for future generations (however, there is no way to know that the map would be passed on to the next generation efficiently,

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because the structure was dependent on permanent staff members continuing the flow of information once older generations of students left).

Even participants whose teammates knew they were graduate students (or extremely early graduates) displayed a skepticism about opening up to teammates about their academics. Carlton described his privacy regarding his academic achievements: "I really don't talk to anybody about my academic status or anything like that. I mean, they congratulated me on graduating [in three years] and I thought that was enough." In terms of academics, Carlton does not expect involvement from his teammates. This disengagement may be a vestige of unsupportive or negative team cultures around academics, but it seems more isolating than insidious. Regardless of intent, it may inhibit the development of the kind of positive academic climates that could normalize early graduation and incubate larger cohorts of graduate student athletes. Myles was skeptical about his own status as a role model for teammates serving as anything more than symbolism, saying:

> when [my teammates] found out I was [getting my Master's], you know, they were astonished, they were happy for me, they supported me knowing that I was on the right track to take care of myself for my future and they felt that they should have been doing the same thing. But, obviously, saying what you should do and actually *doing* what you should do are totally two different things.

In contrast, Ryan described how he and another graduate student athlete on his team "embraced it and we're being the positive role model-leaders that every team needs and we're really setting the example high for these young guys that are in the program." Ellison discussed talking to younger teammates about academic motivation, using the example that football was often harder

than coursework, and arguing anyone on the team was smart enough to excel academically, as long as they were motivated.

Figure 2	Graphic representation of themes in *Chapter 5: Stereotyping*
Prevalent Stereotypes [not a heading]	'… I think all a lot of teachers want to know is that you're really interested in the class. A lot of people just assume athletes aren't interested in their class; they're just there to play football, or whatever it is. I don't think that's the case, I think a fair amount of guys--or, you know, a large percentage of guys on the team—care about their grades and want to do well. But a lot of teachers make assumptions about players, and some students make assumptions as well, that football players don't care about their grades. They also might not believe that they're as smart as they are, because football players in general are given a little more leeway in terms of what kind of grades they had in high school and test scores and whatnot. I'm not saying all the guys on the team are geniuses, but I also think they try hard and they want to do well, which there's a lot to be said for that.' Toby
Stereotyping Incidents: Non-athlete Peers	'a lot of times student athletes get a negative reputation as far as they think that—well, I'm not going to say 'they,' but some people—think that just because you're student-athlete that a lot of the times people do your homework for you or you don't have to work hard, or, you know, basically things are just given to you. I just think that--maybe that's the case with some people, but that's not the case for a lot of student athletes--there are student-athletes that actually work hard for what they have and, you know, they go that extra mile…. I did get a minor altercation with somebody and they were just like 'well, you didn't have to write that!' You know, referring to a paper that I spent a pretty extensive time on and put my hard working into, and they were like, you know, 'well, you guys have people that can do your work for you,' basically, and 'you didn't spend time on that paper.' Just, you know, jealousy, basically. … For some reason, people feel they know certain things about us and they just don't have a clue…' Cliff
Stereotyping Incidents: Faculty	'every once in a while you'd get teachers who you'd feel were kind of against you from the first day.... you just kind of got an idea that maybe, you know, that they've had somebody that was disruptive in their class before or who caused them problems, and a lot of times you could just kind of tell the teachers who would just rather not have athletes in their class. And a lot of the times, depending on how you were, you could kind of change their minds throughout the semester, but then at the same time, sometimes there'd be other players in the room who would make it worse and the teachers would hate us even more.' Ellison
Disrupting overgeneralizations	'just being a student athlete, more than anything, you know, you walk into a class and you know the teacher will automatically have—some teachers—will automatically have an opinion of you because you're a student athlete, so they think that you don't work for anything, that everything is just given to you, I feel like that can kind of hurt you in a way and you have to kind of like prove them wrong. Because I know a lot of student athletes that don't go to class, but I'm in class every day, like *I don't miss class*.' Tevin
Negotiating race-based stereotypes: Perspective of Black participants	'Psychologically, I feel like being an African American, you're… To society, you are a failure if you don't prove yourself. So I felt that I didn't want to be looked at like that, in that light. I wanted to be looked at as an educated black man, so I felt like that motivated me a little bit, I feel like people stereotype you as a criminal sometimes, so I don't want to be looked at like that, I just wanted to show people that 'hey, I'm educated, just like you, and I just want equal respect'. … I think it actually helped my experience, because that's what motivated me: I wanted to prove people wrong. It's like sometimes walking into class and the professor looks at you like you're automatically not smart enough or you're going to ask for help or you're gonna fail this course and then, when they hand your paper back and you've made like a B or an A and all of a sudden you feel that sense of

	respect coming from him—or her.' Carlton
Graduate Status as Counterproof	"Cliff: ….they weren't used to athletes actually being in the Master's program, so I think the kinda, I think they were very, I think they were surprised that I was even you know doing the Master's program. But I wasn't—I was still treated respectfully and I wasn't looked at negatively at all. But, yeah, I think, because I think a lot of athletes don't even enter into the Master's program, so I think they were surprised, if anything. SH: How did they show that? CLIFF: Um, just little things like 'oh, you play football?' Or… I think a lot of them didn't even know that I was playing football at the time, I think a lot of them thought that I was like an ex-football player, like alumni or something like that, but the ones that did know that I was still playing football they were just like, 'wow,' you know, and they'd ask like, 'what do you want to do with your degree?' or 'do you just want to make it to the NFL and then just not continue your Master's degree?' Things like that and just— SH: So people asked if it was a placeholder kind-of-thing? CLIFF: No, they didn't make me feel out of place — SH: No, no, they asked if the degree was a placeholder, basically? CLIFF: Yeah, pretty much, yeah. SH: How do you answer that? CLIFF: I just… You know I just said, 'I'm the type of person that I finish what I start. I don't just start it, just to start it and then after that I'm just going to leave and not finish it.' Like I told the guy, the head guy in the department, I was like 'I always finish what I start, it was a decision that I made to actually enter my master's degree, then I'm gonna finish that.' That's what I told him, 'I'm just that type of person.'"

Figure 2. Graphic representation of themes in *Chapter 5: Stereotyping.*

Discussion

Identity. These participants bought into the ideal of a scholar athlete, or "Scholar-Baller^TM" (Harrison et al., 2010), and strove to fill that role, both for their own sakes and because they understood their statuses as representative figures for a stigmatized group. As such, it was important to participants to portray their scholar-athlete identities accurately and to gain recognition based on this integrated identity. After acknowledging feeling stereotyped, Braeden explained:

> even though that's the case, I was still able to meet people who really cared about who I
>
> was, and I think once that happened then more people started understanding who I was,
>
> so after a while… people just… they knew that football was almost like a secondary
>
> thing to me: I was 'Braeden, who goes to school and studies this, this, and this, and plays
>
> football,' rather than, 'he's a football player and… he goes to school, sometimes.'

Similarly, Darius ended our interview by saying:

> we've covered a lot in my experience and from that, hopefully, you can see that I'm not
>
> just an athlete, but I want to be notarized for how I am as a person, individual, a student,
>
> more intellectual, and as someone who has the ability, the physical ability, to play sports.

His summation underscores his desire to be seen as a whole person with one integrated identity
and not be reduced to only a student or an athlete.

Alec demonstrated how academic success bolstered his academic identity by affirming
his intelligence, saying, "the thing I'm most proud of is my GPA, I think I was just blown away,
I guess I just finally realized that if I just apply myself and don't be an idiot and do stuff, I can be
really, really smart." Alec grew to see himself as an intellectual, but also rearticulates his
personal responsibility to live up to that academic potential. Similarly, Ryan discussed the way
his academic identity buoyed him when he struggled academically:

> There were a few semesters where I didn't necessarily obtain the GPA that I wanted to,
>
> but that just motivated me more for the next semester to improve off those standards and
>
> my coaches, they know how smart I am, here at the USW, and they challenge me even
>
> more, they say, 'RYAN, you're the smartest kid we know on the team and you have to
>
> perform like that' so that was a challenge for me from the coaches as well.

In the above example, Ryan's coaches evoked his identity as scholar athlete to motivate him,
because they already had his buy-in. In these examples, participants' academic identities became
a resource to lean on during difficult times: because they already believed they were
intellectuals, i.e. people capable of excelling academically, the reasonable response to adversity
was to hunker down and work even harder. In contrast, without their preexisting positive

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academic identities, self-doubt would have been a perfectly reasonable (but self-defeating) response to adversity.

Onus to disprove stereotypes. Regardless of the source of the stereotype, by placing the onus to disprove stereotypes on themselves, student athletes take on a position of some power, where they can influence what happens to them and is akin to rejecting learned helplessness (Diener & Dweck, 1978). For example, Ellison portrays the stereotypes his professors have about athletes in their classes as a non-stable factor, saying, "I've never come across a teacher who's going to you know purposely give somebody a bad grade or, you know, grade them worse simply because they're on the football team." By viewing the situation thusly, Ellison places the onus to disprove professors' biases on student athletes, explaining, "a lot of the times, depending on how you were, you could kind of change their minds throughout the semester." Participants indicated they *actively* worked to disprove stereotypes. As Toby explained, "if you're not demonstrating that you're an excellent student… those assumptions remain if you can't prove yourself." This responsibility could be seen as an unfair burden on student athletes to combat the biases of others; however, this understanding of the locus of control is also indicative of their healthy sense of self-efficacy. Participants articulated a similar "can-do attitude" (Myles) to many facets of their lives, and relished the opportunity to assume increasing responsibility for their academic trajectories as they advanced.

Conclusion

Earning a bachelor's degree with remaining eligibility and enrolling in a graduate program may counter some of the stigma about student athletes and re-legitimate participants' student role-identity. Entering a graduate program contradicts prevalent stereotypes by going beyond academic minimums and working toward advanced degrees, which carry their own

rewards, beyond football. Participants' rejection of prevailing stereotypes is most clear in their assertion of what success means to them. Carlton explains:

> when people ask me, 'are you going to make it?' I'm like 'I already made it.' You know
>
> that I mean? I graduated college and that's something I thought I'd never get to do….
>
> When they speak about making it in terms of football, I'm like, 'I already made it.'

Furthermore, becoming a graduate student offers a ready-made alternative explanation for making sense of college athletes' motivations: that, in Braeden's words, "football provided a means to an end as far as getting my education paid for." Regardless of whether a given participant intended to follow this trajectory or opportunistically revised his educational plans when it became possible to earn his bachelor's degree prior to exhausting his eligibility, working toward a grad degree can imply a means-to-an-end motivation for football and may serve to symbolically re-legitimate participants' student role-identity. This finding should be explored in more depth in future work on this population.

Despite the negative stereotyping and extreme constraints on their time graduate(d) student athletes face throughout college, being academically successful—particularly in terms of becoming a graduate student—enables them to exercise increasing control over their image, schedule, and trajectory. Finishing with remaining eligibility and enrolling in a graduate program may serve to counter some of the stigma about student athletes and to re-legitimate participants' student role-identity. Although individual factors such as self-efficacy are important sources of strength for those pursuing this path, institutions cannot be absolved of responsibility for facilitating and encouraging graduate study, implications are discussed at more length in Chapter 9, beginning on page 170.

CHAPTER 6: Time

This chapter focuses on time and its effect on graduate student athletes' college experiences. Time is the quintessential "zero-sum game:" there are 24 hours in a day, period. In order to spend more time on one thing, less time will be available for something else; colloquially, "something's got to give." The time constraints participants described echo other findings on college athletes' experience (Benson, 2000; Harrison & Martin, 2012); however, this study asked about the constraints associated with being successful at both academics and athletics (Harrison & Martin, 2012) and specifically with being a graduate student athlete. This findings chapter is organized into the following sections: *college transitions*, *academic support systems*, *consequences of constraints,* and *time management* (please see the graphic representation of quotes for this chapter, on pages 120-121).

Participants' college transitions were inexorably linked to their distinct experiences as athletes; however, they frequently made caveats in relation to their initial academic transition and struggles, emphasizing that the difficulty of their academic transition was universal to all college students, not just student athletes. For example, Braeden led with the disclaimer "I think, like anyone else, there were some growing pains." This was such a common theme that I captured it in a content code, *like any student*. Analysis of this code revealed participants used this framing almost exclusively when explaining academic struggles, suggesting the sensitive nature of this specific topic induced them to employ discursive tools to qualify their statement and protect them from potentially confirming stereotypes. In other words, participants did not want their academic adjustment to college to be attributed to their being "dumb jocks." After asserting the normalcy of their academic transition, participants usually then acknowledged the ways being a student athlete further constrained their schedule and transition. However, they first actively

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negotiated the stereotyping discussed in the previous chapter by comparing their academic struggles to those of the general student body.

College Transitions

Participants highlighted several factors which contributed to the difficulty of their transitions into college, including, the sheer volume of responsibilities they suddenly faced, the increased difficulty of each responsibility, the abrupt nature of the transition, and their unrealistic expectations of college life. Discussing his transition to college, Tevin summarized succinctly: being a college athlete is "overwhelming because you have to get so much done in a little amount of time." Tevin struggled to simply fit everything he needed to do into one day, detailing the difficulty in "being able to have a good practice, being able to go to class every day, go to tutoring…. early on, that was kind of difficult because I'd go to practice and then I would be so tired that I would just not do my work." He, like many participants, intimated that with so many commitments competing for their time, energy, and attention—at a certain point there's nothing left to give. Other participants echoed Tevin's assessment, highlighting the strain's effect on college athletes' overall well being by explaining the "emotional toll" (Zach) and that the schedule "could really drain you mentally" (Cliff). Ryan, in particular, emphasized the importance of self-care in terms of nutrition and sleep, as well as the necessity for recuperative down time: "you have to make time for yourself and just sit down and relax, zone out for a little while so you can relax and just succeed in all areas."

Given these experiences, participants repeatedly asserted the need to get "acclimated" to the demanding schedule and "whole lifestyle of being a student athlete" (Tevin) during one's transition to college. One factor several participants offered to illustrate the difficulty of their college transition was the abrupt nature of the transition, citing how many responsibilities they

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suddenly had, how quickly they were thrown into 'everything' (the combination of coursework, practice, and training responsibilities, in particular), and how much harder each of these responsibilities was than their previous experiences. According to participants, both the quantity of expectations and the quality of the work expected—in athletic and academic spheres—had "skyrocketed" (Braeden). Reflecting on his transition to college, Toby shared:

> it was busy, because right when I came in I started taking classes and training, and both of those aspects are much different than high school. Training is a lot more intense and is more time consuming, and school is more time consuming, as well. And the material is much more difficult.

Similarly, Zach explained his experience struggling academically during his first semester in college as "definitely new" to him. He expounded:

> high school was a breeze. You know, I graduated top 10 percent in my class and high school came easy. And I think I came into college expecting it to be the same, and obviously that's not the case. I don't think my study skills and my study habits were where they needed to be, and when you throw in being a student-athlete and the time commitment, and the physical, the emotional toll that being a student-athlete can take on you, I think all that together really had a large effect on how I did that first quarter—I didn't do as well as I wanted to…

Despite the shock of his academic transition, Zach concluded "it was probably a blessing in disguise" because the failure caused him to "refocus," reassess his study habits and, ultimately, realize "'this is gonna take a lot more effort than high school.'" Ryan saw the difficulty of transitioning into college as somewhat unavoidable, given that "you just can't simulate managing your own time when you still live at home with your family." As such, Ryan lauded

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programming that helped athletes develop the study and time management skills they needed to succeed in college, but he emphasized there was bound to be some discomfort during the transition because "once you're on your own, living in the dorms and away from home, you really have to learn on your own."

In contrast, several other participants noted that their unrealistic expectations of college (and/or of being a college athlete) added to the shock and difficulty of their transition to college. Myles thought the shock of adjustment came from a mismatch between athletes' expectations of college (stemming from their recruitment process) and the various responsibilities they discovered upon arrival:

> most kids, they sign up, or they sign their letter of intent, thinking 'football, football, football.' But, in the fine print, there's, you know, '*student*.' You have to go to class, you have to do your work, and you have to do all these other things other than just play football.

Myles believed these mismatched expectations of entering college athletes might cause larger problems, such as attrition:

> that's why I feel that a lot of—not a lot, but some—of my fellow freshmen on the football team didn't make it: it was just a rough, rough schedule and if you had no experience with it, if you weren't exposed to it, like I was in high school, you know, I think it puts you at a disadvantage.

In contrast to his teammates, Myles lauded his high school experience as preparing him with not only the academic preparation and study skills to succeed in college, but also for helping him recognize the value of balancing both athletics and academics, as well as forcing him to hone his time management skills prior to college. As a result of his exposure to a demanding schedule in

high school, Myles asserted the college transition "was different for me" and expressed concern about how his teammates were supported during their first semester.

Zach partially attributed his unrealistic expectations of college to watching his brother and girlfriend enter a state university (neither was an athlete) and assuming his experience as an athlete at an academically elite private university would similarly accommodate parties and other social activities. Other participants who felt disadvantaged by the ways in which college differed from their expectations pinpointed the media as a source of misinformation. Carlton described his initial transition thusly: "reality set in and I was like '*I'm on my own, this is not what I was expecting, and this is not how the movies portrayed this!*'" In particular, participants' expectations for college were often formed from movies where the social life was exalted and emphasized over academics (one participant gave the example of *Love and Basketball*). Participants differed in terms of which responsibilities surprised them or waylaid their college transition; for some, it was academic expectations or balancing the sheer volume of their responsibilities, while others struggled to relinquish Hollywood's hedonistic portrayals of college life. Regardless of how their expectations differed from the college life they encountered, most participants noted (and regretted) their inability to incorporate a social life or 'down-time' on top of everything *required* of them, which I discuss at greater length in the section *the sacrificial social life*, beginning on page 111.

Position differences. It is revealing that the two quarterbacks in the sample were especially outspoken about the difficult college transition. They described the steepest learning curve and that the redshirt year did not provide them a reprieve or opportunity to adjust to college. One explained:

I still traveled when I was a redshirt freshman; I still had to do everything that all the starters did, in terms of training and whatnot. And the freshmen who redshirt do extra workouts, so I still had to do extra workouts, and then I had to do the same thing the starters did, I had to travel, so I actually had less time my freshman year—which was tough, because I was also getting adapted and taking four classes and whatnot.

In contrast to the two quarterbacks, participants who played other positions described redshirting as an opportunity to acclimate to all aspects of college, which they remembered fondly:

…honestly, I'd say [getting injured and having a medical redshirt my first year] helped a little bit as far as academically was concerned, simply because on the weekends you'd have a little more time to study and get work done and a lot of times they do redshirt guys to get them acclimated for college before they have to balance so much football, so I think I was able to experience a little bit of that. I was able to get a year of getting acclimated to college and realizing what it was gonna entail while I was hurt.

[My redshirt year was] probably the most fun I had in college. Just from the standpoint of just having school, going to practice and after, on the weekends, you could go to tailgates and watch the games from the stands and just kinda get used to the college life. And then, after that first year, is when you kinda buckle up and you're already used to everything and it's just kind of playing on Saturdays from then on.

These participants' differing experiences highlight the importance of context in understanding the effect of redshirting. Position, place on the depth chart and other factors will affect whether the first year is experienced as a time for college adjustment or as an onslaught of football responsibilities.

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Academic Support Systems: Yet Another Constraint?

Beyond the sheer volume of responsibilities they juggled and their difficulty transitioning, participants also described a delicate balance between many decisions that were out of their control and their personal responsibility to perform within the structured environment. Participants discussed the lack of academic autonomy in the beginning of college, particularly due to the mandatory academic support systems in place for athletes. Zach recounted that freshman year, "regardless of how you do academically, you are aligned with an academic advisor—for your entire career, but particularly for your freshman year," which he described as one of the ways academic services tried "to make sure that students are studying and using their time wisely." Participants outlined a multitude of academic interventions, including, study halls (sometimes called *study table*), developmental workshops, tutoring, and intensive advising. Participants lauded the optional academic supports available to them, but focused most of their discussion on the mandatory academic support system in place when they arrived (and their movement toward increasing autonomy, as seen in the discussion section of this chapter, beginning on page 122). Structured academic enrichment programs, which are set up to ease athletes' college transition, are a mixed bag: although they carve out time for athletes to devote to academics, they also contribute to the constraints on participants' time and their sense of limited academic autonomy at the beginning of college.

Given their time constraints, college athletes rely on academic counselors to make their schedules feasible. Ryan asserted, "the only hard part of being a student-athlete is getting your class schedule to work with your athletic schedule, that's the only conflict really and making sure … your final exam schedule works out so you're not missing any tests or missing any big assignments." Although this is a pressure felt by athletes, it is academic advisors (within athletics

departments) who are largely responsible for handling the logistics of athletes' schedules. As such, participants lauded Student Services' role in making their academic achievements possible; in particular, the feats advisors accomplished in terms of course scheduling. When asked about conflicts between athletics and academics, Alec said, "just scheduling conflicts," as if they were no big deal. He went on to praise the support staff members who handled scheduling for minimizing conflicts, saying:

> the academic services advisers, that's a really under-appreciated part of college athletics, I think, in every sport, especially team sports that are as big as football, or even basketball and baseball. You have to get that many people on the same page and, you know, and do it gracefully…

> Despite their overall praise for Student Services, the schedule conflicts between football

and academics were sometimes intractable and several participants alluded to ways in which their academic options were constrained by their participation in football. For example, Toby described a conflict between academics and athletics:

> in terms of what classes I can take. Just because we practice in the morning, we're not usually free until about 11 o'clock; if the class is in the morning, I can't take it. So I have to wait 'til it's offered some other semester, in the afternoon. It hasn't been a problem for me, like I said, because most of my classes are in the afternoon, anyways. I think it's more of a problem for guys who are into science, like premed, because a lot of those science classes are offered in the morning.

This endemic scheduling conflict effectively steered athletes away from Science majors, demanding academic readjustments and selectively limiting what courses are available to athletes. Zach's story illustrates another way that athletes may be discouraged from pursuing

hard science majors. He described his transition from pre-med into a Higher Education master's program, demonstrating that, sometimes, even without direct "steering" or "clustering" pressure from others (Fountain & Finley, 2009), football participation nonetheless limits athletes' choice of major and especially their perception of how feasible different major programs are. Zach explained that in high school "I definitely had aspirations of going to a great college to get a great education, being pre-med and being a surgeon and, had I not been a student athlete, I think I would have… pursued that vigorously." However, Zach identifies the time constraints endemic to being a college athlete as helping to steer him away from a pre-med major, saying:

> To be a student athlete is definitely a huge time commitment…. when I came here, I wasn't able to maintain the bio-medical engineering track I wanted to… If I hadn't been a student athlete I woulda been fine with it, I would've pursued more of an academic path and hopefully I would've reached those goals as well.

Although Zach was very happy with his revised career goals, it is interesting that he did not disavow his previous goal.

Toby described the more direct ways in which coaches and academic advisors circumscribed college athletes' academic aspirations:

> the academic coordinators—and, you know, they're influenced by coaches—want their players to be doing something… that's manageable and fairly easy; they're not gonna be allowing football players to take electrical engineering here, they just can't do it. There's probably a few guys on the team who can do it, but they won't allow them to do it, just because of the risk that they'll fail a class or something and be ineligible. So I think they do kind of limit players in that regard, in what they can take.

As Toby alludes, how college athletes are counseled affects their choices, in real terms as well as in terms of their perceived choices, and it may limit their academic curiosity or career goals.

Consequences of Constrained Time

Ellison's response to the question of whether he had to "compromise or sacrifice anything to excel at both athletics and academics" was fairly typical. He alludes to the importance of time management, which I go into at greater depth on page 115, but downplays the structural constraints that inevitably lead to trade-offs, saying, "Anything as far as regulations [was handled by the school]… there was never any direct conflict as far as sports not allowing anyone to complete an assignment or do anything like that." As a result of this assessment, Ellison concludes he didn't experience conflict between academics and athletics, instead, "it was just really balancing your time, I'd say as long as you were giving yourself time to do both, there was really no conflict—for me, at least—between football and academics." Ellison's response relocates responsibility to the individual student; of course, this is a somewhat false dichotomy, because the ideal structure is one that develops time management skills (see the discussion section, beginning on page 122, for more on scaffolding that supports increasing autonomy).

Despite Ellison's assertions of agency, Darius' response to the same question, "I've never compromised grades for football and I've never compromised football for grades, but it would definitely help one or the other," reveals an inherent conflict—even if you aren't *choosing* or actively prioritizing one over the other, there is a trade-off. This relates back to the zero-sum nature of time. Participants only begrudgingly acknowledged trade-offs between football and academics, reminiscent of their reluctance to acknowledge stereotyping and discrimination, but their responses often revealed their awareness of the unique constraints on them, on both fronts. These successful college athletes had very positive outlooks on their college experience, but they

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were still forced to make trade-offs and avoid pitfalls associated with balancing academic success and football; these consequences still exist, despite how well participants have been able to negotiate them.

Extracurricular sacrifices. Participants made sacrifices in their extracurricular development in terms of their networking, campus engagement, and internship experiences in order to excel at both football and academics. Although this was a lesser theme in interviews, it emerged organically from the data, without elicitation from the interview protocol, and this theme has particularly important implications. Cliff presciently shared:

> because of how the job market is, a lot of internships and stuff like that [would be beneficial, but] you can't do stuff like that; you know, being a full-time student and being an athlete, it kind of separates that world from you. You can't do internships for jobs…. there was always something that prevented you from doing exactly what you want to do…

Not only did participants miss many extracurricular experiences, which are developmentally important, Cliff also expresses dissatisfaction with his lack of control over his own schedule. Several participants lamented their inability to be more engaged in groups on campus and in community service; they often discussed these sacrifices, like those in their social lives, in regards to their time constraints. For example, Toby shared:

> We do some [community service work] that's required as a team, which is good…. but that's pretty minimal just because it's difficult to get everybody on the team to have the same time slots that are open to do community service because of classes and whatnot. So I've tried to get with groups of guys on the team and do some community service, and visit children at the children's hospital and at the Ronald McDonald house, and things

like that, just get involved in little ways. But it is difficult as a student-athlete, because we spend so much time practicing and whatnot, so that is maybe one thing I'd like to do more, just get more involved, it's just difficult with school and football at the same time.

Zach hoped to get an internship related to his Master's the summer after his final year in football, which was unfeasible while he was still playing. Ellison suggested internship programs as an actionable way to better serve academically successful college athletes, explaining:

maybe, implementing an internship system, just like they implement a lot of things… maybe set everybody on the team up with businesses, maybe help them reach out and meet other people to help them in the future, I think that's something that would help people be successful. And that'd be what the guys that already academically successful, that would help them as well, you know, put them in the programs that reach out business-wise in the community…. after graduation, there is somewhat of a conflict, simply because if you're on a team like that, that takes up so much time, I'd say the internships are something that playing football and things can hurt. You don't have as much time to make contacts and things like that, like most students do while they're in college, and a lot of time guys will get out of college and, you know, football is over, and *that's it.* They, obviously, have their degree—and I mean I've been the situation myself, where you'll have the degree and things like that, but because you were doing football 24-7 for four years, you never really got to intern with a company for a year, or to go to a lot of the job fairs and things like that and make a lot of contacts, so I'd say that's the only thing that football can hinder is if you don't play football after college, if you don't go out of your way—if you don't out of your way to have an internship and things like

that, sometimes you can get stuck when you get out of college because you can't make as

many contacts while you're in college because you were playing football.

These extra-curricular sacrifices in terms of networking, engagement, and internship experiences

suggest one way in which even high achieving college athletes felt their education was short-

changed because of athletic participation. These gaps in their resumes, may also lead them to try

to compensate with degrees, exacerbating a mismatch between experience and their education

(like me, they may end up under-experienced and over-educated).

The sacrificial social life. Nine of the eleven participants (all except Myles and Ellison)

explicitly echoed the theme of sacrificing either their social lives or free time in order to succeed

at both academics and athletics. Many participants reached the same conclusion as Tevin, who

expressed the trade-off he felt:

I feel like sacrificing, you know, free time, more than anything. Being able to hang out

with people and, you know, go out and stuff like that. That had to be sacrificed… you just

can't do whatever the average student can do.… you have to sacrifice a lot.

When asked, "Is there anything you think you've had to sacrifice or compromise to excel both

academically and athletically?" Zach responded, "I would say 'yes.' It's obviously a huge time

commitment to be a student athlete, especially if you want to excel in both athletics and

academics. You forfeit a lot of your social life as a student athlete." Responding to the same

question, Braeden deadpanned, "My social life, 100%," and Alec joked, "No, I mean, just your

social life [laughter]!" Alec continued, "that is what it is; that's okay though, because it's just a

different experience."

Many participants echoed Alec's assessment distinguishing athletes' college experiences

from those of the general student body, saying, for example, "it's just a whole different lifestyle

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than the average student" (Tevin). When asked whether he had experienced conflict between football and academics, Darius emphasized the distinction between what's accepted as normal for a college athlete and the normal experience of a non-athlete, explaining:

> football can leave you with little time to do stuff, and you have to either have got it done earlier or stuff like that. It does in a minute sense conflict sometimes—in comparison to a regular student? Yeah, I think so: it would definitely conflict. But I don't know how to be a regular student, I've been a college athlete since I've been in college, so it conflicting would be normal to me, so in that sense I would say 'no, it doesn't conflict with me,' but if you put a regular student on a football team, the whole thing would conflict because they probably wouldn't be used to it.

As Alec asserts, "you're just kept so busy with football and school-related things that, I mean, you don't have time for it; you don't have time for a social life. Until you learn how to manage time on your own and be successful at it…" Alec again alludes to the importance of time management skills and also foreshadows the importance of earning autonomy.

Toby drew a direct connection, not just to missing his "social life," which could be code for partying and other less meaningful social relationships, but specifically to the *quality* of relationships he was able to build, because "spending time is the biggest way that I create strong relationships." As a result, Toby shared, "my network of friends is probably a little bit smaller than I would usually prefer, just because… with my time commitments, it's just difficult." Similarly, Carlton thought he "had to sacrifice [romantic] relationships" to reach his athletic and academic goals. He felt being in a relationship "can blindside you from what's really important or where your goals are going. Because if the person's not supporting you, then it's kind of hurting you… it's kind of distracting you from where you want to go and what goals you're

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trying to reach." This quote indicates the singular focus required to balance academic success at this level of athletic competition, but it also goes a step further, elucidating how people central to a college athlete's life may also need to prioritize football (or, at least, the athlete's needs) in order to remain a part of his life. It implies a necessary ruthlessness in social relationships and a resultant isolation from the wider campus community, mirroring and compounding other findings regarding how stereotypes may limit college athletes' social circle and foment intense bonds between teammates. Adler and Adler (1991) describe three relevant role-sets: academic, athletic, and social; participants in this study described being forced to pick two of the three role-sets. However, the more shocking finding was about participants' trade-off, not between their social lives and athletics, but between *academics* and social lives, because compromising athletics was never an option. These accounts underscore that, even for participants using football as a means to an educational end, football demands full investment because one's funding is contingent (Hakim, 2000). For example, Braeden explained because he was so "committed to my academics, and also because of my unfortunate time commitment to football—I didn't have a lot of social time." Braeden expanded, "Guys would go to other people's houses, hang out, whatever it was, or go see girlfriends. I never did that, just because I wanted to get my stuff done." So there was a huge trade off—teammates were able to have social lives, but not social lives *and* academic success.

Distance from teammates. In line with other research (Bell, 2009; Benson, 2000), participants were strongly bonded with their teammates. Inadvertently synthesizing several participants' statements, Alec said:

> my really, really good friends were all football players, or all athletes at least, most of
>
> them, probably even 90% of them, were football players and then my best, best friends

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were linebackers, so I mean it's a real strong correlation between the sport I played, the position I played, and the interests that I had.

Research has found the isolation of student athletes may be enforced by their socialization into campus (Adler & Adler, 1991; Beamon & Bell, 2006; Benson, 2000); some of those findings are reaffirmed by this study. However, at the same time that participants in this study described their closest ties as being to teammates, several participants also indicated they needed to keep distance between themselves and their teammates, socially, in order to reach all of their goals. Previous studies have suggested the insularity of college athletes combined with a negative academic culture within the team could partially explain poor academic results (Benson, 2000; Hyatt, 2003). Findings from this study do not contradict that conclusion; the findings actually demonstrate participants compensated for negative team cultures adaptively, by strategically distancing themselves from their teammates in order to either stay out of trouble or to make adequate time for their academic work.

Participants did not express feelings of isolation or sticking out on the team; instead, they highlighted their strategic choice to only selectively join the group. Tevin clarified:

I have some friends on the football team, but I don't hang out with them outside of football, really. Because I'm at an age where I don't like to go out really as much as I used to, and I'm engaged and stuff now, so I just feel like I should just, you know, kind of tone down on all that partying and stuff like that.

For Tevin, the choice to distance himself from his teammates was related to his sense of what was appropriate given his age and stage in life, it was also indicative of a protectiveness of his relationship, which he felt might be endangered by spending too much time with his teammates. Carlton used strikingly similar logic to explain why he kept a protective distance between

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himself and the party scene his teammates partook in: "I don't really hang out with any of them, because I try to stay on the low—I mean, like under the radar—because most of them get in trouble and I don't want to be a part of that." Braeden and Toby associated the distance between themselves and their teammates to the time required to succeed academically. Toby explained:

if I know I have to commit a certain amount of time to a paper, I'm not gonna be able to spend as much time sitting around after practice, just joking around with teammates. I won't be able to spend as much time with teammates.

Braeden went a step further and evoked his teammates' academic difficulties as validation of his superior time management strategy:

for me, [hanging out with teammates is] not like an all-day thing. I know a lot of guys spend everyday, every minute with each other, but I can't do that, just because I like my peace and quiet time, I like some time to read, I like some time to do my homework, and I never want to procrastinate or put anything off, so I always have like a mental schedule in my head of how much time I can allot to friends and I think that probably is the reason why I don't fail classes like, unfortunately, some of my friends have.

Time Management as a College Athlete

Given all of these competing demands, one of the most difficult things for all participants was time management. All 11 participants discussed the pressures on their time, and each highlighted the importance of time management skills and/or tools for dealing with those pressures and constraints. Alec shared, "being a student athlete that—it's not as hard as everybody thinks, I don't guess. You just have to be able to manage your time and that's pretty much the biggest thing." When asked to "name one factor that enabled you to succeed at both academics and athletics," Cliff replied simply, "a big one is just time management, just know

how to manage your time and, you know, stay focused on what you need to do." Toby asserted, "it wasn't a difficult transition… I had to change some of my habits, most noticeably how I managed my time." Participants made these statements as though they were self-evident, but their matter-of-fact acknowledgements of time management belies that mastering time is a hard thing to do. Furthermore, their framing often placed responsibility for success squarely on the shoulders of college athletes as individuals, potentially absolving structural and institutional factors of blame.

Beyond lauding the importance of time management skills, participants shared strategies as well as the importance of seemingly low-tech, yet invaluable, concrete tools. For example, Braeden described "writing a to do list every week" and credited this practice with helping him "organize everything" and "allot time." He explained that writing down both the small and large 'to dos' appealed to his "detail-oriented" nature and the knowledge he had something to do would spur him to complete it, because he found it "just annoying knowing that you have some work to do and you're not doing it or you're leaving it till the last minute—because it's never your best work." Similarly, Carlton attributed his time management successes to effectively using one tool, a planner. He expanded:

> Honestly, I just got a planner and it helped me get through a lot of things. It organized me… Without the planner, I'd be all scattered, I'd be everywhere, be late for certain things, turning in assignments late, but when I have it written down, it helps me get everything done on time.

Other participants referenced more dynamic study skills like "techniques for reading" (Cliff) and a multi-draft writing process ("when I write a paper, I end up doing 6, 7, 8 drafts until I submit it,

just because it takes that much time to think and to mull over all the ideas that I want to communicate" [Braeden]), which they each developed in college.

Perhaps evocative of Carlton's reliance on his planner, Toby argued that planning is essential to mastering time management, "Planning is the biggest thing. Knowing how much time a paper is gonna take you, how much research is involved… I'm just gonna keep reemphasizing that planning's an important part to managing time." Myles referred to this writ-large planning as becoming *a disciple of something*:

> I think you have to have a set of values. You have to be a disciple of something, you have to be a follower of something, and you need to have the emotional discipline to follow it and once you do, it allows you to balance your life. (Myles)

Force of will. Participants frequently evoked value statements about will power and dedication, often boiling their success down to morality tails about the sheer force of their will. Myles lauded "emotional discipline" and Zach explained, "you got to just be strong mentally to get through it." Ellison expounded:

> I just never let myself fall behind, so I'd say that's how I managed it. When it came down to it, I would never miss a deadline, I just made sure I set deadlines for myself and would make sure that I would use them and got everything done by them.

Similarly, Darius explained his academic successes as a product of will power and sacrifice, saying:

> I've always put time aside to study and when finals come along, I've always sacrificed everything, you know, socially, you know, even sleep, to get things done. So managing time with football and school really isn't as hard as you make it, you know, if you know how to sacrifice, then I think anyone with any type of drive can do it.

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Maturation process. Myles discussed his high school experience as leading to his preparation to manage his time and responsibilities in college. "Sports in total weren't really big deal in my high school. There was a big emphasis on balance, on getting your work done first and sports done second." As Myles portrays it, what he gained was not just academic or even study-skills, but instead time to acclimate to balancing competing priorities and a jam-packed schedule. This gave him a head start on the maturation process other participants described during college, which was marked by their increased developmental ability to manage their own schedules and academics. Alec reflected on his personal growth, saying:

> I matured a lot in college—I was an idiot and, even my freshman year, just immature as hell and everything was a joke, I didn't take anything as seriously as I should have. But once I started doing that and, you know, realized that people on the team looked up to me and respected what I did and what I said; then, you know, it kind of falls back on you that you need to lead or you need to, you know, be a role model.

Similarly, Tevin described his transition from struggling academically and being placed in required support programs to a moment of transformation when he matured and embraced responsibility for his academic success:

> my freshman and sophomore years it took me a while to get acclimated to, you know, having to do football and academics, and it was just kind of overwhelming, so I got a little behind… and the coaches were on me and my academic advisor, so I would have to be to do tutoring and study hall and stuff like that, and I got caught up and I just kind of grew up, honestly, and I was just like 'I got to take care of business in order to graduate,' so I just kind of buckled down and got really serious about the academic parts and everything else took care of itself.

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Tevin was invited to speak to the team about his maturation and academic improvement after he graduated early. Maturity speaks to the *ability* of participants to manage their own time; in the discussion section of this chapter I discuss *Earned Autonomy*, which is the freedom to exert control over their schedule etcetera, after they have developed the ability.

Transition into Grad School

By grad school, most participants felt they had figured out a balance between their schoolwork and athletics. Only two participants—interestingly, the same two who did not discuss sacrificing their social lives to succeed at academics and athletics, Myles and Ellison— indicated that entering graduate classes marked a new level of academic difficulty. Other participants did discuss it being more work, requiring more time, and being a different educational experience with distinct features such as smaller classes, more group work, writing, and discussion; however, the overall picture of graduate school shared by participants was as an academically manageable addition to their education.

Participants described the transition into grad school as shallower, i.e. an easier learning curve, because they already had time management skills in place. In other words, building time management skills during undergrad, which enabled them to go to grad school, also made the actual transition into grad school smoother. Zach expounded, "it's actually come pretty easily, after four years of doing it and being a student-athlete and managing four classes each quarter at the same time, I think I've sort of perfected it." Cliff echoed Zach's assessment, adding that he continued to benefit from the support services he used as an undergrad:

> I managed it just like I did in my undergrad program; I was just kind of… I went with it,
> you know? I just made sure I did all my work and whenever I needed extra help, I would
> work closely with my teachers and everything and make sure I was on the same page

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with them, you know. With how our support system with athletes are at USW, it just made it easy—easier—to make that transition to a Master's program, because I still met with my academic advisors and got the proper tutoring or, you know, the help that I needed, so it really didn't change much at all.

Similarly, Ellison spoke of already being comfortable in football by the time he was beginning graduate school, and how that allowed him to focus on his master's program:

my junior and senior year I was pretty comfortable in football, I was doing well, I was comfortable with the schedule, I knew how things worked, it wasn't stressing me out or anything, so you know once football was over for the day, I had plenty of time to get my work done, usually.

Figure 3	Graphic representation of themes in *Chapter 6: Time*
College Transition	"Your freshman year as a Division I football player is probably the worst—the first semester of your freshman year is probably the worst, the worst time. For me, we were waking up at 5 AM every day, we were in the weight room at 5:30—just the freshmen—from 5:30 to 7. Class would be from 8, 8 to maybe 12, I want to say, and then from 12 to about 2 we'd be study hall, study table, doing our work. 2:30 to 7:30 would be meetings and practice then you'd have tape and training table after, so I wouldn't get back to the dorm till probably nine, 9:30 every night. And there'd be days where I'd have to do a little bit more homework, which allowed me—which made me—stay up even later and it was just that for the month of August, September, October, November, December. Five months. It kind of went by like that—really quickly—but there just were days where it would just drag and, personally, that's why I feel that a lot of—not a lot, but some—of my fellow freshmen on the football team didn't make it: it was just a rough, rough schedule and if you had no experience with it, if you weren't exposed to it, like I was in high school, you know, I think it puts you at a disadvantage." (Myles)
Consequences of Constrained Time	"I've never compromised grades for football and I've never compromised football for Grades, but it would definitely help one or the other. I mean, if you were to miss class, you would be able to… if you were able to miss class and concentrate on football more, then you'd definitely see, you'd probably be progressing in Football you know more than the former, and if you were to not go to practice and actually focus on school, then the adverse would happen. But, I mean, myself, no, I never compromised one or the other." (Darius) "I had one class, two seasons ago, and we had a paper due every Saturday night, and I mean it was a thick paper—it was on the European Union, so you can imagine the literature on that! I just remember on the plane ride back from the games, I would have to read these books, I'd have to type on my laptop, and then I would have to like submit it as soon as I landed, wherever there was Wi-Fi, and it was just so annoying. I just felt like 'I'd much rather be in the library working on this and getting it done,' there were plenty of times where I feel like my work wasn't as good as it could've been if I had had more time that was taken away by football." (Braeden)

Extracurricular sacrifices	"I don't think you couldn't perform at academics because of football, usually. But I'd say after graduation, there is somewhat of a conflict, simply because if you're on a team like that, that takes up so much time, I'd say the internships are something that playing football and things can hurt. You don't have as much time to make contacts and things like that, like most students do while they're in college, and a lot of time guys will get out of college and, you know, football is over, and that's it. They, obviously, have their degree—and I mean I've been the situation myself, where you'll have the degree and things like that, but because you were doing football 24-7 for four years, you never really got to intern with a company for a year, or to go to a lot of the job fairs and things like that and make a lot of contacts, so I'd say that's the only thing that football can hinder is if you don't play football after college… If you don't out of your way to have an internship and things like that, sometimes you can get stuck when you get out of college because you can't make as many contacts while you're in college because you were playing football." (Ellison)
	"I'd like to be in more groups and I'd like to have more friends who aren't on the football team, but both of those things—making new friends and being in groups—requires a lot of my time. And, unfortunately, to do well in football and school, I have to commit a lot of time to those; so I have less time to commit to other things I would like to." (Toby)
Sacrificial social life	"I feel like sacrificing, you know, free time, more than anything. Being able to hang out with people and, you know, go out and stuff like that. That had to be sacrificed… you just can't do whatever the average student can do. You just can't, you know? Like, the average student can go out during the week and go to the bar, stay up all night or something like that, but, being a student-athlete, you just can't do that, because you've got class, practice, and all that kind of stuff, and then you probably have to wake up at six or seven in the morning and go work out and so it's just a whole different lifestyle; you have to sacrifice a lot. Like, you'll have friends who are like, 'come over, hangout' and you're like, 'man, I gotta wake up at five in the morning,' so it's just a whole different lifestyle than the average student." (Tevin)
Time Management	"Probably the most difficult part was just learning time management skills and I knew that was going to be a challenge, because you just can't simulate managing your own time when you still live at home with your family. You can try to and you can think you can do it, but once you're on your own, living in the dorms and away from home, you really have to learn on your own: how your body and how your mind reacts when you schedule your time…" (Ryan)
Earned Autonomy	"Coaches really follow your progress your freshman year and once they saw how well I did my second semester and just sign my semester grades of just A's and B's, they didn't pay so much attention to my academics—which was nice, obviously." (Braeden)
	"The academics program here at USW is very unique, it's setup for students to succeed, both with supervision from counselors and academic support staff and then, when they set you up your freshman year with study hall hours, they help teach you how to manage your time, how to make sure you finish up all your papers on time, and then once you continue to grow in the system, you eventually—like myself, I was only in study hall for one year because I was able to succeed early in college and show them, you know, that I could take care of myself or that I had very good motivations—I wasn't forced to do any system requirements by them, I just did it all on my own, so I ended up being in study hall for an even longer. Just on my own because I want to succeed so much in academics." (Ryan)

Figure 3. Graphic representation of themes in *Chapter 6: Time.*

Discussion: Earning Academic Autonomy

Some research on student athlete achievement and role-salience points to the intense

demands of athletics as one factor encouraging over-identification with the athlete role (Bell,

2009; Benson, 2000). Although participants spoke at length about the time and energy required

in order to play Division I football, and especially to balance football and academics, a recurrent

theme was the autonomy participants earned by being academically successful, as well as how

the process of earning autonomy reinforced their burgeoning academic identity. Participating in

football subjected them to many more academic constraints than the general student population;

however, academic success allowed participants to earn more latitude in both concrete and

abstract ways. Participants reveled in this newfound autonomy and recounted how their

academic interests and sense of self flourished as they were given more freedom to explore.

As discussed in the previous chapter, participants reported a lack of academic autonomy

in the beginning of college due to mandated academic support systems. This mandatory

academic scaffolding was important for several reasons: imposed structure and opportunity to

develop skills for future self-reliance, but also because using these support systems does not

damage athletes' nascent academic self-confidence specifically because it's required of all

(which may make it particularly beneficial to borderline students—those who would benefit from

developing study skills etc, but may be vulnerable to negative messages about academic ability).

Many participants explained that mandatory support services dominated their early

college experiences, but this also belied the fact those services were scaffolding students in ways

that aimed to produce more independent and self-directed learners. Alec explained:

> when I first got there, a lot of it's [time management strategies are] forced on you. You
>
> don't have a choice, you're just kept so busy with football and school-related things that,

I mean, you don't have time for it; you don't have time for a social life. Until you learn

how to manage time on your own and be successful at it…

Alec's above quote implies that at some point, within the black box of mandatory support

systems, athletes are taught or adaptively learn to manage their time. Although his quote does not

make clear *how* academic support systems lead athletes to develop the tools necessary to earn

independence from those systems, this process seems to be at work.

Ryan more explicitly explored the scaffolding provided by mandatory support services at

his institution, discussing the way support services at his school were "set up for students to

succeed, both with supervision from counselors and academic support staff and then, when they

set you up your freshman year with study hall hours, they help teach you how to manage your

time." Highlighting that support systems were structured to prepare college athletes for

managing increasing autonomy, Ryan expanded:

once you continue to grow in the system, you eventually—like myself, I was only in

study hall for one year because I was able to succeed early in college and show them, you

know, that I could take care of myself or that I had very good motivations.

These quotes illustrate the intentional construction of 'earned autonomy' within academic

support services' structure, wherein participants gained increasing autonomy over time,

assuming they continued to prove themselves academically. Toby shared his similar experiences

with academic support services:

for my Master's, as I've gotten older, they've given me more flexibility to pick my

classes and do what I want. Whereas, you know, when I was a freshman, they were very

nitpicky about 'what class am I taking?' and 'who is teaching it?' and 'what my plan is

going forward?' Which is expected because, you know, it's hard to trust a 19 year old to

pick classes.

Toby justifies the early involvement, suggesting it is necessary and developmental, but he also

highlights that support services' involvement earlier in his college career was in fact limiting and

that his master's program has provided additional opportunities for him to explore his interests.

The structure of intentional scaffolding designed to move participants toward increasing

autonomy created an environment where Ryan was willing and able to seek additional support as

he needed it, and frame that as a testament to his devotion to doing well academically (instead of

it signaling an academic weakness). He explained:

I wasn't forced to do any system requirements by them, I just did it all on my own, so I

ended up being in study hall for an even longer. Just on my own because I wanted to

succeed so much in academics.

Like Ryan, several participants responded well to the support services and even bragged about

voluntarily adopting those structures later in their program. Those participants who voluntarily

used more services sometimes made a point of the distinction, asserting they used the resource to

ensure success, and went above and beyond the mandated supports to be there—it was still

important to them to establish their autonomy and agency. Agency in seeking help was still

prized, for example, Alec asserted, "I was in study hall for two and half years, because at one

point I just said 'I need to be here, because it helps me get my things done,'" highlighting his

self-awareness and maturity in terms of help-seeking.

Participants earned autonomy over their time by doing well academically—because once

coaches and academics staff trust they can handle their own time, athletes are rewarded with the

autonomy to manage it. For example, Ellison shared, "you're only required to be in study hall

your first two years and you could get out if your GPA was high enough." Braeden explained the movement toward increasing autonomy in terms of a movement away from external monitoring:

> coaches really follow your progress your freshman year and once they saw how well I did my second semester and saw my semester grades of just A's and B's, they didn't pay so much attention to my academics—which was nice, obviously.

Monitoring is a symptom of athletes' lack of autonomy; athletes' progress is monitored to ensure they are performing at a certain level in the classroom—and corrective measures are assigned if they are not. Just being monitored is a lack of freedom, when an athlete is closely monitored it becomes someone else's responsibility to ensure he does not fail. Whether or not he also takes responsibility for his academic performance, there is a professional who is responsible for monitoring his progress and informing him, and his coaches, if he needs to perform better—therefore, he is not responsible for that level of self-reflection and monitoring.[42] In contrast, knowing that you are no longer being monitored—and that it is a privilege you earned through your hard work—also means that if you start slipping, you are responsible for catching yourself. This new framing is true movement toward autonomy and self-directed learning.

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[42] Darius interpreted the continued structure for those struggling as evidence of his college's commitment to academics:

> a lot of rules and regulations for those who aren't academically successful on our team, they have to go through like a strenuous tutoring process and they are, they're doing work all day with tutors and quiet study time and all this… so our team does a really good job of giving us, providing, and requiring a lot of attention to those who aren't academically successful on our team, so I think they show it that way.

However, the continued—and ramped-up, ever-more-involved—academic support for struggling athletes may contribute to negative assumptions about receiving support services, as discussed in Chapter 5, or even perpetuate certain athletes' lack of ownership over their own academic performance.

In contrast to participants who sought out support beyond what was mandatory, it rankled some participants to have their time controlled. Myles, in particular, resented mandatory academic supports that monopolized his time, as evidenced by this quote:

> My freshman year, obviously, [I participated in] study table. But if you get a certain GPA and stay out of trouble, then you're released from it—which I was, really quickly. I didn't want to do it; I didn't feel that somebody should be able to tell me when I should do my homework.… that wasn't happening with me.

Many participants took pride in not needing a lot of support services, seeing it as a testament to them doing well. For example, Zach explained that the mandatory academic supports during his freshman year were "the only true academic services that I've used. I think I did well enough my sophomore through senior years on my own, and was able to study on my own, I never had to use the tutors." About academic services, Braeden said, "they were pretty supportive. But… towards the end, I really didn't need as much." This distinction of praising academic support services, while simultaneously distancing himself from needing their help, was fairly commonplace throughout the interviews. Tevin described one of his major academic successes:

> My last semester before I graduated, that was by far my best semester that I ever had since I've been in school here. So I think that was pretty, that was pretty good, for my advisor [name] to tell me that that was my best semester that I've ever had. And I didn't have tutoring or study hall or anything. **I did it all by myself.** (Emphasis added).

Earning autonomy was a perk of doing well—but that freedom also becomes a testament to how well they are doing, symbolic. Conversely, continued use of academic supports could be seen as testament to an inability to manage alone, which explains participants' self-conscious portrayal

of using optional support services, in which they emphasized the personal initiative they took in seeking help to avoid being stigmatized for *needing* help.

Even those participants who highly valued autonomy and sought to control their relationships with academic support programs were generally laudatory of support services for themselves (e.g. "I was just in there constantly telling them what I needed, what I wanted, and how they could help me—and they did a great job" [Myles]) and for others (e.g. "I never had to use the tutors—but I know we do offer them and I know a lot of guys use them and it's a great resource to have" [Zach]). Zach valued that the resources existed for those who need them, despite counting himself among those who did not require extensive academic support:

> there's probably a large group of guys that are just like me and that do pretty well academically and don't need a lot of help. But we definitely have guys that might struggle academically, and so they definitely use more of the resources that are given to us.

Similarly, Ellison shared:

> I know guys that were in study hall until their very last class [because their GPA wasn't high enough to be excused]—they never got out of study hall, you know, had to have four or five tutors a semester. So I'd say I used it a lot less, which isn't a good or bad thing, because those guys were graduating just like I was, they just required a little bit more assistance and it was awesome that it was there for them...

Participants were supportive of those who need more academic support than they did, while still elevating their own exceptionalism.[43] The above quote also explains why Ellison wanted to achieve beyond a bachelor's degree, because it speaks to the devaluing of a bachelor's degree.

      Navigational Capital. Participants were almost ubiquitously laudatory of academic support services for athletes at their universities (although this may have been slightly skewed due to recruiting methods); however, participants felt they were easier to help than other athletes because they were particularly motivated, knew what they needed and explicitly asked for it, and frequently utilized academic services as a hub for accessing wider academic services and to teach them skills that enabled eventual independence. Furthermore, several participants did not rely on athletics' resources exclusively, but leveraged those resources to connect them to additional, more specialized, resources.

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[43] Despite their overall praise of support services, several participants' comments revealed their perception/belief that academic supports were for those struggling or those who were looking for an easier path, for example, when asked, "do you think your experiences with academic support services were similar to your teammates'?" Darius responded:

> Um, no. The reason I say some are different is that some people want easier classes, just to play football. I really didn't care about easier classes like that, I just wanted to get my stuff out of the way, so I think I was a little easier to guide… and you know some college athletes are kind of protected and they can't do certain classes because they're either not interested in them or they won't be able to pass them because they're too difficult, so I don't think I was that difficult to manage or guide, in comparison.

Similarly, Toby shared, "I think they're a helpful resource if I'm looking to find one or two classes that are a little easier and that have teachers that are helpful: they know those teachers, where to find those people." (Toby)

Participants' navigational capital came into clearer focus when participants compared themselves to fellow college athletes. Darius thought he was "a little easier to guide" than some of his teammates and Myles concluded "it wasn't very hard for them to help me because, you know, here's this kid that knew what he wanted, and is committed to getting there. It makes their job easier, because that's what they signed up to do." Similarly, Ellison recounted how his academic counselor "was always in touch with a lot of the guys, making sure they were doing this, making sure they were doing that, and it was almost like she had to babysit," others. In contrast, Ellison explained:

> honestly, the only time I had to talk to her was when I had a question; then I'd contact her. For the most part, she knew that I was going to be getting it done, so I'd say it was different because I didn't use it as much, I didn't rely on the resources that they gave us, as much as the other guys did.

These successful athletes demonstrate navigational capital by initiating interactions and getting what they need from student services, instead of being 'babysat' by them. As a result, academic support people "didn't stress me as much" (Ellison). This lack of monitoring and babysitting is an incentive encouraging college athletes to earn increasing autonomy—it is not fun to be 'checked' (Darius) or to have 'your progress followed' (Braeden).

Some participants were wary of athletics' academic supports, or at least aware of potential pit falls, and used their navigational capital to develop auxiliary support systems outside of athletics. Myles described an academic advisor within athletics who he admired as having:

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a big impact on me… it didn't matter that I was a football player: his job was to help me

as a *student* get to where I want to go. And I drew a lot of help from them; I kind of made

them actually do their job, a lot. [Both laugh.]

Myles' distinction that this advisor advised him *as a student* suggests this is note-worthy, and

reveals his expectation that athletics' academic support staff may not always prioritize the

development of athletes' student identity. Although Myles valued his academic advisor's

support, he learned to use athletics' support services as a hub to connect him to other resources:

I used support services to guide me to the directions I wanted to go and then from there…

For example, my academic counselor within the athletic facility would tell me "okay,

who's my academic advisor for the [name of department]?" and they would tell me, and

that would be who I would talk to.

Braeden was more plainly suspicious of the expertise and motives of athletics' academic support

services, saying:

I for some reason always took the initiative just to go ahead to see my actual counselor on

campus, because I figured that was kind of a more direct path than going to [athletics']

academic people who—yeah, they might have an idea of what classes I needed to take,

but I thought my counselor would have a better idea. So I was in regular contact with

him…. And I don't think it was intentional that I was ignoring the athletic academic staff,

I just figured I was more confident with the counselors on campus to actually help me

and he was very, very helpful.

In terms of developing relationships outside of athletics, no Black participant indicated the same

facility—the fact that this was something expressed by white and Pacific Islander participants,

but not Blacks deserves further research attention and is discussed again in Chapter 9.

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Conclusion

Despite the many constraints on their time, participants were overwhelmingly positive in assessing their college experiences, noting that the trade-offs they made were worth it, because they got so much out of competing in football. Toby dismissed the compromises he made to succeed both athletically and academically, citing his love of the game:

> to do well in football and school, I have to commit a lot of time to those; so I have less time to commit to other things I would like to. So that's a problem, but I also love football a lot, so it hasn't been a problem for me to commit as much time as I do to football.

Similarly, although Zach felt that he had to "forfeit a lot of [his] social life" to be an academically successful college athlete, he shared the resilient outlook of several participants when he posed and responded to the faux-rhetorical question, "Is that a huge deal? Maybe to some, but I've gotten over it.… I think being a student-athlete has opened more doors than it's closed."

Participants reported a lack of conflict. Of course, this is a study of highly successful students, who also play football, so it makes intuitive sense that participants adeptly navigate potential role conflicts. However, the lack of conflict reported was notable—there were no "bad guy" characters in their narratives. Participants largely portrayed academic services that supported and facilitated their success, but did not "guide" them. Participants were self-directed, describing the necessity of approaching support services staff proactively, and reporting with delight that the staff in turn went above and beyond to assist these college athletes who demonstrated academic commitment and initiative. Findings also suggest that scaffolding *Earned Autonomy* is best practice in student services. This movement toward autonomy in my

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findings may at first glance appear to support the stigmatizing of support services, but it actually speaks to support services' ability and potential to serve as temporary scaffolding for this developmental outcome.

CHAPTER 7: Educational Trajectory

Two questions about participants' path to becoming graduate student athletes take on new urgency given the preceding chapters' findings about the many constraints and pressures on their time, public image, and sense of self as graduate student athletes: 1. *how* were participants able to pursue this trajectory and, 2. *why* were they motivated to do so? When this study was conceptualized, these research questions about participants' trajectory, motivation, and support came first, because I viewed them as decision processes preceding participants' college experience as graduate student athletes; however, during the research process, it became apparent that even for those athletes who had mapped out this path for themselves very early on, their college experiences had a crucial impact on at least their persistence and eventual degree attainment. As a result, many participants' trajectory was inseparable from their college experience, with neither pre-existing the other, but instead their path and experience mutually evolving. Furthermore, participants frequently discounted the "how" of their academic trajectory, dismissively attributing it to the NCAA eligibility rules discussed in the introduction as well as other factors that helped create the opportunity to begin graduate coursework.[44]

This study relies on participants' retroactive reflections on the decision process, meaning findings are all filtered through participants' narrative voice. Instead of seeing these as limitations in my data, my strategy of analysis accounts for the data and uses it to answer the questions it is best suited to answer. As such, my findings have implications for college choice frameworks, but are best suited to examining the meaning participants made of their process and

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[44] The logic of this attribution rests on the following value system, which most participants espoused some version of: *one must make the most of every opportunity he has* (discussed further beginning on page 143).

the discursive work they perform in sharing their story. This chapter begins by examining participants' academic planning (*predisposition* and *premeditation*), or lack thereof, then explores the high value they place on fully taking every opportunity, the *ends* revealed by their instrumental framing, and finally concludes with participants' preparation for their transition out of football (please see the graphic representation of quotes for this chapter, on pages 147-148).

Predisposition

College access theorists emphasize the importance of early predisposition (Hossler & Gallagher, 1986) as well as immersion in a strong college-going culture (McDonough, 1998) in developing the college aspirations that lead to college preparatory behavior and eventual attendance. Many participants discussed their early predisposition to go to college and a smaller group articulated early graduate degree aspirations. These higher education aspirations were not necessarily connected to participants' athletic goals initially and instead reflected messages from their families and educational contexts. Ellison provides an example of a participant who intended to pursue a Master's degree whether it was while playing football or after. He said:

>when I got to college I would say I was already intending on getting a master's degree. I knew that football was gonna pay for my first four years, and was not sure, depending on what happened after that, whether I'd be paying for myself or waiting a year or two, coming back and getting it. But I knew it was something I'd wanted to do since the day I got to college. Even in high school, I knew that I'd want to finish college and then get a master's degree as well. I'd say I knew I had the ideas starting even freshman, sophomore year in high school, I knew that I'd want to get a bachelor's and a master's degree as well, and then once I got to college, it definitely confirmed it.

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Participants described the ever-present norm of college attendance advanced by their parents and school environments, as well as material support for those professed goals. Myles recounted the varying ways college attendance was promoted within his working-class family, "it was always stressed it was important—in my head it was placed that 'you're going to college,' or 'you should go to college,' or 'it's necessary to go to college.'" Myles' family paired this emphasis on the necessity of college going with their own class status; one of their motivations for proactively encouraging college attendance was "my parents regret the fact that they didn't go to school, or didn't finish school." Furthermore, Myles and his family associated higher education with improved career options (see the discussion section of this chapter, beginning on page 148), and emphasized degree completion above and beyond attendance. In contrast, college attendance and graduation was more taken-for-granted in Ellison's middle class upbringing. He explained, "when I was growing up... my expectations were to always graduate college, from my family and from everybody else." Despite differing levels of parental education and differences in terms of how explicitly college attendance norms were articulated, both Myles and Ellison's families succeeded in creating strong college-going cultures for their sons.

Most participants articulated clear motives for aspiring to higher education, particularly in terms of the anticipated career dividends (for example, Ellison explained that he wanted a master's degree because "I just knew that the job atmosphere and everything was really competitive," and earning a graduate degree would presumably make him more marketable). Other participants absorbed the message of college attendance more seamlessly and accepted the norm of college attendance without further justification. For these participants, college attendance and degree attainment were worthy goals based on their own merits, not because of their future career pay-offs. Toby shares this more elite, less career-driven, perspective, saying,

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"from a young age—at least my dad's side of the family—was very attuned to going to a good school, and going to graduate school after, and making the most of your education. So I think I was very lucky in that regard."[45] In addition to messages about college going, Toby's family shared knowledge about college quality and advanced degrees, displaying their social capital, and also broaching the strategic outlook (i.e. to "make the most of one's education") advocated by almost all participants at the time of their interview.

Premeditation

For several participants, earning an athletic scholarship was a pre-planned strategy for accessing higher education. These participants were calculating in utilizing football for educational ends, but similar to those discussed in the preceding section in terms of their early predisposition toward higher education and/or graduate degree aspirations. For example, Myles wanted "specialized education," but was turned off by how expensive it was. Due to his working class roots, Myles was acutely aware of how important higher education was before he knew whether he'd be able to play football at the Division I level; he later realized football could be leveraged to that end or, in his words, "that something special could be made from football." Myles explained his strategy for obtaining the education he wanted but could not afford:

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[45] Toby clarified that although graduate school was on his radar from a young age, "not as much a master's program like I'm in now, obviously that's graduate school, but more like a four-year, like going to medical school, or business school, or law school. But yeah, I mean, they're all kind of the same, I guess…" In this way, Toby somewhat disparages his own degree (a Humanities MA) because it is not a professional degree. However, he needed the fifth year and the flexibility provided by his master's program to do career exploration that he could not do earlier in his college career; questions about the value of specific graduate degree programs are addressed in Chapter 8.

it was my plan all along to try and get my undergrad done really quickly, so that my

graduate program could be paid for by the university. It—I always planned to do that, so I

figured—I saw the prices of graduate programs and I saw the overall price of

postsecondary education in general, and I told myself, 'I ain't paying for that.' Luckily,

you know, I was good enough to earn a Division I scholarship, and I saw opportunities to

not only get a bachelor's degree, but to get a graduate degree as well.

Similarly, Darius explained, "my goal was basically to get a full scholarship," in particular, he

chose to attend an elite public university to demonstrate he was "intelligent and an intellectual,"

not just a football player.[46] Braeden had the goal of earning an athletic scholarship from the time

he was in elementary school, for the express purpose of sparing his parents the expense. He

recounted, "I told my parents I would get a scholarship so they wouldn't have to pay for

college." Furthermore, like Myles, Braeden formed this plan before he knew which sport would

provide him the scholarship to fund higher education: "I didn't say what sport; I said I would get

a scholarship." These two participants focused on the economic utility of football participation,

repeatedly explaining their motivation to play football as a financial means to specific

educational ends.

Despite their similarities in viewing football instrumentally, Braeden and Myles'

premeditation differed in one important way: whereas Myles intended from a young age to use

his eligibility to pay for a graduate degree in addition to a bachelor's, Braeden did not initially

include graduate school in his strategy. Braeden was the participant most explicit about

[46] Darius, who was taking postbaccalaureate coursework, but hoped to pursue a graduate degree after his football

career ended, discussed ways that he negotiated his image as an intellectual more explicitly than participants who

were pursuing graduate coursework, perhaps because that pursuit spoke for itself in negating negative stereotypes.

conceptualizing football instrumentally, explaining, "as far as football, it provided a means to an end as far as getting my education paid for," and this belief permeated Braeden's relationship with the sport—he was invested in it only insofar as it could be instrumental. Without the financial incentives, for Braeden, the demands of football, "physically, but more than anything else emotionally and mentally," would not justify participation. He elaborated, "I doubt that I would play for four years at a Division II or Division III school, where I'm not getting my tuition paid for or I'm not getting a check every month." Furthermore, Braeden explained that he did not like football ("I really don't" he reiterated emphatically); instead, he saw it as a job, which he pursued with unimpeachable commitment, despite his lack of enjoyment. As a result of this instrumental framing, the decision to go to graduate school was an easy choice for Braeden. The opportunity to attend graduate school emerged organically out of his determination to earn a bachelor's degree and once that additional opportunity was presented, he seized it, as an extension of viewing football instrumentally. As shown by Braeden's example, planning to use football instrumentally in service of educational goals is not limited to those who were intending to pursue grad school; however, it may have influenced participants' ability to pivot and adjust their goals so as to fully take advantage of the academic opportunities football provided.

Ryan recalled that his high school coaches encouraged him to think about football instrumentally and to aspire to a graduate degree:

my coaches in high school had mentioned it to me, they said, 'RYAN, if you graduate on time then you can start grad school and just make the most of your education,' because education, you know, it costs a lot of money, costs a lot of money to pay for it and to be able to take advantage of five years of education is you just you can't replicate that, that opportunity—it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get your education paid for.

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This support during college planning and introduction to strategically thinking about how to fund a graduate degree helped Ryan chart his academic path before he even began college. Much like Ryan's coaches, several participants (including Ryan himself) encouraged future players to adopt an instrumental perspective on football participation. Myles related the need for knowledge of graduate degree opportunities for athletes (as well as the strategic framing of those opportunities) back to whether athletes are exposed to college-going cultures early and their subsequent predisposition to attend, explaining, "I feel that if my teammates were exposed to the idea earlier, and their parents were exposed the idea earlier, I feel that there'd probably be a little bit more Division I athletes doing what I'm doing right now." Important in this assertion is the unspoken belief that, of course, college athletes want to achieve academically (or, as Harris' [2011] title proclaims, "kids don't want to fail") and one of the primary impediments to more athletes succeeding at this level is a simple lack of early awareness, therefore, institutional agents may be able to mitigate the problem through small-scale changes with big impacts.

Incidental Educational Opportunities

In contrast to those who had early aspirations of college attendance, Carlton did not grow up in a strong college-going culture. In fact, the messages he received about college going were most notable in their absence:

CARLTON: Well, no one in my family had ever went to college, so, I mean, pretty much if you graduated high school, that was pretty much the standard. Other than that, no one ever pressured you to going to college.

SH: Uh huh [assent], and when you did have conversations about going on to college or even playing football in college, what did those sound like?

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CARLTON: I mean, I don't really remember having conversations about going to college, because I was so focused on graduating high school that… I guess I would like say, I wasn't even thinking of going to college at the time… Because I was just focused on graduating high school, so I never really had a conversation about that.

As a result, Carlton first realized that college was an option for him during his junior year in high school, he explained:

I had got like a letter from the University of Oklahoma and my coach called me into his office saying they wanted to offer me a scholarship. And he was telling me how it works and stuff and he was like 'if you keep scoring touchdowns like you're doing or playing like you're playing, then, you know, you can go to college.' I was like, 'college?!' That was the first time it had really been brought to my attention. I was like, 'are you serious? I can go to college?'

Importantly, Carlton's experience validates the narrative of college athletics as a path to higher education for some athletes. His experience was unique among the high achieving participants in this study, but that does not make it less powerful. Although most young athletes have probably at least considered that athletic participation (if nothing else) might lead them to college, Carlton's surprise and excitement about the opportunity to attend college captures the profound effect athletics can have on college access prospects for educationally disadvantaged students. Nonetheless, Carlton, who lacked early support and awareness for college going, prescribed what he'd lacked as a way to support future college athletes' academic success:

CARLTON: I think by them having a strong background, family background, or whatever, supportive, that'd help them reach their academic goals, a strong support system.

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SH: And do you feel like you have that?

CARLTON: Um, I think I have… I mean, somewhat, I think I have that. Because, you know, instead of being pushed to graduate high school, I wish I was pushed to graduate college. But even graduating high school gave me the opportunity to go to college, so I think I had what I had to.

Although Tevin's grandmother strongly encouraged him to attend college, he did not believe it would have been feasible without football. When asked, "how do you think your process and decisions would've been affected if you hadn't been recruited?" Tevin responded, "I don't know where I would be at, I probably wouldn't be here today, graduating from a big-time college and playing Division I football… I honestly don't know, to be honest; I could be back at home, being a bum, honestly." Carlton guessed that he would be "cutting hair" were it not for football. A few other participants mused that they would have gone to less selective colleges or ones closer to home.

Taking the hypothetical question a step further, Alec offers an example of someone who was not initially offered a football scholarship (because of the administrative issues discussed in footnote 37, on page 69); instead, he attended an academy to ensure he was recruited the following year. In other words, Alec's strategy was to 'double down' on football as a pathway to college (this strategy made rational sense to him because his primary motivation for college going and persistence was initially his love of football). This reaction is in contrast to the back up plan Ellison described, wherein he applied to colleges through the traditional channels in case he were to be injured or otherwise miss out on a football scholarship. In this dichotomy we can see important differences between those who relied on football to provide educational opportunities and those immersed in strong college-going cultures early in life, for those who formed early

higher education aspirations, even if they used football instrumentally to actualize the aspirations, their degree aspirations were more resilient to athletic setbacks (I discuss this pitfall of incidental opportunism further beginning on page 148).

Even for participants with early degree aspirations, circumstances sometimes presented them with unanticipated educational opportunities; in particular, a few participants only realized later in their college careers that pursuing graduate study while playing was a realistic possibility. Alec, who was awarded a medical redshirt in his junior season, was especially surprised by the graduate school opportunity that suddenly presented itself at the "start of my senior year. I never really, I had never really thought that it was an option for me… just because I didn't know what I wanted to do at the time and then the opportunity kind of just arose out of nowhere." Alec described the role his medical redshirt played:

> I had a lot of surgeries playing football and so my true junior year, my third year of school, I had to redshirt, and sit out a year from football for shoulder surgery. But what that did was I gained another year of eligibility as far as playing, but stayed on course in the classroom. So I was able to graduate in four years, and still have one more year remaining and so…. I was on full scholarship and I basically got my grad school paid for because of football.

Similarly, Ellison described a medical redshirt as ensuring "that year didn't count against me" in terms of athletic eligibility. But what both Ellison and Alec describe is the *academic* boon of having an extra year; in contrast, for some participants who were redshirted their first year, they had to more consciously choose to pursue a 'fast track' to ensure they were not counseled into a

course load that stretched the bachelor's degree to fit their five years of eligibility (discussed

further in the *implications* section of Chapter 9).[47]

Participants who approached college going or graduate school as 'incidental educational

opportunities' did not discuss the financial payoff of football as frequently as participants who

formed degree aspirations earlier, but the ways in which football participation enabled the former

group's access to higher education extended beyond just the financial aspects into their personal

motivation, feasibility, and other variables. In other words, those who credited football with

providing access to higher education in ways beyond the financial (e.g. Alec, who didn't think he

would have persisted in higher education without football, and Carlton and Tevin, who wouldn't

have considered college as a viable option without football) were less vocal in terms of

strategizing in financial terms. But, for them, the import of the opportunity that football provided

them was highly revered and the financial benefits were an implicit part of the larger access

puzzle.

Value of Opportunity

Participants felt responsible for utilizing every resource available, encouraging future

college athletes to take graduate courses during their eligibility if given the opportunity and

advocating this specific way of viewing the opportunities provided by a football scholarship.

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[47] Alec also discusses coaches' roles in the decision to pursue graduate school "the coach's responsibility is, you

know, he wants to win games and he wants his players to graduate. But, well, once their four years are up and

they've graduated, he has no obligation to send them to grad school or not, even if they are able to." This

observation highlights the need for support for graduate student athletes from all members of the role-set and

underscores concerns about how the graduate transfer rule (as well as other concerns) might serve as a disincentive

for athletic departments and coaches to encourage graduate study (Infante, 2012; Martin, 2008).

Alec shared that "telling somebody to use every resource possible and *exhaust them all* would be my best piece of advice," and Ryan expanded:

> I've already told a few of our freshmen right now because they already know they're gonna redshirt just like I did, so I've been telling them already this week—because they just got here last week—I've already been telling them 'guys, make sure you get on top of your academics so you can you know get the most out of your education and maybe even start grad school down the line.'

This advice becomes an ethos, which justifies actions and guides decisions. Ellison's explanation of his decision-making process regarding pursuing a master's reframes the decision as simply the moment when he was able *to act* in accordance with his preexisting belief system (in other words, the action was a logical extension of much earlier decisions about what to value and believe):

> I'd want to get a bachelor's and a master's degree as well, and then once I got to college, it definitely confirmed it, I knew that I'd want to do it then, and **when I was given the opportunity, I didn't hesitate to do it.** (Emphasis added)

Similarly, Alec said of his decision to pursue a graduate degree while still playing, "it was always a 'go' from the beginning; once I found out I could, that's what I was gonna do." Participants prized 'opportunity utilization.' When asked to name "one factor that enabled you to succeed at both athletics and academics," Tevin expounded:

> Just where I come from. I know that **I had a big opportunity** to be the first in my family to graduate from college, **and that just was all the motivation I really needed**. And when my grandma passed away, that's all I could really think about, was just her harping

on me about education. So that was like the only thing that I needed to motivate me to succeed in academics and athletics.

Participants expressed the view that there was no reason not to pursue graduate coursework, especially given that they were expected to enroll in courses year-round. Many participants discussed being continuously in school, without real breaks, and how many courses they accumulated, thereby connecting the sheer volume of classroom hours built into their schedule to the opportunity to enter graduate school. This affects both their experience and opportunity. It also explains why original research questions about "how" participants were able to become graduate student athletes was insufficient—participants frequently cited the fact that it was *possible*, so they felt more or less obligated to do so; according to participants, the "how" came down to the NCAA rules that I outlined as a background factor in the first section, not more individual enabling factors. Cliff shared his advice to future athletes about whether to pursue graduate coursework:

> I would tell them to go for it, you know, especially with how it is now. I mean – I know when I was doing it was kinda like I was pretty much going to school year-round, so if you're going to be there working out for the summer, I just figured I might as well take classes as well, and you know all that did was help me graduate, you know, either on time or little bit earlier. And then when you do that, and if you use up your redshirt year, if it allows itself to be done, then why not, because you're only going to better yourself and further your education, so why not?

Tevin described how he was able to graduate before exhausting his eligibility:

> I just took 12 hours each semester, in the fall and the spring, and then in the summer I took six hours—it was a mandatory that we take summer school—so I'd take summer

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school and then take my hours in the spring and the fall. And then my last semester was

in the spring, so I had 15 hours and those were my last hours I had to a complete before I

could graduate, so I decided to just take all 15.

Braeden emphasized the ability to use football to educational ends and expressed frustration with

other athletes who were not taking advantage of these opportunities in two quotations:

my academic advisors were always really supportive of me and told me that it was really

cool what I was doing, and that I was going to pursue a grad degree, and said that it's not

very common—which I thought was weird. I mean I figured, it's not that difficult,

because I took a lot of extra classes during my four years here which, honestly, if I just

took, if I just took the classes I needed to and didn't take those, I would've graduated

early anyway, so it was kind of strange to me that not many people graduate early…

I don't understand why more kids don't strive for that, because I know some programs

are only a year long or maybe only eight classes, so I think if you can do that in your fifth

year, then why not? I mean putting that on your resume gets you, puts you in a higher

position, a higher possibility of getting a job, being paid more—it just doesn't make sense

why kids don't think about their future more, I would definitely say that they should

strive to do it, 100%.

Another common argument structure for participants regarding whether to pursue

graduate coursework was to acknowledge the hard work and sacrifices entailed in pursuing

graduate work then assert that the sacrifices were unequivocally "worth your while" and,

therefore, "if you have an opportunity to do something like that and to continue your education,

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there's no reason why you should not" (Alec). Zach structured his argument similarly, connecting the opportunity to earn a graduate degree to future career opportunities:

> At the end of the day, you might see it as a sacrifice, but you're coming out of a great
> academic institution with two degrees—with a master's degree that's gonna hold a lot of
> weight when you're looking for a job, so it's definitely something I would promote.

Braeden was even more explicit, discussing how graduate school could set athletes up to easily transition from sport:

> I would say absolutely do it, if you can, because it's just going to put you in a better
> position, as far as when you're done with football. Even though it's going to be difficult
> to get there, it's going to be well worth it.

Figure 4	Graphic representation of themes in *Chapter 7: Educational Trajectory*
Predisposition	"Even from my grandparents who, because of the circumstances when they were my age couldn't go to college, they had to go out in the workforce and help support their families. They always stressed the importance of going to college, getting a degree… because that's just the way the world is now: you need to have a degree and you need to have something to stand next to your name in order to get that high-paying job or that job that will allow u to live comfortable. My parents regret the fact that they didn't go to school, or didn't finish school, so it was always stressed it was important--in my head it was placed that "you're going to college," or "you should go to college," or "it's necessary to go to college." Myles "I wasn't rich or anything, but I wasn't trying to beat the odds or anything like that when I was growing up, it didn't really affect what I was trying to do, for the most part. Like I said, my expectations were to always graduate college, from my family and from everybody else." Ellison
Premeditation	"it was my plan all along to try and get my undergrad done really quickly, so that my graduate program could be paid for by the university. It—I always planned to do that, so I figured—I saw the prices of graduate programs and I saw the overall price of postsecondary education in general, and I told myself, 'I ain't paying for that.' Luckily, you know, I was good enough to earn a Division I scholarship, and I saw opportunities to not only get a bachelor's degree, but to get a graduate degree as well." Myles "Since I was very young I told my parents I would get a scholarship so they wouldn't have to pay for college. I think I must've been about eight or 10 or 12, somewhere around there, I told them that I would get a scholarship to play in college. I didn't say what sport; I said I would get a scholarship." Braeden "my coaches in high school had mentioned it to me, they said, 'RYAN, if you graduate on time then you can start grad school and just make the most of your education,' because education, you know, it costs a lot of money, costs a lot of money to pay for it and to be able to take advantage of five years of education is you just you can't

	replicate that, that opportunity—it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get your education paid for." Ryan
Incidental Educational Opportunities	"I had got like a letter from the University of Oklahoma and my coach called me into his office saying they wanted to offer me a scholarship. And he was telling me how it works and stuff and he was like 'if you keep scoring touchdowns like you're doing or playing like you're playing, then, you know, you can go to college.' I was like, 'college?!' That was the first time it had really been brought to my attention. I was like, 'are you serious? I can go to college?'" Carlton
Value of Opportunity	"I knew that I'd want to get a bachelor's and a master's degree as well, and then once I got to college, it definitely confirmed it, I knew that I'd want to do it then, and when I was given the opportunity, I didn't hesitate to do it." Ellison

"it was always a 'go' from the beginning; once I found out I could, that's what I was gonna do." Alec

"I would tell them to go for it, you know, especially with how it is now. I mean – I know when I was doing it was kinda like I was pretty much going to school year-round, so if you're going to be there working out for the summer, I just figured I might as well take classes as well, and you know all that did was help me graduate, you know, either on time or little bit earlier. And then when you do that, and if you use up your redshirt year, if it allows itself to be done, then why not, because you're only going to better yourself and further your education, so why not?" Cliff |

Figure 4. Graphic representation of themes in *Chapter 7: Educational Trajectory.*

Discussion: Instrumental Framing Reveals End-goal(s)

Regardless of whether a given participant intended to follow this trajectory or opportunistically revised his educational plans when it became possible to earn his bachelor's degree prior to exhausting his eligibility, working toward a grad degree can imply a means-to-an-end motivation for football and may serve to symbolically re-legitimate participants' student role-identity. Just as "making academics a means to get to participate in athletics" (Woodruff & Schallert, 2008, p. 42) reinforces conceptualizations of *athlete* as the primary role, reframing athletics as a means to an educational end accomplishes the inverse. When one role is framed as a means to an end, the role associated with the end is more salient to the 'real' identity, whereas the means is the role performance in the interim, simply to reach the end. As a result, all of the effort participants invested in football takes on new meaning and is justified when they reframe

their participation as a means-to-an-educational-end, even as they begin to divest from their athletic identity (as professional career becomes more obviously unrealistic). Through this reframing, athletes are able to recast the college football experience as worthwhile and lend themselves autonomy by making their decisions seem like they relied on foresight. For example, although Carlton had not considered going to college—much less getting a graduate degree—before he was recruited for football, he encouraged other athletes to adopt an instrumental understanding of the benefits of football participation, exclaiming, "I'd tell 'em, *'Get it while it's free!'*" Similarly, Ryan described advising freshmen on the team:

'education will take you a lot further than football will—because you can only play football for so long. So you have to set yourself up for the future and just make sure you take care of academics first.'

Participants also discussed preparing for the transition from sport and their readiness to explore other aspects of themselves. Myles shared, when asked whether he had aspirations of entering the NFL:

I'm done playing football. I mean, I would love to continue playing football, but I just want to do something different with my life. I mean football has been my life for the past 10 years—that's roughly 40, forty-something, percent of my life that has been football, you know? I mean, I think I'm ready to do something different and I want to do something different.

The means-to-an-end framing legitimated participants' academic identities, as did their readiness to prepare for careers after they retired from football. The specter of injury inspired some participants to develop their identities beyond football, but many also looked forward to the

increased control over their lives, bodies, and image that they would have after they were done playing football.

Despite the usefulness of participants' instrumental framing, there is a fine line between using football as means to an end and being constrained and limited by the means (Mahiri & Van Rheenen, 2009). Mahiri and Van Rheenen (2009) problematize the narrative of sports as a means to an end. They note that sports frequently circumscribed their participants' academic aspirations and identities, and juxtapose the 'means to an end' understanding of the body with the luxury of viewing sports as an avocation, as many white and/or advantaged communities might (and which helped make Van Rheenen's "choices about prioritizing academics over athletics less conflicted" [p. 39]). Although a football scholarship may enable one to afford college, it is also a highly contingent source of funding, which shapes decisions in ways beyond demanding participants' commitment to football: for example, it also structured their course schedule—keeping them in summer classes and further inhibiting internship or non-football experiences. This tension is discussed at further length in the implications section of the last chapter.

Conclusion: Career Options and Self-Determination

Participants overwhelmingly framed or reframed their participation in football as an instrumental means to an educational end. Furthermore, several participants explicitly connected their degrees to having meaningful self-determination over their future careers. For example, Myles explained his understanding of the credentialing aspect of higher education, saying, "that's just the way the world is now: you need to have a degree and you need to have something to stand next to your name in order to get that high-paying job or that job that will allow you to live comfortable." Myles' grandparents, as well as his parents, had inspired him to realize that "I didn't want a blue-collar job. I didn't want to be working really hard all the time; I didn't want to

have a disadvantage because I didn't have a degree." In contrast to Myles, college attendance was not presented as a goal, or even a realistic option, within Carlton's family, and he would not have considered going to college without the encouragement and accommodations provided by being recruited for football. Carlton mused that, if he had not been recruited to play college football, "I woulda probably been cutting hair, because that's the only hobby I enjoy besides playing football." Carlton's assessment that whatever he would have done without college would have needed to be a "hobby" is a tacit acknowledgement of the need for a degree to enter a *career*; because Carlton would have begun work straight out of high school without football, the only options available to him were unskilled "hobbies." In contrast to his perception of only one career option without a college degree, toward the end of our interview Carlton listed three viable career paths he was considering based on his education; even more striking was the shift demonstrated when Carlton explained unprompted that if an NFL career didn't work out for him, "if not, I'll be just fine, because I have a degree and I can do something else that I enjoy doing besides football." The juxtaposition of Carlton's two assessments regarding what career paths were available to him is profound—not only does Carlton see his life chances as improved, his ability to access what brings him *joy* has actually expanded too. Despite the differences in their families' early messaging about college-going, Carlton and Myles arrived at similar understandings of the credentialing function of higher education and the ways in which credentials would enhance their lives, namely, by increasing their career options and future opportunities.

CHAPTER 8: Graduate Program

Given the stereotypes surrounding college athletes alleged disinterest in academics, it is important to address not only participants' career goals, but also how their degree program(s) related to those goals. These topics have real world significance in terms of how college athletes ought to be advised and encouraged to conceptualize their education. Furthermore, given participants' commitment to pursuing every opportunity with gusto, as discussed in the previous chapter, it makes sense to explore in further depth exactly *what* participants are pursuing when they set out to earn a graduate degree. Is it a matter of simply accruing as many degrees as possible during their eligibility—either for the sake of "[using] every resource possible and *exhaust[ing] them all*" (Alec) or in service of earning the credentials necessary in an increasingly competitive job market—or do these degrees hold more complex meaning(s) in their lives and future goals? Answering these imperatives, this chapter covers how participants thought their education fit into their career plans and life goals (please see the graphic representation of quotes for this chapter on page 158).

Postbaccalaureates

Participants certainly had access to different channels than the average applicant to graduate degree programs, because they were internal candidates to their institutions[48] and were guided through the process by the athletics support staff. Furthermore, participants may have been on different application timetables and/or more likely to apply to only one program than other aspiring graduate students. I did not ask participants whether they thought there were

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[48] Because I did not include athletes who used the graduate transfer rule, this was true of all participants. In future research with the graduate student athlete transfer population, this question may be better examined.

'special admissions' practices at work in their graduate programs. Only one participant mentioned being rejected from his first choice graduate program; another (who ultimately pursued postbaccalaureate coursework instead of a graduate degree) was discouraged from applying to the Sports-related master's which enrolled many graduate student athletes at his university because his GPA was just short of the 3.0 cutoff of the increasingly selective program. Although attending graduate programs was tied to their continued football eligibility, importantly, pursuing a graduate degree was a conscious choice by participants who could have (more) easily continued playing while taking post-baccalaureate coursework. In other words, they were not compelled to take graduate courses for athletic reasons; it was a choice that was likely developed from genuine academic motivations, despite preconceptions of this population.

The two participants who were unlikely to pursue graduate coursework within their eligibility provide proof of a viable postbaccalaureate path other than graduate school. Rather than begin a graduate program that he was unlikely to finish (Tevin), or that was interesting, but not his true passion (Darius), these participants opted to take postbaccalaureate coursework that was intellectually engaging, but not stressful (please see the graphic representation on page 158). They were unselfconscious in telling me they would focus on football for the fall semester. Although this may seem to contradict other findings, it actually serves to strengthen them. Because there are viable alternatives to beginning a graduate program, it is more likely that those pursuing a graduate degree are truly invested, so that of those who started graduate school in this study, all were likely to finish.

Carlton explained his decision to take postbaccalaureate courses for one semester prior to entering graduate school thusly:

next semester I'll be in grad school, I'm applying this semester…. I was just a little

overwhelmed with all the work I had done in order to graduate, so I just wanted to like

take a little short break, but take classes that wasn't so stressful. …So I just wanted a

little bit of time to kind of regroup, I guess I would say…. before starting something

that's going to be even more stressful than undergrad.

Similarly, Ryan voiced the common sentiment that a graduate degree was a "bonus" credential,

saying:

I'm really not sure what to expect with grad school. I've heard it's not quite like

undergrad, I've heard it's maybe a little bit less stressful, just because you already have

your degree in your hand, so there's not as much pressure from yourself… because you

understand this is all bonus, it's almost like a bonus essentially, because you know you're

getting more education. I'm just excited, I'm really excited to start, just to be able to say

that, you know, I graduated with not only a Bachelor of Arts degree but also Master of

Arts degree from the USW would be an amazing achievement.

Choosing a Graduate Degree Program

Participants chose their graduate programs either because it could serve as a path to their

career goals or because of their genuine intellectual interests (or a combination of those two

reasons). For those who pursued intellectual interests that were not tied to a specific career goal,

the strategy was usually either 1. to explore possible careers related to the interest or 2. to

indirectly enhance their future career opportunities with the additional credential, while also

feeding their intellectual curiosity. Participants took their choice of graduate program seriously

in terms of pursuing their interests if they were getting master's—maybe more so than in their

undergraduate major choice. Like the participants who chose not to pursue graduate coursework,

they viewed a master's degree as a "bonus," so they argued one should only pursue it if it fit his interests and plans. For example, Ryan was "an undeclared graduate student" at the time of our interview because he wanted to make sure to pursue the *right* program. He shared, "I'm going to research a few programs here, a few colleges here, and then take a few [graduate] classes to figure out what my interests are."

Career alignment. Zach's master's degree fit neatly into his career aspirations; as he explained, "I think it really fits what I want to do.… I think it's just gonna open more doors to my future." Although career alignment was important to participants, it was not their only consideration. Braeden explained:

> "if I did Public Administration or Management Information Systems, it would almost be like I was forcing myself in a way. Because it wasn't what I wanted to do, what I was interested in. I was kind looking at all the options and thinking 'okay, what are people going to think when they see this on my resume?' and, or, I was thinking 'is this going to pigeonhole me in applying for jobs or whatever it was?' and my parents said 'you're young and you should do what you wanted do, and you should do what you're interested in' and that just kind of led me to this."

Braeden makes the distinction between a career credential and intellectual curiosity, dismissing another graduate student athlete as having earned, "just a master's that he needed, rather than something that he really wanted to do—and also I think his undergrad was a general studies sort of thing so it wasn't as specified as mine was, as specific…"

Clustering in certain graduate programs. Several participants highlighted that they were in graduate programs that were unusual for athletes to pursue, differentiating themselves from graduate program clustering and assumptions about the worth of those particular programs. For example, Zach mentioned the master's in sport administration that was more common pursuit of his teammates:

 As far as other options, initially, I was looking into a Sports Administration Master's here. It's a pretty popular 1-year program; it's something that appeals to a lot of student athletes because you can get it done in one year and, obviously, everything will be paid for. Whereas the program I am in, it's more of a year and a half to 2 years, minimum. But that was my other option. At the end of the day, it came down to where I saw myself going and which program was stronger—and that's definitely the one I'm in.

Zach used this comparison to highlight his unique accomplishment, saying, "I'm the first football player—and probably one of the first student-athletes—to pursue the program I am in. I did know of a number of our guys in the past, others have done graduate school their senior years, and the majority of them have been in the Sports Administration program." Although this graduate program clustering is likely due to several factors, including that the programs align with the career ambitions of many college athletes, who also have disproportionate exposure to those careers and aligned graduate programs, the phenomenon of clustering can be used to validate skepticism about the academic rigor of athletes' degree programs and call into question whether enrolled athletes are genuinely interested in the subject matter. Regardless of whether these critiques are valid, they re-enforce negative stereotypes about college athletes' acdemic commitment and ability. It is in this context that participants differentiated themselves from those enrolled in programs perceived as graduate clusters.

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Intellectual Curiosity

More than careers and credentialing went into participants' planning and decisions regarding graduate school. In particular, participants followed their intellectual curiosity as a compass for their career paths. Myles displays an expanding vision for how his graduate program fits into his future goals and career, specifically because he followed his interests as opposed to a more applied program of study:

> I was initially going to get my master's in Public Administration, but after going through the curriculum, it didn't really have what I needed. What I wanted to do, eventually, was work with nonprofits in a leadership role, and running them properly and making sure that they stayed afloat—so an MBA gives you the business acumen necessary to do that. …So I felt that the MBA program would be a better fit for me, in doing what I wanted to do and, actually, I've kind of stirred the pot as far as my future career aspirations—I've really gotten involved and really interested in the financial industry, and I see it as a way that I can help nonprofits in the future manage their finances. …that's an area where I think I can make a difference.

Braeden described how his intellectual interests developed over time and ultimately made school fulfilling:

> in high school I probably wasn't the best student there could be, but towards the end I started to appreciate school. And then when I got to USW and I saw the vast amount of different classes, I realized there were actually classes out there that appealed to my interests, I didn't feel like it was work anymore, it was something I could do everyday and everyone is very supportive and always told me that education should be the number one thing.

Braeden was well aware of the fleeting nature of many athletic careers and initially used that awareness to motivate him academically; once he discovered his academic interests and passions in college, they translated into more intrinsic motivation.

Figure 5	**Graphic representation of themes in *Chapter 8: Program's Place***
Postbaccalaureates	"I could have started taking graduate classes, and then it's easy to *say* that you are going to come back and finish, but… I don't know. I just really wanted to focus on football more than anything. I got my degree, so I was just like 'football, for this semester, is gonna have all of my attention.'" Tevin "I'm looking into law school to see if maybe what the prospects are of getting into law school and finding my true interest in something that I may want to get a Master's in. Because the program here that I was going to go into, it was something that was very interesting, but I don't know if I was fully committed to that, like I want something that I really want to study, something that has my full interest, if I'm going to go to a graduate program." Darius
Career Alignment	"I was initially going to get my master's in Public Administration, but after going through the curriculum, it didn't really have what I needed. What I wanted to do, eventually, was work with nonprofits in a leadership role, and running them properly and making sure that they stayed afloat—so an MBA gives you the business acumen necessary to do that. …So I felt that the MBA program would be a better fit for me, in doing what I wanted to do and, actually, I've kind of stirred the pot as far as my future career aspirations—I've really gotten involved and really interested in the financial industry, and I see it as a way that I can help nonprofits in the future manage their finances." Myles
Intellectual Curiosity	"if I did Public Administration or Management Information Systems, it would almost be like I was forcing myself in a way. Because it wasn't what I wanted to do, what I was interested in. I was kind looking at all the options and thinking 'okay, what are people going to think when they see this on my resume?' and, or, I was thinking 'is this going to pigeonhole me in applying for jobs or whatever it was?' and my parents said 'you're young and you should do what you wanted do, and you should do what you're interested in' and that just kind of led me to this." Braeden

Figure 5. Graphic representation of themes in *Chapter 8:* Graduate *Program.*

Conclusion

Participants spoke about career alignment and tried to match their degree to what they wanted to do; but even those who were not sure what they wanted to do explored their interests in a way to help them find their career path. So if there was a clear career path or an intellectual interest, they argued one should pursue the interest and figure out how to make that into a career path. In that way, the intellectual curiosity of participants was heartening. Braeden spoke

disparagingly of a teammate who earned a Master's degree he "needed" rather than one he was really interested in; that was not the way it should be done, according to these participants. Again, I want to highlight the seriousness of purpose with which participants approached their graduate programs and how *meaningful* these programs were for them. They heralded the benefits of additional education—of course there's a credentialing function of it and participants spoke at length about that aspect, too—but interviews also revealed an undercurrent belief that "there's tons of stuff to learn, why not learn it?" (Alec).

CHAPTER 9: Conclusions and Implications

The proceeding four chapters, *Stereotyping*, *Time*, *Academic Trajectory*, and *Graduate Program,* present a wide array of findings addressing graduate(d) student athletes' academic experiences and trajectories. This concluding chapter integrates the previous chapters' findings to form a fuller picture of participants' trajectories, experiences, and the larger phenomenon of graduate(d) student athletes in Division I football. After an overview of the dissertation's findings, major themes are discussed. Lastly, implications for theory, policy, and practice, as well as directions for future research, are explored.

Overview of Findings

Participants faced three primary stereotypes related to being "student athletes:" they were "dumb jocks;" being a student was not their primary motivation for going to college, being an athlete was; and their academic path was gilded, i.e. they didn't have to work because everything was handed to them through athletics. Those were the three stereotypes participants felt like they were battling, which came up again and again, in multiple contexts. Although participants did report stereotyping from their non-athlete peers, participants were relatively quick to dismiss those incidents of stereotyping, saying things like 'it doesn't matter,' 'they didn't mean it,' 'they don't understand,' or 'if they understood better, they'd feel differently.' Participants did not feel compelled to address stereotypes from student peers and would instead write them off as though they did not matter. Previous research on stereotype threat makes clear that these slights likely took a toll and contributed to participants' isolation (Steele, 1997), but peers' prejudices were less consequential to participants than stereotyping by faculty, as evidenced by how much more participants had to say regarding faculty members' stereotypes. Toby offered the specific example of a professor,

who—he knew I was a football player—and I handed in a paper, and I got the grade

back: there was *nothing* written on it—most of the class had stuff written all over their

papers, all I had was a grade.

After Toby asked for feedback, the professor spent more time with the paper to write comments;

however, when he handed it back the second time it also had a higher grade on it. In other words,

before standing up for himself, not only did Toby get no feedback and miss out on that

developmental aspect of college coursework—he actually got a lower grade because his

professor did such a cursory job of grading his work. This incident indicates how important it

was for these athletes to advocate for themselves, and reaffirms why they felt a responsibility to

combat stereotyping they received from faculty. Whereas they could dismiss similar stereotyping

from peers, that was not an option with the faculty—if they cared about academics and their

grades.

     For participants, their status as graduate student athletes served as a counterproof to

negative stereotypes. First, as an existence proof—being in graduate school, in and of itself,

countered the idea of a 'dumb jock.' But the structure of graduate courses also enabled more

interaction with peers and faculty, so the fact that participants really cared about their academics

was manifestly clear, whereas participants often did not have the opportunity to prove their

academic commitment in earlier lecture classes. These mechanisms for negating stereotypes

were important to participants; as they progressed academically they got less negative feedback

and their athlete status stopped mattering as much to those around them because participants had

already achieved at a level that certified them as serious students. Nonetheless, participants still

felt the onus to disprove stereotypes. This onus cut both ways: it was an individual responsibility

that in some ways fed their sense of self-efficacy, but on the other hand it was an extra burden on

the individual and absolved institutions—and even the people doing the stereotyping—of some of their responsibility.

Furthermore, the idea that graduate student status is a counterproof is very optimistic and hopeful, but that potential is often thwarted by the reality that graduate student athletes were largely invisible on campus, both in their grad classes and on their teams. For example, Cliff spoke about how peers in his master's program did not know he was a football player and, if they did know, they would ask whether his 'master plan' was to leave the program and enter the NFL. When people asked that, Cliff had a series of responses he would give, where he would explain to them 'no,' why that was not his plan, and combat the stereotypes inherent in the questions. But when his graduate peers did not know he was concurrently an athlete, those conversations never took place.

A more surprising finding was the invisibility of graduate student athletes within a team. Teammates did not necessarily know *who* was pursuing graduate coursework and graduate degrees, and in some cases they did not know that *anyone* was doing it. Toby explained:

> it's difficult to tell [who is a graduate student on the team], as well, unless you ask them. Because you're not going to class with them, I don't know what classes they're taking… they're not going around telling people 'I'm going to a *graduate school* class.'

It is understandable why those conversations may not emerge organically, but it is also disheartening that several participants spoke about being put in touch with teammates (or former teammates) who had taken graduate coursework only when they (participants) were on the cusp of graduating, or even after they had already graduated. This effectively meant graduate coursework often became an option to participants only when support staff asked 'do you want to take postbaccalaureate or graduate classes?' toward the end of their college career, when

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participants had already earned a bachelor's degree, instead of it being a possibility—and goal—they were aware of earlier in college, when more college athletes could have been planning and strategizing to graduate early and even have the choice of whether to begin graduate courses or degree programs.

Both forms of invisibility undermine the ability of graduate student athlete status to disrupt stereotypes or trail-blaze and create a graduate-school-going culture within a team. Myles underscored this point when he said "I had to figure out how to make this idea become a reality" he falls back on his self-efficacy as enabling him to accomplish so much, but he also comes back to **"**if my teammates were exposed to the idea earlier, and their parents were exposed the idea earlier, I feel that there'd probably be a little bit more Division I athletes doing what I'm doing right now."

Findings about Time were less surprising. The college transition was abrupt and stressful for participants, as it probably is for most college students. Furthermore, participants faced extreme constraints on their time due to their participation in intercollegiate athletics. When asked about support services, participants tended to focus on the mandatory services and how those further constricted their time. Consequences of constrained time were extracurricular sacrifices such as not getting to do internships, volunteer, nor be involved in other student groups and, most notably, conscious sacrifices to their social lives. Participants spoke at length about their inability to do well at athletics *and* academics while also having a social life. But they portrayed it as essentially a choice between academics and a social life because athletics was never up for debate—there was no way to 'scale down' in football. They spoke about teammates who *did* have social lives, but were not doing well academically, implying that the decision to prioritize a social life was the crucial difference between them. The situation demanded

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participants "pick-two-of-these-three-choices," but their commitment to football was inviolable. Because of their choice to prioritize academics over a social life, participants described having to distance themselves from their teammates because being too enmeshed would not be good for them, academically. But in general participants did not find (nor seek out) other support, not even from other graduate(d) student athletes—it was more of a stepping back, into isolation, from what was perceived as a potentially negative influence. Interestingly, this finding is not presaged by the research literature (with the exception of Oseguera, 2010) yet it has powerful implications and is deserving of future study.

Participants viewed time management as a cure-all; furthermore, participants focused on the strength of their will as the source of their successes. In some ways, this focus is empowering because it supports a strong sense of self-efficacy by emphasizing that the challenges are changeable and within one's control, but in doing so, this focus also inherently blames those who are not as successful for their challenges and failures. I tried to honor what participants shared with me, while also problematizing some of the individualistic way(s) they made sense of their experience. This tension is explored at greater length in the next section.

As far as the transition to graduate school, participants found it easier than the transition to college. They felt that they already had their techniques in order; they knew their schedules; they understood football; and they were certainly in better physical condition than when they started. So beginning graduate school was really just a scaling-up and, because it came with increased freedom, participants enjoyed the transition and were excited about it.

Although participants spoke at length about the time and energy required to play Division I football, and especially to balance football and academics, a recurrent theme was the autonomy participants earned by being academically successful, as well as how the process of earning

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autonomy reinforced their burgeoning academic identity. For example, Braeden explained, "coaches really follow your progress your freshman year and once they saw how well I did my second semester and saw my semester grades of just A's and B's, they didn't pay so much attention to my academics—which was nice, obviously." This speaks not just to the increasing autonomy given to participants, but also to their desire for it. It is a basic human desire to be autonomous. Participating in football subjected them to many more academic constraints than the general student population; however, academic success allowed participants to earn more latitude in both concrete and abstract ways. Participants reveled in this newfound autonomy and recounted how their academic interests and sense of self flourished as they were given more freedom to explore. Because they were so overscheduled in the beginning of college, every little step of increased autonomy was meaningful for participants and served as a carrot incentivizing academic success.

Although several participants spoke about extended support, continuing to use supports when they were no longer required, they made a point of the fact that they were not *required* and emphasized that their continued use of supports hinged on their (positive) decision-making as opposed to a need for support. In the process, extended use of academic supports is reframed as an individualistic triumph. In contrast, some participants like Myles, for example, really chafed at the lack of autonomy; he worked his way out of the mandatory support programs as quickly as possible and did not look back. Not only was it important for participants to have control of their time and the content of what they were doing with it, autonomy was also symbolically important as a testament to their success. That symbolism can get lost if we overemphasize the natural desire for autonomy, e.g. 'of course everybody wants control;' importantly, autonomy was also

an external status symbol of academic aptitude and success, established within participants' team and athletic departments' cultures.

Participants demonstrated navigational capital in terms of their ability to juggle everything and all participants tended to talk about it in comparison to other athletes who weren't doing as well and needed more support; the fact they didn't need as much support was attributed to their navigation capital pretty consistently across all participants. But when we started talking support systems outside of athletics, Black participants did not have them or at least did not talk about them, a finding discussed at greater length beginning on page 172.

Despite facing negative stereotypes and extreme time constraints, findings from Chapters 5 and 6 suggest stereotyping and other constraints decreased as participants graduated and earned increasing autonomy over their academic lives. By working toward advanced degrees, participants bolstered their own and others' interpretation that football served as a means to an educational end; furthermore, because their graduate status could be read this way, it legitimized the primacy of participants' student role-identities. However, due to the continued invisibility of the graduate(d) student athlete population, the potential for graduate(d) student athletes to disrupt stereotypes may not be fully realized. Nonetheless, participants overall were satisfied with their college experiences and felt like the trade-offs and sacrifices were well worth it. They were so happy with the end result that they were largely not very critical of the process, or as Carlton stated "I want the same outcome, so I wouldn't change anything."

One of the main findings about participants' educational trajectories was their predisposition to go to college. For example, Myles and Ellison basically offer definitions of a college-going culture in describing their college choice experiences: it was a norm, an expectation from himself and everyone around Ellison, as well as something that was constantly

stressed.[49] For Myles, intentional and explicit messages about college-going were communicated by his family because he was the first in his family to graduate college, whereas for Ellison it was more in the air of being in a middle income family. Participants also discussed their premeditation to use football instrumentally, particularly to earn a scholarship and thus finance their education through football. I labeled the idea 'I'm using football to it as a means to an end' as *premeditation*; several participants discussed planning that out as early as 8, 9, or 10, when they decided they would earn a scholarship to pay for college. It was a common refrain, but some of the participants who initially framed it in those terms were aware of graduate opportunities whereas others were just thinking 'I'm getting my bachelors degree paid for;' either way, it was a relatively easy shift to incorporate graduate degree attainment goals when participants already used an instrumental framework to understand their football participation.

Football also sometimes provided an incidental educational pathway or opportunity. The only participant who really did not consider college before it was right in front of him was Carlton. He was shocked when he got his first recruiting letter and was really excited about the unexpected opportunity to attend college. For everyone else, the opportunity was in their mind, but as each new opportunity arose—for example, the opportunity to get a master's degree and not just a bachelor's—those opportunities were often incidental and unanticipated perks of participating in football, especially for participants who took a medical redshirt later in their college careers. Nonetheless, even participants without early degree aspirations tended to revise

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[49] "it was always stressed it was important—in my head it was placed that 'you're going to college,' or 'you should go to college,' or 'it's necessary to go to college.'" Myles

"... my expectations were to always graduate college, from my family and from everybody else." Ellison

their narratives to incorporate the intent to use football instrumentally as a pathway to education once those opportunities presented themselves.

Participants stressed the value of every opportunity and the importance of "using every resource and *exhausting them all*," as Alec said. Because they tended to feel they had an obligation to use every opportunity, participants often attributed their graduate degree attainment to structural factors instead of thinking about what they had done or how the structure encouraged the achievement; instead, its just a normal extension of doing what you're supposed to do. The instrumental framing reveals participants' end-goals and re-centers education as the product of both football and their college careers as a whole. Furthermore, it reaffirmed participants' academic identities right as they are likely abandoning unrealistic plans to 'go pro' (Adler & Adler, 1991; Ahlgren, 2001; Sellers & Kuperminc, 1997) and it gives an alternative explanation for why they invested so much energy into football. In other words, and instrumental framework is protective in that it allows participants to justify the sunk cost of football. By framing football instrumentally, there is the appearance of agency; it sounds like this usage of football was premeditated, but that interpretation is complicated by the opportunism inherent in the (coexisting) assertion 'the structure allowed me to do it and so I did.'

Lastly, and this also relates to the findings about participants' graduate degree choices in chapter 8, the career options and self-determination of participants was bolstered by becoming graduate students within their eligibility. Carlton's transition from someone with very few career options into a self-assured young man who easily named three viable careers he would want to do was symbolic of the larger world that opened up for participants as they earned advanced degrees. Most notably, Carlton's new career possibilities were all these things he enjoyed, which were now options. Thus the idea of 'career development versus personal development' is a false

dichotomy—it was really the fact that Carlton was able to do the personal development through college that opened up a myriad of more fulfilling and meaningful careers for his future.

Postbaccalaureate participants—in particular the two participants who were unlikely to begin graduate coursework within their eligibility—show there is a viable alternative to graduate coursework; it is not a case where college athletes who finish early are simply pushed into graduate courses that are not personally meaningful. The experiences of Tevin and Darius reaffirmed the seriousness with which all participants took their choice of graduate degree program (and made the decision of whether to take graduate courses); their reasons not to do so were counter-stories that proved the rule. Ryan, who had not yet started graduate courses but had a lot of eligibility left and was about to begin graduate coursework, spoke about the lack of "stress" he anticipated in his graduate program: "you already have your degree in your hand, so there's not as much pressure from yourself… because you understand this is all bonus, it's almost like a bonus essentially, because you know you're getting more education." These "bonus degrees" freed participants to start exploring what they really wanted from a graduate degree, giving them much more latitude to do so than their undergraduate experiences had, unfortunately.

Participants spoke about career alignment and tried to match their degree to what they wanted to do; but they argued one should pursue their interest(s) and figure out how to make that into a career path. In that way, the intellectual curiosity of participants was heartening. Braeden spoke disparagingly of a teammate who earned a Master's degree he "needed" rather than one he was really interested in; that was not the way it should be done, according to these participants. Again, I want to highlight the seriousness of purpose with which participants approached their graduate programs and how *meaningful* these programs were for them. They heralded the

benefits of additional education—of course there's a credentialing function of it and participants spoke at length about that aspect, too—but interviews also revealed an undercurrent belief that "there's tons of stuff to learn, why not learn it?" (Alec). My liberal arts background may color my excitement, but I was thrilled to see participants pursuing graduate degrees for what I'd argue are 'all the right reasons,' in contrast to the misinformation and skepticism in the media. Participants took their choice of graduate degree program seriously, endeavoring to align their degree with their passions and career goals and thereby reinforcing the finding that graduate(d) student athletes' decisions are increasingly personal and independent from athletic considerations.

Autonomy and Agency

Participants' *Autonomy* and *Agency* emerged as major themes throughout all four findings chapters, as did findings regarding the role of institutions in enabling or hindering athletes' ability to excel academically. The ways autonomy intersected with the findings included: Onus to disprove stereotypes (Chapter 5), Earned Autonomy (Chapter 6), the self-efficacy implied in using football instrumentally (Chapter 7), and the flexibility to pursue intellectual curiosity during graduate school (Chapter 8). Furthermore, findings reveal that *autonomy* is not only important to participants as a goal that motivates and directs their actions; it is also learned and developed *through* their college experiences. As a result, autonomy should not be viewed as a static individual trait or external incentive, but rather a developmental outcome. Institutions have a responsibility to scaffold and support students as they develop increased autonomy, especially for students who enter college academically underprepared. In contrast, individualistic, blame-the-victim interpretations of autonomy often absolve institutions

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of responsibility for student outcomes and seem suspiciously like telling individuals, "just work harder, guys"—which is often not possible for college athletes.

Self-efficacy. Interviews revealed participants' high self-efficacy, demonstrating participants' sense that their actions were the main motivators of their successes and their overriding belief that if they worked hard, they could achieve and/or overcome adversity. Diener and Dweck (1978) found "helpless children focused on the cause of failure, whereas the mastery-oriented children focused on remedies for failure" (p. 457). Because the participants in this study were all academically successful, it makes intuitive sense that they did not exhibit learned helplessness. In fact, their trajectories offered an inherent (and sometimes explicit) critique of learned helplessness, especially in regards to the self-defeating nature of focusing on uncontrollable barriers, or of viewing them as stable instead of variable. Instead, participants' narratives often included lessons learned (or lessons participants wanted to pass on) about resilience, maintaining motivation, when to ignore stereotyping, and the desire to "prove them wrong," as pathways to success in the future.

This last motivational tool implicitly evokes the beliefs and stereotypes of the dominant group, which supports the argument that college athletes' awareness of stereotypes the out-group holds about their group, as well as their personal attributional style, may affect how they pursue academic success. Participants may have been taught to be proactive due to the belief that self-efficacy would enable them to be 'exceptions' to the perceived widespread academic failure of college athletes. Conversely, participants may have embraced their agency through the process of working to refute stereotypes, discrimination, and alternative attributions for their success (such as admissions leeway). These lessons may help instill resilience and create a kind of shield against the difficulties as well as stereotypes students are likely to encounter.

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Race and mentoring. None of the Black participants discussed developing meaningful relationships with professors or other university staff outside of athletics. In contrast, several white participants discussed their meaningful relationships with academic counseling staff outside of athletics and with professors and their decreasing reliance on athletics' academic support services. It seems pretty clear there was a substantive difference in the relationships Black and white participants developed outside of athletics. Because none of the Black participants had mentors outside athletics, they remained reliant on athletics' academic support systems throughout college and even into graduate school. For example, when Ellison returned to finish is master's after playing in the NFL—in other words, when he was done playing football and definitely not playing for the school anymore—he still had the Academic Support Services person in athletics scheduling classes for him because he did not know how to do it. He did not ask her to show him how to do it; he actually had her do it. Previous research offers a plethora of explanations for why Black athletes in specific might lack support from academic advisors in their majors and among faculty members and fail to develop robust mentoring relationships, including stereotyping or the fear of stereotyping (Comeaux, 2007, 2010; Comeaux & Harrison, 2007). Regardless of the reason, the lack of support has consequences.

For white participants, it is unclear if their positive relationships were the product of well-developed navigational skills, or if the relationships themselves helped to develop those skills; but they likely reinforced each other. Despite the chicken-or-egg question, white participants *appeared* to take initiative in seeking advisors and mentors outside of athletics. These relationships not only provided white participants with specialized academic advice, as well as mentors likely to prioritize academics over athletic considerations, they also enabled white athletes to more readily blend in with the general student body by seeking out general

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college resources instead of those reserved for athletes. The *over-attribution effect*, wherein situational attributions are made for the success of others, is especially likely to be applied to people of color (by whites) because majority group members have a tendency to overestimate their own abilities in comparison to a minority (Larwood, 1982). Moreover, because Black participants were more reliant on academic supports within athletics than their white counterparts, observers may misinterpret this continued support as an external advantage given to college athletes (which would reaffirm stereotypes about college athletes being pampered), instead of seeing the isolation they experienced and how it disadvantaged this subset of college athletes.

Exceptionalism. Participants tried to make sense of these specific tensions, implicitly asking, "How am I different than my teammates?" "Why am I in graduate school and they're not?" and coming to the conclusion that their hard work and agency were part of the answer; for this reason autonomy needs to be grappled with and thought about. However, participants also spoke about institutional factors frequently, suggesting their embrace of purely individual explanations for success was superficial at best, and likely involved a healthy dose of facework (Goffman, 1967). In fact, if other college athletes do not know it is possible to graduate before exhausting their athletic eligibility and/or to take graduate coursework, or if the option is only available to some (for example, those who redshirt), then the selection of which college athletes pursue this path is structurally constrained. As such, the institutional structure undergirding the flow of information and opportunities is at least as much of a factor in determining which college athletes pursue graduate coursework as is individual drive.

Autonomy is not necessarily specific to graduate students; it is likely an important goal to all college athletes. However, the graduate student status allowed participants to negotiate

college experiences differently and to *demonstrate* their autonomy to others. The status functioned as a set of tools used to perform and validate participants' academic autonomy; however, participants also developed increasing autonomy along *with* their graduate status. Graduate courses provided opportunities for participants to further develop academically and professionally, through self-exploration as well as self-regulation. This helps to resolve the tension Bamberg (2012) found between self-regulation and self-exploration in personal narratives; the kind of autonomy participants earned allows them to embody both.

Implications for Policy and Practice

  Scaffolding and autonomy. Not everyone who conceivably could pursue a graduate degree while playing football necessarily should; however, anyone who wants to, and puts in the work to do so, should be able to have that option. Many participants explained that mandatory support services dominated their early college experiences, but this also belied the fact those services were scaffolding students in ways that aimed to produce more independent and self-directed learners. Participants also spoke about scaffolding of support services and the ways that they structured it so they could open up increasing autonomy and in that way made it to work to earn it over time, and I think this kind of scaffolding is a best practice that can be emulated to achieve more widespread academic success for all college athletes.

  Given the importance of autonomy, how do these findings translate to students who are not already on the path toward being graduate student athletes? If autonomy allows and enables success, but college athletes have to have success first to gain autonomy, where does that leave less academically successful college athletes? The fact that many athletics' academic support services programs are framed in a way where individuals can earn autonomy—so they may not initially have autonomy, but are told "here's the pathway to earn it"—is how the 'unsuccessful'

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become successful. By showing college athletes what they have to do, and teaching them *how* to do it—actually doing that scaffolding, not just saying, "once you miraculously start getting A's, we'll let you out of mandatory study hall," but instead, explaining, "once you take notes; once you [etcetera]… you'll be ready to succeed academically and will get to chose whether you need support from us." Scaffolding includes all elements that teach skills and processes for achieving academic success, not just the outcome itself. When athletics' academic support programs are structured so as to give increasing autonomy, they are able to scaffold the most needy athletes and ideally push the majority to at some point taste at least a modicum of autonomy and success.

Participants were consistently proud and excited about the autonomy they earned by doing well. Things like being allowed to schedule one's own classes without being monitored and not getting "class checked" for attendance were important and meaningful to participants because of the symbolic acknowledgment they were doing well, as well as the actual freedom itself. It doesn't necessarily require graduate status for college athletes to earn that kind of autonomy, but in a lot of cases it *did* require graduate student status for participants to be able to pick their classes the way they wanted to and fully explore their career choices because of eligibility requirements and other constraints earlier in their college careers.

In addition to the implications for practice—namely, that scaffolding in concert with systems for increasing academic autonomy are a best practice for student services in athletics—the effectiveness of combining scaffolds and autonomy has important implications for policy. It is crucial that postbaccalaureate opportunities remain viable options and that the options involve actual choices. Pathways to graduate programs and coursework, in a variety of fields, need to remain open in terms of admitting current athletes and in terms of NCAA eligibility rules allowing and encouraging graduate student athletes (for example, with the continuation of the

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graduate transfer rule). Conversely, in order to maintain the academic legitimacy of the graduate student athlete status, college athletes who graduate before exhausting their eligibility should neither be forced into graduate coursework nor degree programs (in other words, there needs to continue to be a viable postbaccalaureate option for 'early' graduates, too).

Awareness of postbaccalaureate opportunities. The lack of awareness of postbaccalaureate opportunities is a real problem: in terms of getting everyone who can and wants to become a graduated athlete the opportunity to do so; in terms of overcoming negative stereotypes; and in terms of giving those who are doing this, even, their due credit. So I believe undertaking to do a better job of publicizing the athletes who are doing this, and the fact that its happening as a phenomenon, that there is a critical mass of college athletes doing it—not just one lone guy—is important work, with real implications.

Internships. One of the most concrete applications of these findings is the need for internship programs and other opportunities for college athletes to develop outside of football and coursework, and outside of athletics entirely. Several participants stated or implied that high achieving college athletes were disadvantaged in the job market because they haven't had opportunities to intern or even network in fields outside athletics because they literally have no time that is their own; even during summers they were expected to work out and take classes, much like during the traditional school-year. Ideally, athletics departments should not oversee internship programs to ensure internship experiences maintain separation from the athlete role. Many athletes volunteer for a significant amount of community service, yet these opportunities are often framed as a team: you go to visit a hospital with teammates and the overall experience is meaningful to the kids in the hospital *because* it's their favorite player or favorite team. However, internships should be used as a way to help successful college athletes develop

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identities outside of athletics, thus they would require a different model than the one currently used by many athletic departments. This separation from athletics is also important because if career is central to one's identity, it's important for his self-image to know he earned his successes, as opposed to attributing success to the privileges associated with being an athlete. In general, participants sought an integrated identity, but in order for it to develop, there needs to be opportunities provided for each side. Participants underscored this point in terms of their readiness to explore neglected aspects of themselves and move away from their athletic identities.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should examine each of these themes in more depth, as well as use quantitative research methods to better define this population. Not just how *many* people are doing this, but *who* exactly is doing it, *why*, and *how*. For example, in this study, both of the participants who were postbaccalaureate scholars "only" were Black. I don't necessarily believe that is the national trend, but that question (and many others) should be investigated empirically. Future research should also look at other subsets of the graduate(d) student athlete population. For example, graduate transfers, who may have been more likely to pursue a graduate degree for primarily athletic reasons; postbaccalaureate scholars; expanding to other sports; female athletes etc. Lastly, future research should investigate the impact of race more thoroughly than I was able to in this study.

Conclusion

Only 1.7% of college football players make it to the NFL; arguably, the same percentage of college football players could feasibly work toward a graduate degree within their NCAA eligibility. There are external limits on how many athletes will play professional football

(nationally); no such caps apply to graduate student status. The critical mass of participants in Division I football deserve alternative narratives of success. When we encourage athletes to dream big and work toward their goals, graduate degrees should be one of the options presented. In contrast, the fundamental mislabeling and misunderstanding of this class of college athletes is a missed opportunity for institutions and individuals to make the most of the symbiotic relationship that has developed within D-I football. Graduate(d) student athletes remain largely invisible on campuses around the country, while their educational experiences remain under-examined in the academic literature. In this context, findings from this exploratory study provide a starting place for new discussions of graduate(d) student athletes and illuminates specific tensions within the larger system of intercollegiate athletics.

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Interview Protocol

Introduction to interview: There are no right or wrong answers and you can always tell me to strike things from the record later, so please speak freely…

Obviously, we're doing a phone interview, so if I ask you for clarification, please remember that I just don't want to misinterpret what you say. I'll be doing a lot of listening, but I may also say things like "uh huh" and "that makes sense"… please don't feel like you need to stop your story! If I am asking you a new question or changing the topic, I'm going to try to make it very clear. Otherwise, I'm probably just engaged in what you're saying. OK?

As you know, this study is about how you decided to take graduate courses **and** what your experience of doing so was, but can you start by telling me about **how you came to** take post baccalaureate/graduate courses while playing DI football? What is the story behind how you were able to do both? [PAUSE] If other people (reporters, acquaintances, family friends) ask you questions like this, do you have a standard answer that you give?

Interview questions (Note: not all questions were asked, many were follow-ups/prompts in case parts were not brought up by participants organically):

1) Childhood
--What was your childhood like? Where did you grow up? How was your family structured? What kind of schools did you go to?

-How (and when) did you start playing football? What position do you play? Have you always played that?

--What were your family's beliefs about and attitude towards education/academics? How did they show these beliefs? Can you give me an example?

--What were your family's beliefs about and attitude towards sports and athletics? How did they show these beliefs? Can you give me an example?

-What were your goals & aspirations as a child? When did you realize that you might be able/want to play football @ the college level?

--What was your high school like? How did athletics & academics fit into your experience?

--How did you decide which college to attend? What factors influenced your decision? Who supported you as you were applying? How?

-Can you describe your Recruitment process? Were you heavily pursued? How did the recruiting process make you feel? How do you think your process & decisions would have been affected if you hadn't been recruited?

2) Transition to college

-How was your transition to college? What parts were difficult? What went smoothly? Was college what you expected?

-In college, did you ever struggle academically? What was that like? What do you consider your major academic successes? [did you receive recognition for these accomplishments? What kind?]

-In college, have you ever struggled athletically? What was that like? What do you consider your major athletic successes? [did you receive recognition for these accomplishments?]

-In college, who are/were your good friends?

--Did you use a redshirt year? Have you suffered any major injuries? If so, what was it like to not play? How did you spend that time? Did it change your outlook/perspective?

--Do/did you spend a lot of time with your teammates off the field?

- Do you feel like your teammates have backgrounds similar to your own? How so/how do they differ?

-Do you feel like your teammates spend their time in the same ways you do? Do they have similar goals?

--Have you ever used Athletics' academic support services? What were your experiences with them? (Did they help you choose your courses? What advice did they give?) Has your experience with them been similar to your teammates'?

-How (if at all) has race affected your team and/or your experience as a player?

3) Decision to take postbaccalaureate courses

-What are your ultimate career goal(s)? How is your major related to your plans? Have your plans or goals shifted over time? If so, how and why?

--When did you first think about taking graduate or post baccalaureate courses? Who did you talk to about the idea/decision? What else did you consider while deciding?-Was there anyone particularly supportive or influential in the decision? What did their support look like?

-Has your team been supportive of your academic goals? How do they show their attitude?

--Do you think you've been judged or stereotyped during your college career? If so, what about? Can you describe a situation in which this happened to you? Class, social setting…

--Has anyone ever questioned your commitment to football and/or academics? Can you tell me about that?

4) Rest of college career

-How is school different now that you are a postbacc/grad student? Are the courses similar? How do you anticipate school…

-How have you been able to manage your time?

-(if applicable) How are you treated by your fellow grad students, is it the same or different than how classmates treated you as an undergrad?

--Have you experienced conflict between academics and athletics? If so, can you describe?

-Is there anything you feel like you've had to compromise or sacrifice to be able to excel both academically and athletically?

--If you had to name one factor that enabled you to succeed at both academics and athletics, what would it be?

-What would you tell younger guys who were thinking about trying to use their eligibility to take graduate courses? What advice do you wish you'd been given? What would **you** do differently? What do you wish was different?

-What (if anything) do you think could be done to better support academically successful student athletes? Do you have ideas about how to solve some of the problems you've identified? What do you think could be done to encourage more student athletes to achieve academically?

5) Post-College

-Did (or do) you have aspirations of entering the NFL? -Were you drafted/do you anticipate

being drafted? Do you think your academic success affects how the NFL sees and evaluates you?

-Did you complete degree then/will you complete a graduate degree within your eligibility? (if applicable) What are you doing now?

-Is there anything else you would like to share or that you think is important for me to know in order to understand your path?

I am continuing to recruit, so if you think of anyone you think might be interested in being interviewed, I would really appreciate if you could pass on to him the information about my study and how to contact me.

Thank you so much for your time & thoughtful answers—I couldn't do my research without your help! I'll let you know when your interview is transcribed (typed up) & you'll have the opportunity to review it if you want to. You can also contact me in the meantime with any concerns or changes you want to make—you have all my contact information, right? Great! Thanks again, it was such a pleasure to hear about your story!

Appendix B

Final list of codes

	Title
1.	"Like any student"
2.	$
3.	Autonomy/Control
a.	Of Academics/scheduling
b.	Of football/athletics
c.	General focus/hard work
4.	Body/Injury
5.	Career goals
6.	Closing Narrative
7.	College Choice
8.	Community Service-Giving Back
9.	Identity
10.	NFL
11.	One Factor
12.	Preparation

13.	Program's place/meaning
14.	Q1 Narrative
15.	Race
16.	Resources
17.	SES
18.	Social life
19.	Stereotyping
20.	Time
a.	Constraints
b.	Management
21.	Trail-blaze/role-model
22.	Trajectory (major choices)
a.	Shift-steer-cluster
23.	Transition
24.	Utility of football