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**Scholar or Baller in American Higher Education?  
A visual elicitation and qualitative assessment of  
the studentathlete's mindset**

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# Scholar or Baller in American Higher Education? A visual elicitation and qualitative assessment of the student-athlete's mindset

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## Abstract

*Eminent scholar Harry Edwards (2000) has articulated three major realities of African American males in sports: a) The presumption of innate, race-linked black athletic superiority and intellectual deficiency; b) media propaganda portraying sports as a broadly accessible route to African American social and economic mobility; and c) a lack of comparably visible, high-prestige African American role models beyond the sports arena. Driven by labeling theory (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1959), eight African American male student athletes were surveyed and interviewed. The last two points of Edwards' scholarship were investigated.*

*"We have pretty good historical data and quantitative data about African American athletes. Now we need good qualitative data-in the form of detailed information on the real life experiences of African American student athletes. And we need it done by African American men and women who can do in-depth interviews and ethnographic observations and collect data."-Jay Coakley, Professor of Sociology, 1999*

*"Relatively little research has focused on the subjective experience of members of stigmatized groups. Understanding the consequences of social stigma requires an understanding of the phenomenology of being stigmatized."-Jennifer Crocker, Kristin Voelkl, Maria Testa, and Brenda Major, 1991*

*"The interplay between automatic biases caused by racial cues, and the subjective conscious states in which perceivers "sincerely believe" their judgments and intend to behave consistently with them remains fertile ground for social cognition research. "-B. Keith Payne, 2001*

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## INTRODUCTION

"I wanna be like Mike," is a common phrase relevant to many American youth (Wilson & Sparks, 1996, 1999). American youth are often consumed by mainstream media images and messages (Hoberman, 2000). Black youth have been especially targeted by images of African American professional athletes. Due to this increased level of success, Black culture has become increasingly influential in advertising decisions (Biagi & Kern-Foxworth, 1997; Patillo-McCoy, 2000). Corporations that have large populations of African American patrons, such as *Nike*, use mainstream marketing strategies and tactics to promote products in African American communities. For instance, most of the advertisements promoted by these corporations feature entertainers and professional athletes—often portrayed as very "flashy" caricatures. Many corporations also utilize grammar (colloquial) techniques that they feel would appeal to black culture (Armstrong, 1999). These advertisements can generate multiple forms of stereotyping where their meaning can travel faster than the actual printed text.

African-American student athletes have been no exception to the implication of stereotypes. Stereotypes that student athletes may perceive with certain athletic and occupational images are the focus of this study. Stereotyping is the process of imposing characteristics on people based on their perceived group membership (Coakley, 1999). Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major (1991) indicate that stereotyping allows humans to increase intelligibility of a complex social world, making it easy to fall prey to this behavior. This study focuses on stereotyping of student athletes with a particular focus on stigmas attributed to African American male student athletes through certain athletic and occupational images.

Student athletes face many stereotypes everyday on college campuses (Person & LeNoir, 1997). Many colleges and university students view male student-athletes in major revenue producing sports as the most visible individuals on campus (Cornelius, 1995; Harrison & Plecha, 2001). This visibility fosters increased opportunities for them to be recognized and ultimately stereotyped. Many view the student-athlete as "dumb" and lacking the ability to keep up with the academic standards of the college or university they attend (Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McGwen, 1995; Sellers, 2000).

Additionally, stereotypes of African American student-athletes are much different than their white counterparts. The expectations of African American student-athletes outside of sports are low in relation to their White peers; for example, many tend to believe that African American student-athletes have problems making career transitions after sports (Edwards, 2000; Sellers & Kuperminc, 1997).

The "stepping-stone" mentality has been well documented in the literature related to sport sociology (Coakley, 2001), upward mobility via athletics (Edwards, 2000) and even in popular movies such as *Hoop Dreams*, *He Got Game*, and *Love and Basketball*.

Stereotypes also have a significant effect on a person's self-schema (Harrison, Lee, & Belcher, 1999). Self-schema is the cognitive generalization one makes about self, derived from past experiences that organize and guide the processing of self-related information contained in the individual's social experiences. Individuals often choose sports that involve participants with schemas similar to their own.

People also choose roles in occupational society in the same way sport preferences are chosen. Previous research shows that active involvement in specific sports differs according to gender, social and economic status, ethnicity, and race (Armstrong, 1999). In addition, Harrison (1999) describes race as a powerful socializing agent that exerts its robust influence in a myriad of social backdrops and allows sports to be a fertile setting for the development of racial self-schema.

This study investigates the perception of athletic identities and occupational identities from mainstream print media. Many advertisements that are seen in popular press create a perception of the "baller" athlete forcing youth to create limited and unhealthy self-schemas (Harrison, Plecha, & Comeaux, 2001).

A "baller" is a popular culture image (Comeaux & Harrison, in review) that resonates with the sports of football and basketball (can also be a noun, adjective, or verb). Both these sports and the concept/label of "baller" receive visual (attire) and identity (sport choices) investment by many African American youth. Based on this assumption, I researched this identity with a methodology and design focusing on image-based research and the need for more studies with participants and their reactions to various media and visual stimuli (Curry, 1986; Gonzalez & Jackson, 2001; Prosser, 1998; Snyder & Kane, 1990)

The occupational and educational expectations are not as high for African American male student-athletes and the reasons vary (Sellers & Chavous, 1997b). Edwards (1991) after twenty-five years of researching this genre contributes these underdeveloped mindsets to four themes that either one or all collapse in the educational process: the home, the community, the school and *the receptive mind of the student* (Edwards, 1991, emphasis added). The latter point is the focus of this paper.

The survey aspect of this study examines how the student-athletes perceive images in the print media related to identity association and success (Leary, 1995). I hypothesize that perceptions in the media have restricted the self-schema of African American male student-athletes and limited their occupational outlook and diverse vocational desire(s).

The purpose of the qualitative and visual aspect of the study was to examine the deeper meaning(s) of these schema and stereotype perceptions by African American male student-athletes. Labeling theory (social reaction and self-identity constructs) largely developed by Becker (1963) and Goffman (1959) enables the researcher to interpret the findings in this study. Both theorists articulate that a label is a definition of a person, applied to that person by an audience who creates the definition based on their perceptions of the person.

The process by which labels are created and applied to an actor by an audience

is deemed the labeling process. One label that relates to the retention of student-athletes is that they are often referred to as only "athletes" and not student-athletes. In other words, the term "athlete" has developed a meaning of its own throughout history by both the individuals labeled and the institutional forces (sport and American higher education) that socialize a bias towards athletics and not academics (Smith, 1988).

## STEREOTYPE IDEOLOGIES AND AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

There have been a few studies related to stereotypes of athletes portrayed in the media (Johnson, Jackson, & Gatto, 1995). These studies are based on understanding how participants process stereotypes. The encoding of stereotypes are created at an early age and the student-athletes keep these beliefs throughout their lives. These encoding processes can influence the perception of their success in other areas (i.e., occupations, vocations).

As such, athletes and entertainers have been the most publicized figures within African American communities (Andrews, 2001). Although, Hoberman (2000) cites that television images of Blacks especially males are not particularly diverse. Black men in the media are often displayed by their physical prowess, singing ability, dancing skills or comic prowess (Hawkins, 1999). According to Hoberman (2000) it is these images that young Blacks aspire to, whereas White youth are not as affected by these images and are not summarily tarnished by their negative impact.

### **The Natural Athlete Myth**

Harrison (1998) argues that the media portrayal of athletes reinforces and perpetuates the theory of the "natural athlete." Many successful African American athletes have been given the natural athlete label. It is assumed that natural athletes are born with certain characteristics that allow them to perform at a higher level than others without any extra practice or work.

The natural athlete is said to be all brawn and no brains (Hoose, 1987). Related to this notion, Rainville and McCormick (1977) found that White American players receive more praise and less criticism than African American players in the National Football League (NFL) by broadcasting commentators. Rainville and McCormick's (1977) also found that NFL announcers assume that performances by African American players are due to uncontrollable external forces while performances by White athletes are due to controllable internal forces. These assumptions indicate that stereotypes regarding the intellectual capability of African American males is often questioned, especially within the parameters of sports.

In terms of higher education, counselors, administrators, coaches and the student-athletes themselves, leading to low expectations in the classroom, may

operationalize these beliefs. Instead of successful matriculation and the attainment of a college degree, African American males (especially in revenue sports) are often "channeled/tracked" in to "jock courses and majors" and retained merely for their eligibility to participate in organized sports (Person & LeNoir, 1997). Throughout sports in higher education, these courses have varied from physical education to undeclared to general studies to criminal justice and interdisciplinary studies.

### **Athletic Stereotypes and White Americans: Whiteness and Blackness**

The media portrayal of African-Americans athletes is based not only on negative stereotypes, but also on stereotypes that appeal to White audiences (Harrison, 1998). According to Early (1998), Whites feel it is okay to admire Blacks for their skills while fearing their presence. Additionally he reports that White people have a fear of not being White but also a fear of being at the mercy of those who are not White.

Popular media and empirical representation rates have well established that Blacks dominate participation in sports like football, basketball, track and field, and boxing (Lapchick & Matthews, 2001). However, control and authority in these sports venues remains with White America (Andrews, 2001; Wiggins, 1997). Some Whites assume that since Blacks are gifted physically then they must be deficient mentally, as in a large Louis Harris Poll, 53% of the Whites in that sample felt that African Americans are still inferior intellectually and mentally (Lapchick, 1991).

*Since some Whites may believe that Blacks are mentally inferior, Blacks are sometimes not allowed to gain access to high positions in sports. Tucker & Smith (2000) articulated similar findings in their research on the lack of Black leaders and executives in sport, as they referenced a large data base of over 50% of White Americans in the sample assuming that African Americans are intellectually inferior and deficient to Whites (study they referred to was conducted at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor at the Institute for Social Research by Shulman and Associates). The assumptions that are made by some Whites are largely formed due to millions who see the televised roles of Black athletes as the definition of a Black man (Boyd & Shropshire, 2000; Hoberman, 2000).*

### **STUDENT-ATHLETES OR ATHLETIC STUDENTS?**

Black youths have very high hopes of establishing careers as professional athletes (Lapchick, 1997). Yet, the chances for making it to this level are very unlikely.

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Often times, these young student-athletes fail to devise an alternative plan if they do not make it as a professional athlete (Irons, 1999; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001; Williams, 1993). This failure to perceive professional sports realistically leads many Black male youths to fail academically, which prevents them from being socially and economically mobile as adults (Coakley, 2001; Edwards, 1991).

Several theories, commentaries and research perspectives explaining how sports are seen as great opportunities and downfalls for many African American youth, have been cited (Lapchick, 1991).

Assimilationists hold that athletic ability can be a ticket out the ghetto for hopeless and disenfranchised Black youth and that athletics can serve as a source of needed resilience, discipline, and self-esteem for these populations (Braddock, 1981).

The exploitation theorists assert that race relations in sports reflect and reproduce institutional structural relationships that often take advantage of African American student-athletes and then discards them when they are no longer useful (Braddock, Rogster, Winfield and Hawkins, 1991). This outcome matches how Edwards (1984) describes that society, school culture, media hype, and disproportionate rewards channel African American boys into sports. The channeling of Black youth into sports leads to dismal academic performance and diminished futures (Sailes, 1993a; Sailes, 1993b).

Statistics have shown that numerous Black collegiate student-athletes do not perform well in the classroom in comparison to Whites (see the discussion that follows). A 1998 study on National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I student-Athletes revealed a 57% graduation rate for male and female student-athletes. Additionally, the study revealed that only 42% of Black male student-athletes graduated in comparison to 55% of White male student-athletes (NCAA, 1999). Many student-athletes, failing to complete graduation requirements and failing to make it as professional athletes, find themselves in lackluster careers struggling to survive (Irons, 1999). The student-athletes are forced to take lower level jobs because of their lack of preparation for a career (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). Thus, it is important to encourage student-athletes to look at academics as a feasible/viable activity much like sports, to secure valued careers after they graduate from college.

Taylor (1999) suggests that sports and athletic principles (i.e., character, determination, perseverance, commitment) should be applied to academics, which would improve the motivation of athletes in the classroom. Taylor further asserts that student-athletes can perform well academically if their motivation and encouragement remains focused.

Sellers & Kuperminc (1997a) acknowledge that there is a big structural division existing between athletics and academics. They contend that combining the divisions of athletics and academics will allow for more academic success stories. Sellers (2000) provides suggestions and recommendations to African American student-athletes, their families and universities on how to make the most out of the African American student-athlete's collegiate experience and also how to maximize the opportunities for success after their athletic careers

have ended (Sellers, 2000).

Previous research related to student-athletes recognizes many problems in sports reflect societal problems (Coakley, 1999). Studies indicate that Black males, more than White males, believe that they can become athletic professionals (Jackson, 1996; Lapchick, 1997). Also, Black men as scholars or professionals in the mainstream media are underrepresented when compared to images as athletes and entertainers. Coltrane & Messineo, 2000; Holmes, 1998; Johnson, Jackson, and Gatto, 1995; Johnson, Hallinan, & Westerfield, 1999; Wilson & Sparks, 1996; Wilson & Sparks, 1999). Therefore, African American male student-athletes (in football and basketball) tend to identify more with a "baller" identity that is regularly portrayed in the media.

The strong association that Black males have with athletic and entertainment themes encourages Black males to strive for elite athleticism (Wilson & Sparks, 1999). As such, Black males may be less likely to be invested in their education. The lack of educational development causes Black males to have decreased opportunities to succeed in other areas, leading to the hypothesis that media stereotypes affect African American student-athlete's career attitudes and their professional aspirations. The interaction of stereotypes, structural (athletic) bias, and self-labeling can lead to powerful but monolithic perceptions.

Becker (1963) and Goffman (1959) are two major contributors to the sociological and psychological literature on labeling theory. Labeling theory is used to address the research question guiding this study.

The major premise in labeling theory is the basic concept of individual identity; group relations; the impact of environment; and the movement and interactive meaning of information. Both scholars refer to the individual as an actor/performer shaped by his/her environment and audience constructed to provide others with "impressions" that are consonant with the desired goals of the actor (Goffman, p.1959). The "baller" is used in place of "actor/performer" in this study. A "baller" is a popular culture image that resonates with the sports of football and basketball (can also be a noun, adjective, or verb). Both these sports and the concept/label of "baller" receive visual (attire) and identity (sport choices) investment by many African American youth (Comeaux & Harrison, in review).

## METHOD

The impetus for the visual design in the study are the following research questions: Will African American male student-athletes in high profile sports (football and basketball) identify more with successful athletic representations versus occupational images of success? What stigmas and labels do African American male student-athletes attach to these images of success?

### Participants

Participants of eight student-athletes participated in this study (ten were recruited

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but only eight participated). Participants were student-athletes (there was one session with five student-athletes and three individual sessions with one student-athlete). The student-athletes represent sports that are large revenue producers and considered high profile events such as basketball and football (one student-athlete is a baseball participant). Eight of the participants were African American male student-athletes. The age range for the subjects was from 21-24 (mean age was 21). All the student-athletes were identified as at least sophomores in educational status. The selection of the teams and players were a function of the close rapport and the development of a trusting relationship over a two-year period between the student-athletes and the experimenter. All student-athletes received lunch for their participation in the study.

### **Procedure and Data Collection**

The data were collected with a survey based on the highly reliable self-impression management inventory (Leary, 1995) and focus group interviews. The study was based on four images on print advertisements from various popular magazines. The participants were shown advertisements labeled A, B, 1 and 2. Advertisements A and B were of a male in professional attire (i.e., suit and tie). The advertisements labeled 1 and 2 portrayed an athlete playing basketball and football respectively.

The African American male student-athletes were shown these advertisements featuring African American males. After examining each image, the participants were asked to complete the survey (same survey used for all images) based on the self-impression management inventory. This survey measures individual association with stimuli (i.e., mass and print media) The survey measures were consistent and identical for each image (A, B, 1, and 2), and contained forty-one items on each survey (Likert-scale).

### **FOCUS GROUP**

After the surveys were completed, participants engaged in focus group discussion. This was designed as part of the study to reveal deeper meanings of each student-athletes' ethos and identity. The questions asked were based on interviews with student-athletes about their experiences in sport and the experimenter's and other scholar's observations of interactions with student-athletes over several years. One trained researcher conducted the focus group discussion. The African American student-athletes were interviewed face-to-face by an African American male researcher. There were at least four major questions posed to the group of student-athletes. The questions were based on the images portrayed in the advertisements. The student-athletes were allowed to answer freely and openly to each question. The comments were hand recorded by the researcher (student-athletes were more comfortable without a tape recorder, thus one was not used). These student-athletes were more than cooperative with the study, and verbal and written consent were given.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Frequencies were tabulated for responses to each of the four pictures. Themes for each focus group session were transcribed and coded by the experimenter and one trained graduate student (see tables below). There were many themes in the study, but I will focus only on the major findings.

## FINDINGS AND RESULTS

One measure in the questionnaire reads "The character in this ad looks like he is smart." The responses for image "A" were 25% for "strongly disagree." The response for image "B" were 25% for "strongly agree", 37.5% for "agree" and 37.5% for "not sure". The responses for image "1" were 25% for "not sure", 62% for disagree and 12.5% for strongly disagree. The responses for images "2" were 12.5% for "not sure," 62.5% for disagree and 25% for strongly disagree.

Responses to the second item included, "This character is relevant to me." The responses for image "A" were 25% for strongly agree, 25% for agree and 37.5% for disagree. For image "B" 75% of the student-athletes responded they were not sure. 12.5% answered strongly agree and 12.5% answered agree. For image "1", 25% of the student-athletes answered strongly agree. Another 25% answered agree. For image "2" 62.5 % of the student-athletes answered strongly agree. While only a sample size of eight, these data indicate that the African American male student-athletes surveyed in this study identify more strongly with an athletic image an occupational image. In terms of the athletic image, the student-athletes did not perceive the athletic image as smart. Also, there were some negative connotations associated with the occupational images. These findings prompted me to collect qualitative data to buffer the responses. After the surveys were completed and transcribed, the responses to related questions of the "baller" versus the scholar phenomenon were revealed.

The researcher received many comments from the focus group discussions. The following are quotes taken from the discussion (transcribed from all four sessions that data were collected):

### Data Collection 1

- Q.** Why the dichotomy between the baller and scholar image?
- A.** "We live in a society based on stereotypes and the athletic look is in."
- Q.** What is the message we are given?
- A.** "Images of Professionalization are based on in control versus being in control. Suit and tie assumption, that one is doing well."

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- Q.** Is another paradigm possible?
- A.** "Maybe, but no if channeled towards the power and control. Everyone wants the 'Life of Reilly,' i.e. big house, Navigator, women."
- A.** "If they do not need us, then we are not embraced! Assumptions are that we do not want to do anything outside of sports. What brothers need is a five year plan—rewards versus potential awards. Too many slacker attitudes. 'Only I care about my future,' should be the thought."
- Q.** Does your sport make a difference, since it is "less Black"?
- A.** "Neck and neck for football and basketball, we are equal but each sport is perceived differently in society."

**Data Collection 2**

- Q.** Which image will you experience more racism in? Why the binary?
- A.** "Old Sambo is still around and present in one of these ads (mouth open). To be in the corporate world you have to change your image and assimilate—except if you are Michael Jordan, he can wear his hat backwards, earring, baldhead, etc. You lose your identity because people in corporate America will judge your image. There is confusion with the baller notion/image; can be a flashy dresser or hooper."
- Q.** What do you think of the ad images?
- A.** "Some are 'real' which is what I respect (keeping it real). Diamonds, thin waist, shiny shoes, this is the life of the nice truck with rims. One image looks like Bryant Gumbel, one not bad, one image looks White, corporate equals White to me in many instances."

**Data Collection 3**

- Q.** Which image investment do you feel you will experience the least amount of racism? Why?
- A.** "The athlete image is more accepted in society (for Black males). It's a form of entertainment. In terms of control and power, a lot of people do not like to see brothers make the decisions. CEO versus a certain amount of power. We are not in control of anything (as ballers)."

"Our role models are athletes. In terms of a baller, there are two different levels. Skills as an athlete-i.e., MJ, Vince Carter, Scottie Pippen. The other level is in the hood clocking with a nice car. Everyone has their own definition of the word (baller). Stigmas are not there with either one though, it means successful."

**Q.** Why the binary of athlete or scholar? Why?

**A.** "The hood (street dreams) and fantasizing versus fantasizing as a CEO. There is a cultural exchange each day. Growing up you do not see your siblings role models owning companies, traveling etc."

"Socially, folks are into dating, groupies etc. Also, we (the brothers) are not accepted in that role. For instance, in my psychology 111 class, it was obvious that many people (Whites especially) are afraid of Black men. My teacher asked the class how many people would be scared if they were walking the street alone and had to walk past a Black man—3/4 of the class raised there hands, some Black women too. I guess they are afraid because of media images and the Detroit news. Stupid crimes by some have a big effect on how people see us. It's just difficult to get used to the environment and to adapt to other beliefs and values."

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#### Data Collection 4

**Q.** What is a baller? Overall impression of the study? Athletically or financially? Why do they have an ad with a pager on the football player?

**A.** "This ad was catchy though. The first image looks like he is very aggressive with his style. There is no way that they would put a pager on Joe Montana (a White former quarterback in the NFL). Some of these images show our sexual dominance."

"The second ad makes no sense. The second ad is cool. The first ad's style is energetic. Ballers need pagers too! Some of the images are comical, from slavery to free time. A White dude would not be seen doing that (comical images). Images are dark. These images are typical, sports. The basketball ad was cooler than the football ad."

**Q.** Why the binary?

**A.** "They push us in sports but they control, we play and then we are out after that. White kids look up to athletes too, but we are still controlled and marketed. From 6am-12pm when you grow up, you do not see images of Black people in control. It's the doctor versus the entertainer, maintain power they will. College is hard, school systems are whacked. We just pass the SAT to get by, we are tracked, they only care about our GPA so we can

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be eligible.”

“It’s just another route. We are discouraged to graduate. Sports is a very racial image. I feel like the White man can cut me off at any time. Nothing is going to change. It’s been since the 1970’s and it’s still the same. They make a business out of our business, hip-hop and sport. Less people look like you in the corporate image. We just don’t get the support in society like we do in sport. We need more Black Professors!”

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine some of the effects of stereotypical images portrayed in the media regarding African American male student-athletes’ perceptions and mindsets of success. It was hypothesized that stereotypical images portrayed by the media do have an effect on the African American male student-athlete’s perception of success. The results obtained from this study support the hypothesis that particular images have certain connotations for some African American male student-athletes. More importantly, this study enabled African American male student-athletes to tell their own stories and subjective interpretations of their own realities, a rarity for research highlighting this population (Benson, 2000; Lawrence, 2001; Singer, 2001). The narratives and authentic statements made by the student-athletes are categorized and in table format (see Figure 1).

Themes revealed racism, structural inequity, stereotypes and racial socialization. All of these themes relate to the previous literature reviewed and completed for this study.

Previous research has also supported the thesis of this study. Researchers argue that the rigorous demands of training and competition often require competitive athletes to narrow their external activities in order to achieve optimal athletic performance (Danish, 1983). Research also reveals that many student-athletes recognize the lack of effort they place on academics and blame their lack of interest on obsessive coaches and the business mentality displayed by college athletic departments (Sailes, 1993a, 1993b). McPherson (1980) suggests that athletes often focus their attention on success in their respective sport, often making the athlete blind and oblivious to the reality of a short-lived career in sports. As a result, some athletes lack preparation for collegiate post-collegiate careers (McPherson, 1980).

A few limitations must be noted about the research findings. One limitation is the small number of subjects. The survey approach, even using a small sample was for the purpose of assessing a wide range of attitudes and feelings for further research in this genre; which will be improved later with a larger sample size and experimental design (Harrison, Holmes, & Moore, 2000). The population was selected (due to better access than a random sample) and primarily the sport of football (with the exception of one baseball player and one basketball player). The major focus was on African American male student-athletes, therefore no other gender and/or ethnic groups were considered. The focus also was on NCAA

Division I student-athletes instead of the wide range of student-athletes at the Division II or III levels.

## CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many issues and variables that surround the occupational and athletic outlook of young African American males. Large portions of some African American communities are led by blind faith that sports will serve as a prime vehicle of self-realization and social-economic advancement (Harrison, 2000).

Problems in college sports reflect broader societal problems. There is a noticeable lack of respected role models on college campuses for underrepresented populations.

There are very few African Americans who are professors at predominately White college campuses (Smith, 1990a, 1990b, 1992, 1993, 1995). Also, the majority of athletic directors and administrators on college and university campuses are White (Lapchick & Matthews, 2001). The reality is that student-athletes must stand up for themselves and take responsibility for getting a good education (Edwards, 2000).

Solutions to the stated problems include changing the socialization processes for numerous Black male youth. Young African American male student-athletes need to value both academics and athletics, and images must be systemically created and cultivated that depict this concept. Student-athletes may not be as cognizant (generally speaking) about academic opportunities like the non-student-athlete population. Information needs to be available to student-athletes as a whole. There also needs to be more recognition given to student-athletes who are successful outside of sports. Finally, the most important dilemma in terms of solving the dichotomy of academics and athletics will not be simple. The fusion of both a scholar and baller may empower and develop a mindset that changes the way revenue student-athletes are seen as minorities in higher education.

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