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A Day in the Life of a Male College Athlete: A Public Perception and Qualitative Campus Investigation

Keith Harrison, *University of Central Florida*



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A Day in the Life of a Male College Athlete: A Public Perception and Qualitative Campus Investigation

Suzanne Malia Lawrence

Azusa Pacific University

C. Keith Harrison

University of Central Florida

Jeff Stone

University of Arizona

Perceptual confirmation paradigm (PCP) rooted in social psychology, can be implemented to frame sport science research questions (Stone, Perry, & Darley, 1997). Public perception of college athletes' lives has been scarcely investigated in the sport sciences (Keels, 2005) using the PCP to prime stereotypes. The purpose of this study was to prime stereotypes about a day in the life of a college athlete by using qualitative inquiry to assess college students' ($N = 87$) perceptions. Participants provided written responses about a day in the life of a college athlete. Two different college athlete targets were used "Tyrone Walker" ($n = 44$) and "Erik Walker" ($n = 43$). Four major themes and one minor theme emerged which are descriptive of the participants' perceptions. Findings were related to the leadership responsibilities of sport management practitioners in higher education. Future research inquiries and relevant suggestions were articulated for sport management scholars in the 21st century.

Stereotyping has been widely researched in various disciplines such as social psychology, sport sciences, and media studies (Hall, 2001; Hamilton & Sherman, 1994; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Lapchick, 2000; Rasmussen, Esgate, & Turner, 2005; Steele, 1997; Stone, 2002). The *Nature of Prejudice* by Gordon Allport (1954) is a landmark text in the study of stereotyping and discrimination in American society. According to Allport (1954), "A *stereotype* is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category" (p. 191). A stereotype is a fixed idea that accompanies the category. A stereotype enters if the category is freighted with judgments. A

Lawrence is with the Dept. of Innovative Education Technology and Physical Education, Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA 91711. Harrison is with the DeVos Sport Business Management Program, University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL. Stone is with the Dept. of Psychology, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721.

stereotype exists as a fixed mark upon the category. Stereotypes can be based on numerous factors, a few are race, gender, and sport differences.

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have studied *racial* stereotypes surrounding athletic ability, race relations, and sport participation (Brown, Jackson, Brown, Sellers, Keiper, & Manuel, 2003; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Rasmussen et al., 2005; Stone, 2002; Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999). However, the public perception of college athletes' lives has received scant attention in the sport sciences. In addition, nonracial stereotypes associated with college athletes has been under researched as well. Harrison and Lawrence (2004) assessed primarily White college students' perceptions of the African American athlete and their opinion as to whether African American athletes are superior in certain sports (football, basketball, and track and field). They (2004) found 25% of participants believed African Americans had a physical advantage over White athletes. Twenty-four percent of participants attributed African American athleticism to African Americans' strong work ethic and 19% to African American cultural factors; only 14% of participants disregarded race in their explanation of athleticism. Stone et al. (1999) conducted two experiments, which demonstrated that framing an athletic task as diagnostic of negative racial stereotypes about African American or White athletes can hinder performance in sports. "In Experiment 1, African American participants performed significantly worse than did control participants when performance on a golf task was framed as diagnostic of 'sports intelligence.' In comparison, White participants performed worse than did control participants when the golf task was framed as diagnostic of 'natural athletic ability'. Experiment 2 observed the effect of stereotype threat on the athletic performance of White participants for whom performance in sports represented a significant measure of their self-worth" (Stone et al., 1999, p. 1213).

Surprisingly, there is a paucity of research regarding general stereotypes (without race as the central point of focus) about college athletes and public perception surrounding college athletes' lives. A few scholars have focused on faculty attitudes' toward college athletes (Beck, Bennett, Maneval, & Hayes, 2001; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Harrison, Comeaux, & Plecha, 2006; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007). Students in several studies were found to have similar negative attitudes toward college athletes consistent with the dumb jock stereotype (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1989, 1991; Engstrom et al., 1995). More specifically, Engstrom et al. (1995) found that faculty members perceived male revenue and nonrevenue college athletes negatively in situations dealing with academic competence, special services, and recognition. Simons et al. (2007) conducted a study where collegiate athletes were asked how they were perceived and treated. Thirty three percent reported they were viewed negatively by professors and 59% by students, only 15% reported positive perceptions. Participants reported specific comments about athletes made by nonathlete students and faculty members (Simons et al., 2007). These comments were as follows: low intelligence, little academic motivation, and receipt of undeserved benefits and privileges (Simons et al., 2007). Due to the dumb jock stereotype, athletes are stigmatized in the academic arena (Simons et al., 2007). Negative stereotypes about college athletes can affect team and classroom dynamics, cause isolation by college athletes, create segregation among college student populations, and impact faculty member-college athlete relationships. These concerns are significant for researchers,

educators, coaches, and practitioners in higher education. The current study borrowed from the field of social psychology and was guided by the concept of behavioral confirmation. The following section specifically outlines the theoretical framework, which informs this study.

Perceptual Confirmation Paradigm (PCP)

Traditional social psychological research and theory on behavioral confirmation has two implications. The first implies that the study of behavioral confirmation processes can inform an understanding of social processes occurring at superordinate levels of analysis and serve to address global social problems (Zanna, 2008). The second implication is as follows: “[c]onceptualizations of behavioral confirmation processes should take into account the intergroup contexts in which the confirmation of stereotypes may take place” (Zanna, 2008, p. 217). Interpersonal processes, and the characteristics of situations and persons that influence them, lead to the confirmation and disconfirmation of expectations in the course of social interaction (Snyder & Stukas, 1999). There is a chain of events by which the expectations of one person guide and direct the dynamics of social interaction such that the behavior of the target of those expectations comes to confirm or disconfirm those expectations (Snyder & Stukas, 1999).

People hold stereotypes about college athletes, and the stereotypes have an influence on how college athletes are perceived. The current study used the procedures used to examine perceptual confirmation effects (Hamilton & Sherman, 1994). The studies which use the Perceptual Confirmation Paradigm (PCP) demonstrate that, when an action is committed by a stereotyped or nonstereotyped individual, the perceivers evaluate its meaning differently, depending on to whom the behavior was attributed. These procedures offer a meaningful strategy for exploring whether stereotyped expectations about a target significantly change a perceiver’s interpretation of the target person’s behavior. Studies on perceptual confirmation of a stereotype have demonstrated that the use of a stereotype can be affected when individuating information about the target is available (Stone et al., 1997; Wheeler, Jarvis, & Petty, 2000). In this study, the individuating information is simply the differences in the athlete target names “Tyrone Walker” or “Erik Walker” (Wheeler et al., 2000). These names were employed to prime a stereotype. The procedures outlined in the methods section offer a detailed explanation.

In social psychology, Wheeler et al. (2000) employed the process of priming manipulation to arrive at negative implications for the holders of such stereotypes. They found that *racial* stereotype activation can produce maladaptive, stereotype-consistent behavior for nonstereotyped individuals who hold a stereotype. “Non-African American participants who were subtly primed with the African American stereotype performed significantly worse on a standardized math test than participants who were not so primed. The effect of the prime was significantly stronger for those individuals who spontaneously considered the stereotype from the first-person perspective” (Wheeler et al., 2000, p. 173). Initially, in the current study, the athlete target names of “Tyrone” and “Erik” were adopted to prime for racial stereotypes. Primary researchers attempted to use the process of priming manipulation, which was similar to the one used by Wheeler et al. (2000).

Also, social psychologists Stone et al. (1997) conducted an experiment utilizing the PCP, which elicited perceived notions surrounding the athleticism of African American and White male basketball players. The experiment had White participants evaluate a basketball player while listening to a radio broadcast of a collegiate basketball game. Fifty percent of participants were told the target was a African American athlete and the other half of participants were told the target was a White athlete. The broadcast clearly demonstrated that the target athlete played very well. Stone et al. (1997) found the White male target was perceived as displaying less “natural athletic ability” however more “court smarts” and “hustle.” The African American male target player was perceived as displaying less court smarts and hustle, but more natural athletic ability. The African American male target was perceived to be a better basketball player even though all participants heard the same running account of the athlete’s basketball performance.

The current study was conducted to do the following: (a) apply PCP by priming college students about a marginalized and high status group, college athletes, at a predominantly White institution; and (b) demonstrate the perceptual confirmation of stereotypes about college athletes by subtly priming stereotypes about male college athletes at a predominantly White institution.

Central Focus

The present study examined the perceptions of majority students at a predominantly White institution utilizing the PCP. The scope of this study was to learn college students’ opinions surrounding how male college athletes spend their time and the stereotypes they may or may not hold about male college athletes. The central research questions this study examined were as follows: (a) What are college students’ dominant perceptions of male college athletes’ daily lives after conceptually stepping into their shoes for one day?; (b) How does the PCP inform the interpretation of college students’ stereotypes about male college athletes?; and (c) In what ways are the stereotypes about African American and White male college athletes universal and divergent?

Methods

The current study used the narrative inquiry approach, which is a subtype of qualitative inquiry (Chase, 2005). “Contemporary narrative inquiry can be characterized as an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (Chase, 2005, p. 651). A narrative can be oral or written and can be elicited or simply heard during observation, an interview, or a naturally occurring conversation (Chase, 2005). Within any of these situations, a narrative can be as follows: (a) a short story about a specific event or particular characters; (b) an extended story about an important aspect of one’s life such as marriage, illness, or work; and (c) a narrative of one’s entire life or someone else’s life (Chase, 2005).

The current study was informed by the narrative inquiry approach (Chase, 2005) in that it allowed the participants to be narrators. A narrative communicates

the narrator's point of view and expresses emotions, thoughts, and interpretations (Chase, 2005). A narrative makes the self (the narrator) the protagonist either as actor or interested observer of others actions (Chase, 2005). When a participant tells a story, he or she shapes, constructs, and performs the self, experience, and reality. According to Chase (2005), "When researchers treat the narrator as actively creative in this way, they emphasize the narrator's voice" (p. 657). With the emphasis on voice, the primary researchers focus on several aspects: (a) what the participant (narrator) communicates; (b) how he/she communicates; and (c) "to the subject positions or social locations from which he/she speaks" (Chase, 2005, p. 657). In the current study, participants were asked to write a story from the first person perspective and participants were carefully selected using the typical case sampling method. "When researchers treat narration as actively creative and the narrator's voice as particular, they move away from questions about the factual nature of the narrator's statements" (Chase, 2005, p. 657).

In a previous study by Wheeler et al. (2000) a priming manipulation technique was used with non-African American participants, where participants were instructed to write an essay about a day in the life of a college student named either "Tyrone" or "Erik" Walker. According to Wheeler et al. (2000), "These two sets of instructions were used to prime the African American stereotype or not, respectively" (p. 175). The current study adapted the priming manipulation technique used by Wheeler et al. (2000) and primed stereotypes about college athletes. This study combined the narrative inquiry approach with the priming manipulation technique. Participants were asked to tell a story about what their experience would be like if they were a college athlete. Researchers were not attempting to interpret participants' stories as to whether they were factual or not. Narrative researchers view themselves as narrators as they develop interpretations and find ways in which to present their ideas about the stories they collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). "As narrators, then researchers develop meaning out of, and some sense of order in, the material they studied; they develop their own voice(s) as they construct others' voices and realities; they narrate "results" in ways that are both enabled and constrained by the social resources and circumstances embedded in their disciplines, cultures, and historical moments" (Chase, 2005, p. 657).

Participants

Typical case sampling was used in the current study. According to Patton (2001), *typical case sampling* "illustrates what is typical, normal, or average" (p. 183). The aim here was to acquire general college students who were enrolled in introductory courses. Participants included 87 college students from a predominately White university in the western United States who were enrolled in introductory psychology classes. Attaining students from introductory courses helped ensure that participants were typical and average. A total of 44 participants were randomly assigned to write about a college athlete named "Tyrone Walker" and 43 were randomly assigned to write about a college athlete named "Erik Walker" (Wheeler et al., 2000). Participants consisted of 32% female ($n = 28$) and 68% male ($n = 59$). All participants were White and in their freshman year in college. The age range of the college students was 18 to 19 years.

Procedure

Participants were recruited by telephone and met with researchers individually in a university research laboratory. On the telephone, they were simply told that the study concerned “sport psychology,” and that they would complete a questionnaire if they participated. They were also told that the study would last 30 minutes and that they would receive one credit toward a requirement for their introductory psychology class. Participants were acquired from three introductory psychology classes.

Upon arrival at the research laboratory, participants were instructed to write a one-page story about a day in the life of a college athlete. They were provided with a one-page form to complete the task. The one-page form used the following information and instructions at the top of the page in efforts to elicit a written response:

Our research investigates how people think about college athletes. To gather this information, we would like you to imagine a day in the life of a college athlete over in the athletic department. Your college athlete’s name is Tyrone Walker (some participants read Erik Walker). To complete this task, imagine a day in the life of Tyrone (or Erik), as if you were him, looking at the world through his eyes, and walking through the world in his shoes. Then, using the first person, please write a brief story describing what a typical day in the athletic department is like for Tyrone (or Erik). That is, please write in the first person as though you are Tyrone (or Erik) telling us about a typical day for you in the athletic department. Use only the space below to write your story. You have five minutes to complete the task, and when finished, place this paper in the envelope provided.

The rest of the one-page form included lines for the participants to write their responses. Five minutes were allotted to the participants to write their responses in efforts to attain a manageable data set. There is a difference in the athlete targets names “Tyrone Walker” or “Erik Walker”, these names offer a bit of information about the college athlete and were employed to prime a stereotype or not, respectively. Participants were not informed of the race of the athlete targets. Participants were not informed of which sports Tyrone or Erik competed in therefore, they assumed a sport for each athlete target on their own.

Data Analysis

The written responses to the one-page form were typed to form one database for effective data analysis. An investigative team was formed which consisted of four individuals trained in qualitative research methodology, two of which were the primary researchers. This investigative team was used throughout the data analysis process. All of the members of the investigative team examined the entire data set.

Following transcription, each investigator read each of the participants’ transcripts line-by-line to get a sense of the college students’ responses, which is referred to as line-by-line coding (Glaser, 1978). Next, the process of “open coding” was used in which investigators identified potential themes by pulling

together real examples from the text (Agar, 1996; Bernard, 1994). This process is also often referred to as identifying raw-data themes, which are quotations that capture a concept provided by the participant (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The third reading of the transcripts by the investigators involved a *memoing* technique which is used to record relationships among codes and/or raw data themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). There are three types of memos; code notes is the type the team used. Code notes were formed by each of the investigators attempting “to summarize his or her ideas about what is going on in the text” (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 783).

After code notes were recorded, the investigative team met to discuss the transcripts. The primary purpose of this meeting was to interpret and identify major and minor themes. During this meeting investigators shared and discussed their code notes with the group. There were rare incidences of inconsistent categorizations among investigators which were resolved by engaging in discussion with all investigative team members. Final decisions were made which would accurately and systematically reflect the transcripts and saturate the themes. Themes were derived from all of the transcripts and attempts were made to interpret commonalities among the thoughts described in each of the transcripts (Patton, 2001). Primary researchers identified major and minor themes across transcripts and support for each theme was located in each of the transcripts (Patton, 2001).

Finally, utilizing the themes, which were previously mentioned, transcripts were coded by the primary researchers. Codes are assigned to contiguous units of text and act as tags to mark off text to later retrieve and index (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Codes associated with each theme were identified in each of the transcripts to determine the number and percentage of participants which responded within each of the major themes (see Tables 4 & 5; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), computer-assisted programs offer assistance in coding qualitative data. The ATLAS.ti software program is a powerful software package used for qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual data. ATLAS.ti was used to verify and assist with the accuracy of determining the number and percentage of participants who responded within each of the major themes. The ATLAS.ti data analysis was consistent with the investigative teams' coding procedures. The participants' responses were also tallied and triangulated to determine number and percentages of the minor theme (*Common Negative Stereotypes*) reported (see Tables 1, 2, and 3).

Results

Due to the large participant pool ($N = 87$), there was plenty of variety within participants' responses. The length of participants' responses included four to five sentences to a long paragraph. Each of the responses included several key concepts, which coincided with the study's major themes and minor theme. Very few participants' responses exclusively coincided with only one major theme or minor theme.

The following three sections include: (a) the significance of the minor theme; (b) the major themes coinciding with the athlete target Tyrone; and (c) the major themes coinciding with the athlete target Erik. Participants' quotations are offered

Table 1 Common Negative Stereotypes About The College Athlete: Erik Athlete Target (N = 43)

Stereotype	# of Participants	Percentage
Dumb	1	2%
Lazy	8	19%
No study time	4	9%
Time spent partying	9	21%
Totals	22	51%

Table 2 Common Negative Stereotypes About The College Athlete: Tyrone Athlete Target (N = 44)

Stereotype	# of Participants	Percentage
Dumb	5	11%
Lazy	6	14%
Time spent partying	3	7%
Totals	14	32%

Table 3 Common Negative Stereotypes About Both College Athletes: Erik & Tyrone Athlete Targets (N = 87)

Stereotype	# of Participants	Percentage
Dumb	6	7%
Lazy	14	16%
No study time	4	4%
Time spent partying	12	14%
Grand Totals	36	41%

to support each of the major themes. At the end of each of the major theme sections there is an indication of the number and percentage of the participants who reported responses coinciding with the major theme of the section (see Tables 4 & 5). Four major themes emerged which are descriptive of the participants' ($N = 87$) responses regarding the two athlete targets Tyrone ($n = 44$) and Erik ($n = 43$). Primary researchers (trained qualitative researchers) implemented a specific guideline for this study and to be considered a *major* theme 55% or more of the participants' responses must have coincided with the theme. The titles of some of the major themes are directly from the participants' words, which is a technique termed "in vivo coding" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

Minor Theme Significance

Additional stereotypes that were not revealed in the major themes can be grouped together to form the minor theme of *Common Negative Stereotypes*. The minor

Table 4 Perceptions of a Day in the Life of a College Athlete: Tyrone Athlete Target Major Themes: Descriptive Percentages Of Transcripts (N = 44)

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Balancing life all day	42	95%	I get exhausted waking up at 5:00 a.m. every morning to go to practice. It never comes easy, crawling out of bed and forcing myself to be wide awake to meet the coaches' and teammates' standards. It's almost as difficult to keep my head up and eyes open during lectures all day long. Practice is over, homework still to come. I don't know when I will be able to sleep again.
Big man on campus	28	64%	My name is Tyrone Walker. I go to the University of Arizona and am currently on the Wildcat Basketball team. Being an athlete here is pretty rad. I wake up, open my closet and pick one of at least 30 free clothing items I got from the University. I attend my classes, which are relatively easy, considering I am the star of the team and I quite often get strings pulled for me. Everyday my workouts are tough, but my free tuition and God-like status on campus are worth it. Being an athlete is simply like being a God.

Note. Please keep in mind that participants' transcripts ranged from 1 to 6 sentences. Each of the transcripts included several key concepts that coincide with the study's major themes. Very few participants' responses exclusively coincided with only one theme, therefore the percentages should not add up to 100% and the N should *not* equal 44. This table presents the continuum of themes to avoid truncating the major themes.

theme *Common Negative Stereotypes* consisted of a group of negative stereotypes which White college students hold about college athletes. These consist of the college athlete being dumb, being lazy, not studying at all, or partying a lot. This is considered a minor theme due to the percentage of participants who contributed to this theme, which was 51% and/or lower.

Although revealed through the minor theme, a major finding of this study was that college athletes are also described stereotypically (51%, see Table 1) and perceived as dumb, lazy, and party animals. It is well known that African American male college athletes are a highly stereotyped population (Cuyjet, 2006; Lapchick, 2000). Results indicated that the athlete target Erik was stereotyped slightly more often using 22 negative descriptors (from 22 participants) versus 14 negative descriptors (from 14 participants) for the athlete target Tyrone (32%, see Table 2). Findings also indicated that 41% (36 total negative descriptors) of all participants

Table 5 Perceptions of a Day in the Life of a College Athlete: Erik Athlete Target Major Themes: Descriptive Percentages Of Transcripts (N = 43)

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Busy day	40	93%	The alarm goes off at 5 a.m. and, and barely awake, I need to get up and get to practice. As quickly as possible, I leave my dorm and walk to the gym for an early workout. I get there 5 min after 6 and am the last to arrive. The coach is yelling at me and telling me that I have no dedication. After a hard workout, I run back to my dorm to get my backpack and race to my 8 o'clock class.
Being an athlete is great	25	58%	When I woke up this morning, I had overslept because I had forgotten to set my alarm. I only had half an hour before class, so I showered quickly and got to class only a few minutes late. I went through the rest of my classes taking a break to go to the union for lunch with my friends. Tonight, I'm going to the rec center with my roommate.

Note. Please keep in mind that participants' transcripts ranged from 1 to 6 sentences. Each of the transcripts included several key concepts that coincide with the study's major themes. Very few participants' responses exclusively coincided with only one theme, therefore the percentages should not add up to 100% and the *N* should *not* equal 43. This table presents the continuum of themes to avoid truncating the major themes.

negatively stereotyped both athlete targets, the athlete target Erik and the athlete target Tyrone (see Table 3). This revealed that college athletes (both athlete targets Tyrone and Erik) were stereotyped in this study. Participants' general perceptions of college athletes were similar and some participants may have viewed both names as reinforcing the dumb jock stereotype. While the label "lazy" was universal, the "dumb jock" tag was used to describe the athlete target "Tyrone" five times more than the athlete target "Erik" in the current study (see Table 2).

Participants who responded to the athlete target of Erik ($n = 43$) reported either the college athlete being dumb, being lazy, not studying at all, or partying a lot (see Table 1), $22/43 = 51\%$ reported these stereotypes. Participants who responded to the athlete target of Tyrone ($n = 44$) reported either the college athlete being dumb, being lazy, or partying a lot, $14/44 = 32\%$ reported these stereotypes (see Table 2). Overall, 41% of all participants ($N = 87$) negatively stereotyped college athletes and used one or more of the following to describe athletes: dumb, lazy, failing to studying, or partying a lot (see Table 3).

Tyrone Themes

Two major themes emerged which are descriptive of the participants' ($n = 44$) perceptions concerning the day in life of the college athlete Tyrone: *Balancing Life All Day* and *Big Man On Campus*.

Balancing Life All Day. The major theme *Balancing Life All Day* represents participants' perceptions of how athletes spend their time. Participants' acknowledged that college athletes do spend time completing their homework and studying. They also recognized that college athletes like Tyrone have an abundance of time to himself to do fun activities such as socializing, eating lunch with friends, video games, and hanging out with his girlfriend, consider the following three quotations.

First I wake up really early eat some food before I have to go lift weights with my team. We all meet inside the gym around 6:30. I then lift for two hours and go back to my house to get ready for school. (968)

Usually I wake up pretty early and head out for practice. After practice I come back and sleep until about 10 a.m. or so. At this time I get up and either make myself a warm healthy breakfast or I call up my friends and we go get something to eat. I have a few classes I usually miss each day in the morning hours. I usually don't sweat it though, the teachers know who I am and they are cool with it. I will generally only go if there is a test to do or something to turn in. In the afternoon I go to my classes if I feel like it. Then I head off to lift weights and do some training. Then over to my girlfriend's to chill. After that my day is done and starts over. (986)

These participants reported that college athletes do study unlike some other participants' quotations, which failed to mention that they make time to study, contemplate the following comments.

The mornings are always chaotic for me because I'm always running late. First I eat a quick bowl of cereal, jump in the shower and get dressed. Then I try and finish any unfinished homework or studying I have from the night before since practice ran late last night. I go to class because I have to attend them all otherwise I will be off the team. Practice is hard and I'm exhausted by the end of the day. It pays off though because I get to go to school and play the sport I love. My coach checks the attendance record to make sure I go everyday. Life can be nearly impossible but in the end it is worth the struggle. (26)

Today, as any other day I woke up at 6:00 am for my morning jog. At 8:30 practice began, by the time 10:00 rolled around I was already very exhausted. Next was shower and meal time. Then came my daily classes from 12:00 to 4:00. I get a hour break while I have to eat once more and start some homework. Then came evening practice until 7:00. After that was homework and studying until 12:00. . . . Sleep. . . all over again. (643)

This theme also consisted of participants' recognition that college athletes work out on a daily basis typically in the morning, as the following quotations illustrate:

A day in the life of a college athlete like I am is pretty difficult, but very manageable. I have practice usually every day for about two to two and a half hours. Practices can sometimes be fun but usually I am working hard to master my techniques. The coach is pretty nice when it's just me and him, but he gets strict when he wants me to get better as well as the other players on my team. Our team is pretty good because we work the hardest. As for school work, I have to do that right when I get back so I have time to shower and get a good sleep for it to all start again in the morning. Being a student athlete is tough, but I love it. (219)

Hello, my name is Tyrone. I am a Caucasian male and a varsity athlete in swimming and track and field. Each day is very difficult; I wake up at 7 a.m. for morning swimming practice, so early because most classes begin at 10 am. Leaving time for a hard two hour practice. People don't really know how hard I work and rarely they know who I am because I'm not a basketball player or quarterback. I believe I work harder than most sports athletes here. (1075)

Students' also realized that it is tough for college athletes to wake up early and push themselves to workout hard in the morning.

"Get up. Get up. Get up!" I try to push myself when I'm playing, but often the hardest part of my day is the first few moments of consciousness. That's where my commitment is truly tested. Training. Everyday 6:00 a.m. Some days I simply lack the motivation at first but I always pull myself together in time for practice at 6:15. My day is long but I keep going until I've done what I need to do. Going to sleep, that's the easy part. (282)

Participants (42/44 = 95%) reported that most college athletes must attend early morning workouts with their teams, which is sometimes very challenging. They also reported that college athletes are very busy, have little time during the day to work on academics, and have difficult schedules to maintain (see Table 4).

Big Man on Campus The theme *Big Man on Campus* involved participants' perceptions that athletes receive star status and are continuously recognized on campus. This also includes the idea that athletes receive privileges such as free athletic gear, academic tutors, and are enrolled in user-friendly courses. Students' (participants) perceived that Tyrone (a college athlete) would be well known on campus and given plenty of attention, consider this example from a participant:

I really hate having to wake up so early in the morning for practice. I guess its just one of the little things I need to do to stay here at the University running track. So my morning usually consists of waking up around 4:30 a.m. to be at the track at 5 a.m. Running is what I love so I'm willing to do it. Then its shower time and off I go to class. Walking to class is usually interesting. People recognize me and point. I don't mind it much; I actually enjoy the

attention, and why shouldn't I? I worked hard to be where I am and nothing was just handed to me. After class its study time. It's nice to have a study group like they do for all the other athletes. After studying it's off to weights. This is the highlight of my day. (650)

Participants also realized college athletes "sport" their athletic gear on campus and are fairly confident.

When I got to school, I walked by the union and almost everybody looked at me when I passed by. First they looked at my face to make sure it was the real Tyrone Walker, then they instantly looked to my shoes and then to my gear. I could definitely see mouths moving, gossiping about the game from Saturday and that nasty dunk I threw down. Two kids wearing University shorts came up and shook my hand and said, "You're the shit." Then I got some McDonal'd's and went to Spanish class. (1036)

Students reported that college athletes have advantages over them such as free academic tutors and easy courses, as the following participant quotation demonstrates:

The athletic department is great. I wake up in the morning around 9a.m., I go work out for two hours, and then off to class in my golf cart. I can't imagine being a student and not an athlete as well. We, athletes, have so many advantages that the normal student does not have. For example, I have counselors who create my schedule. They create a schedule for me so I do not have stressful days. I also have unlimited tutors who do most of my work for me. Oh, and walking 15 minutes across campus is something I never do, I use the golf cart provided for us. This way I don't get too tired. (43)

Participants perceived college athletes as being privileged, having their tuition paid by the university, and having plenty of women to date, consider the following two comments:

My classes don't start until 11 a.m. at the earliest and I'm currently taking the minimum class load of 12 units to complete a declared major. So I wake up at 10 a.m. and am out the door of my apartment by 10:30 on my way to school, if I decide to go to class today. I drive a 2001 BMW M3 the school paid for by the tuition of the students who also attend the University. When getting to class mostly everyone there knows who I am and the professor doesn't mind that I'm handing in the paper three days late because I had a game when it was due. After class I head to practice where I'll stay for three to four hours. (150)

Well I just got up and I'm pretty sore from practice yesterday. I can't wait to get to school though because there are about five or six different girls who are wanting to get with me. I think it may be just because I'm an athlete. I am however a little tired of walking from the dorm to school. I constantly get stopped and asked if I play sports just because I am African American. Even though I do play sports I don't like people to make that assumption because of the color of my skin. Because of the frequent stopping I am often late to class

and coach won't let me play if I keep being tardy. I bet someone could cover for me and do an assignment for me. Then coach would never know. (174)

Participants (28/44 = 64%) reported at least one of the following about college athletes' lives: enjoys privileges, receives free academic tutors, enrolls in easy classes, and receives plenty of attention (see Table 4).

Erik Themes

Two major themes emerged which are descriptive of the participants' ($n = 43$) perceptions concerning the day in life of the college athlete Erik: *Busy Day* and *Being an Athlete Is Great*.

Busy Day. The theme *Busy Day* involved participants' recognition that Erik (a college athlete) has to wake up early to workout with his team. Students' also realized that these workouts are fairly challenging and could cause Erik's body to be sore. Participants suggested that living the life of a college athlete is very hectic and busy. They acknowledged that college athletes work hard and have full schedules, as the comments illustrate:

I woke up this morning at 6:00a.m. I stopped by the gym for my morning routine. I usually run a few laps then work on my weight training. After a quick shower I go to my first class. It is a Math 100 class to finish my general requirements. I have to go back to my apartment for lunch then go to two more practices before practice. I am on the University soccer team I get home at 8:00 where I work on homework for my English 102 paper. I then go to bed at 10:00. (377)

I'm Erik Walker, and I am a college athlete. My days are usually busy and are spent with me working hard to be able to do what I love. I wake up early and get ready for my day. In the morning I practice hard at my sport, so that I will be the best I possibly can. Throughout the day I go to class and also think constantly about the sport in which I love so much. I am dedicated fully to this sport and no matter how much work it is, it is worth it to me. (151)

Students reported that college athletes have to follow a tight schedule and they must have self-discipline, which could involve passing up social events to stay home and study.

Hi, my name is Erik Walker and let me show you what it is like to be me for a day. I wake up around 6:30 a.m. each morning and go to practice. Practice is usually about three hours long. So from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. After practice I go home, usually, to finish homework, shower, and if time permits take a nap. Most of my classes start between 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. On Mondays and Wednesdays I have class from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Tuesdays and Thursdays I have class from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. After class I usually get dinner with a friend, and then head home to start my homework and/or get ready to go out that night. Depending on how much work I have, I may go out with friends. If I don't I'll stay home and do homework and head to bed. (951)

Participants suggested that the biggest priority for college athletes is their workouts and staying rested for their workouts.

This morning I awoke at 7:00 a.m. feeling tired and very sore. My first thought is that practice was very hard and I cannot believe that I have to go again in an hour. As I walk down the hall for breakfast my muscles are aching and I feel like going back to bed. As I fall asleep in my bowl of oatmeal, I realize that I need to be on the football field in 15 min. So, I rush down there so I can be yelled at by my coaches and do endless laps around the field. After the grueling morning practice I need to get ready for class. As I walk to class wearing University attire I can notice people looking at me differently because I am an athlete. Does this mean they think I am not as competent? Same routine everyday. (367)

Erik wakes up early in the morning everyday to go to practice. Running, jumping, pushing his body to limits he never thought possible. After morning practice he goes to take a shower and get cleaned up for a long day of classes. After he gets some breakfast and a shower he goes to all of his classes in succession. He goes to his dorm or home to get some lunch maybe a quick nap. Then back to school to finish his classes. After that he goes back to an afternoon practice at the gym. Then Erik goes home around seven or eight at night to study for upcoming tests or quizzes. (900)

On the other hand, some participants felt that Erik had plenty of time to himself to do whatever he wanted. Students reported that Erik has time for socializing, naps, video games, and even smoking marijuana, as the following two responses indicate.

As my day starts I wake up at 9 a.m. and head out to class. Since I have a personal note taker I just sit there and go to sleep. Once class is done I head over to the union and get some food. Once that's over I head out to go practice for my sport that I play. Afterward me and the guys head back to our rooms and shower. Then we head out to a friend's place and socialize with some friends. Next all of us head out to dinner. Once we get back we head over to our friend's apartment and we watch some TV. After I head back and go to my room and finish some homework. Then I go to sleep. (452)

My name is Erik. This morning I woke up to my usual breakfast of protein supplements. I no longer eat real food; I get all my nutrition in shake form. After breakfast, I injected myself with the juice, so I could be pumped up and ready for action. Then I go to the gym and work out till I puke. Then it is time to not go to class and smoke dope. Everyone knows all athletes smoke dope, and of course, so do I. I would go to class because there is a girl there who really wants my nuts, but I would rather get high and play PS2. I'll call her later for some booty. (681)

Participants also recognized college athletes spend time on their coursework and have to find time to squeeze in studying, as the following participant's quotation reports.

A day in the life of a student athlete is very busy. I begin my days waking up very early to get in a morning workout. We need to be in top physical shape to compete at our level. After my morning workout, I attend two to three classes in the morning until the afternoon. As a student athlete, I am required to be a full-time student. I am also required to keep my grades up to compete and remain on the team. I also have to worry about completing my degree. After classes, I go to afternoon practice with my team. We need to get a lot of practice, so we practice for several hours everyday. Then I go home to do my homework and study and begin another busy day. (634)

Participants (40/43 = 93%) reported that college athletes such as Erik have hard workouts in the early morning and very busy schedules (see Table 5). They also reported college athletes have plenty of free time to do fun activities such as, socializing with friends and video games.

Being an Athlete Is Great The theme of *Being an Athlete Is Great* consisted of participants' responses, which acknowledged that college athletes are privileged and receive advantages on campus that other students do not receive. These advantages are free academic tutors, free athletic gear, "faculty friendly" courses, and plenty of attention from fans, consider the following three comments.

The day in the life of Erik Walker starts out with a wake up at 7 a.m. I get up, check my e-mail, take a shower, and eat breakfast. I go to English at 8 a.m. and since I had practice last night I didn't finish my essay on time. It's ok though, my professor will cut me some slack because I am the star golf player! Lucky me. Then after that, I have to go to 1 more class before lunch. At lunch I hang out with all my buddies and make a lot of noise. Then some girls come up to me and ask for my number. Then I have to go to practice from two till 6:00. I go eat dinner with my golf friends and then call to ask out the girls I met today. Maybe we can hook up. The End. (636)

Man I'm tired, I had a late night. Well in time to get up and go to some classes. I'll have some breakfast first. Damn I'm late to class, oh well. Man the class has already been going for 15 min. It's a good thing it's an easy class and that one girl will give me her notes. I'll sleep a little. Man I hope ??? goes well my mind is always preoccupied with practice and not focused on school. Well it's time for lunch. Better go get some free food from that one place that likes me. Maybe after I'll go ??? (183)

Salutations, I'm Erik Walker. Being a college athlete is great! I spend the majority of my day practicing for my sport. Practice can be tough, but it keeps me on top of my game. As a student I also "practice." I do a good four hours of homework every night. I have a "coach", of sorts, for my school work. Most people call it a tutor, crazy huh? Well, being a college athlete is great! (426)

Students suggested college athletes have women give them their telephone numbers and are constantly approached for interviews. These suggestions are substantiated by the fact that high-profile college athletes are exposed to female attention and the demands of media (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998).

Today is just like any day. I wake-up, take my supplements and shakes and go to practice. On the way there I am stopped by many fans, telling me how good I did last game. Several girls give me their phone numbers and tell me to call them tonight, if I would like “to party.” I finally arrive at the gym where I am greeted by several members of the local press. They interview me for several minutes and I change, get in my warm-ups and get to the court. On arrival I am scolded by the coach for being late. I end up doing some extra drills and running. Later that night I call the phone numbers and we party. It feels good to be an athlete. (78)

Woke up today at about 10:00 or so. Man, I’m sure sore from the workout last night. Coach really worked us hard. On my way to my first class I got bombarded by writers asking about everything from the game winning shot last night to how high I think I’m going to go in the June draft. This is the first time that I’ve ever been confronted during the school day. Usually it’s after practice or games, oh well. My classes all have been going pretty good. Luckily I’m majoring in broadcasting so they aren’t all that hard. I love being an athlete. Tonight at practice we are just going to run through our plays, no conditioning or anything. Coach wants us to be well rested for the tourney tomorrow, but I think I’m going to go out and party tonight. I love being an athlete. (117)

Participants (25/43 = 58%) perceived Erik’s life as an athlete to be wonderful and full of privileges that regular students do not receive (see Table 5).

Discussion

Much of Allport’s (1954) research occurred before African Americans integrating college sports. Most of the research on African Americans integrating sport focuses on racial/ethnic differences and stereotyping, with little attention given to Allport’s notion of *cultural relativity*. Consider Allport’s (1954) analysis of *cultural relativity*:

Ethnic differences are so numerous and so elusive that some people have concluded that there are no uniformities among the cultures of the world. The claim for “cultural relativity” may go even further. Actually, all human groups have developed activities that are functioning equivalent. Whereas details may differ, the members of every society agree in many of their purposes and practices (p. 115).

Murdock (1953) claimed, “There are certain human practices found in every culture known to history or to ethnography” (p. 124). He (1953) offered a list of human universals some of them are as follows: age-grading, athletic sports, bodily adornment, calendar, cleanliness training, dancing, and education. Allport (1954) pointed out that athletics and sports are included on Murdock’s (1953) long list of components that demonstrate and cultivate cultural uniformity and human universals. This example of athletics and sports being human universals served as the focus of the current study as the primary researchers approached uniformity with the use of qualitative methods.

Utilizing Allport's (1954) perspective on stereotyping is useful to the current findings and offers an explanation for the process of stereotyping by students. "A stereotype acts both as a justification device for categorical acceptance or rejection of a group and as a screening or selective device to maintain simplicity in perception and in thinking" (Allport, 1954, p. 192). In addition, Allport (1954) claimed that stereotypes can be favorable and/or unfavorable. Both the major themes and the minor theme in this study, such as *Big Man On Campus*, *Being An Athlete Is Great*, and *Common Negative Stereotypes*, support this notion and demonstrate that stereotypes can confirm and/or disconfirm preconceived notions. It is important to note that some of the participants' comments are quite valid. For example, participants reported that college athletes do not have much time to study (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998) and that they receive free academic tutors. Even though these ideas are fairly valid at most institutions, these are still stereotypical notions held by participants. According to Allport (1954), "A stereotype need not be altogether false" (p. 192).

Regardless of whether the stereotype is valid or false, Steele's (1997) *stereotype threat* is salient in college athletes' lives. Steele (1997) found that a social-psychological threat arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one's group applies. "This predicament threatens one with being negatively stereotyped, with being judged or treated stereotypically, or with the prospect of conforming to the stereotype" (Steele, 1997, p. 614). According to Steele (1997), "*Stereotype threat*, is a situational threat—a threat in the air—that, in general form, can affect the members of any group about whom a negative stereotype exists (e.g., skateboarders, older adults, White men, gang members)" (p. 614). Steele (1997) claimed when stereotypes about groups apply, members of that group can fear being reduced to that stereotype. "And for those who identify with the domain to which the stereotype is relevant, this predicament can be self-threatening" (p. 614). It is vital that college athletes become aware of the *stereotype threat* and the common stereotypes about them. This awareness could assist and challenge them to maintain their self-identity and not fall into this situational threat which causes individuals to underperform (Steele, 1997). "Individuals susceptibility to this threat derives from their identification with the domain and the resulting concern they have about being stereotyped in it" (Steele, 1997, p. 614). Simons et al. (2007) confirmed that many college athletes in their sample (538 surveyed) are aware of the negative stereotypes about them.

Inside Higher Ed analyzed data from NCAA and found at 46 colleges, athletes comprise at least a third of the African American male student population and at 96 of the universities, and athletes comprise at least 20% of the African American male student population (Luebchow, 2008). At these same colleges and universities male college athletes only represented three percent of the males on campus. In addition, recent NCAA statistics indicate one out of 11 African American males at predominately White institutions is a college athlete. And one out of 21 White males on campus is a college athlete as well (NCAA, 2008a). This skewed demographic of athletic presence versus academic representation(s) contributes, in part, to how a day in the life of male college athlete may confirm perceptions that are limited by student exposure to athletes in diverse settings.

Participants connote a male college athlete with the phenomenon of the theme *Big Man On Campus*. The socialization of the male college athlete is storied and

being a big man on a predominantly White campus creates certain images in the public's mind (Edwards, 2000; Lapchick, 2000). This is why the majority participants reported comments such as, "my super-athletic body," "all the ladies take notice," "teachers who I am cool with," and "my nasty dunk." These comments are descriptors that are culturally related to high-profile sports, which have African American males overrepresented in relation to other sports and the campus in general (football 55% & men's basketball 60%; NCAA, 2008b). This is further rationale that PCP has informed the current study in terms of stereotypes with the labels used that differ by frequencies of the *Common Negative Stereotypes* (see Tables 1, 2, & 3).

The minor theme of *Common Negative Stereotypes* included college athletes being labeled dumb, lazy, failing to study, and partying a lot, all of which could suggest bias. This study primed for stereotypes and 41% of participants used common stereotypes to describe *both* athlete targets (Tyrone & Erik). Historically, the African American athlete has been stereotyped as the "dumb jock" or "dumb African American" athlete (Edwards, 2000; Hall, 2001; Lapchick, 2000). White athletes have been labeled as "slow" or lacking the ability to jump. Forty one percent of participants reported negative stereotypes, which indicated that this study arrived at college athlete stereotypes, rather than racial stereotypes.

This study's results have enhanced the use of PCP in sport management. Current findings helped to unravel some of the general stereotypes and the harmful effects of stereotyping in collegiate sport. By using PCP as a tool, primary researchers have focused on the confirmation of expectations by students within the social interactions on campus and in society. This study revealed the negative stereotypes that could hinder the student and college athlete relationship. According to Snyder and Stukas (1999), there is a chain of events by which the expectations of one individual direct the dynamics of social interaction such that the behavior of the target of those expectations comes to confirm and/or disconfirm those expectations (Snyder & Stukas, 1999). The present study revealed confirmation based on a fixed stereotype(s) of male college athletes, consistent with pre-conceived notions about gender and sport (i.e., masculinity). Conversely, there was disconfirmation in the study by athletes being labeled as busy and studying. This prominent concept from the PCP has guided the current study and can be useful in future sport management studies.

The notion of athletic privilege is a stereotype, which directly coincides with the major themes of *Big Man On Campus* ($n = 44$ Tyrone data) and *Being An Athlete Is Great* ($n = 43$ Erik data). This elite status that college athletes supposedly hold, can be both positive and negative for them. According to Hyatt (2003), the perceived elite status can add to the inequity and discrimination of college athletes. Students think that college athletes are receiving more than a fair share of the university's resources and the athletes and athletic departments are being extended unusual privileges (Hyatt, 2003). This poses the question whether college athletes are privileged or not. Hawkins, Lawrence, Harrison, and Mintah (2007) surveyed 383 college students and reported that 78% of participants thought college athletes receive extra privileges beyond what they earn. Participants were also asked what type of privileges college athletes receive and they reported the following three themes: academic privileges (54%), fringe benefits (30%), and social praise (16%; Hawkins et al., 2007). These themes directly

coincide with the current study's major themes of *Big Man On Campus* and *Being An Athlete Is Great*.

In the last section, the primary researchers examine practical applications based on findings for sport managers and results from this study as well as, future research using PCP and CRT as appropriate theoretical and methodological approaches.

Limitations, Implications, and Future Recommendations

There are three main limitations in the current study. The participants were all White students. Primary researchers aim was to examine big time college sports (male athletes), which traditionally take place on predominately White institutions, therefore the focus was on how mainstream White students viewed the athlete targets (Erik & Tyrone). Investigation of minority group students' perceptions would provide a broader understanding of all students on campus. Participants came from a single institution. Therefore, there are constraints in regard to the broader meaning of the findings due to the scope of only one institution. The student narratives were based on a male college athlete target and his masculine behavior. In terms of gender, the focus was on males therefore the findings could not be interpreted to encompass all college athletes (females and males). An additional limitation was that the primary researchers failed to name the race of the athlete targets, which could have certainly changed the written responses received from the participants.

Current findings are relevant to sport management practice in the context of college sport for several reasons. Students' perceptions of college athletes prove informative for sport management practitioners because the way in which college athletes are marketed and exposed in the media. These marketing methods are directly linked to the media relations sector of the athletic department. It is very relevant for sport managers to figure out a way to promote the educational successes of their college athletes to the broader campus; this would allow practitioners to mainstream college athletes' lives. The aim should be to give people access to what is happening with college athletes beyond athletics. Sport management scholars and higher education leaders should promote the academic successes of their students and college athletes. This could be done not only within the athletic departments but also within the academic departments. Departments can hold academic excellence banquets that bring together both groups of students and college athletes, which would create a comprehensive understanding of each other. These types of approaches may cultivate a different view and public perception of a day in the life of a college athlete on campus.

The implications for administrators involve the implementation of programs, which increase the intellectual and social interaction between general students and college athletes. Coaches can use these findings by highlighting the nonathletic successes of their players during team meetings, media days, and other public forums to educate the public. One example can be seen in Kansas State University's football media guide where Coach Ron Prince indicated that he has placed 150 players on the Big 12 Commissioners' Honor Roll (Kansas State Athletic

Department, 2008). Illinois State University (ISU) utilizes another collaborative example, which is an effective intervention. ISU invites each academic department and their professors to the scholar-athlete awards banquet every year. College athletes, as the primary stakeholders in intercollegiate sport, can benefit from these perception interventions, as they are counter-intuitive to the dominant stereotype about athletes.

Furthermore, insight to college athletes' lives is significant for sport managers. Sport managers can enhance the quality of life for the college athlete in several ways. They can help college athletes manage the *stereotype threat* (Steele, 1997) they may experience. They can improve the way in which college athletes are portrayed in the media. They can help to dispel some of the campus myths, which perpetuate poor relationships between students and athletes, such as athletes have it easy and get all the glory. Sport management scholars and practitioners can even assist athletic department support staff in their relationships with college athletes by giving them insight to what college athletes' daily lives are like. More specifically, sport management scholars can disseminate research that educates and informs athletic administrators of how college athletes at their institutions are perceived. Scholars can give college athletes a voice by utilizing qualitative studies to allow them to share their primary concerns in regard to their athletic and academic lives. Sport management practitioners can brand and market positive and educational images of college athletes. Practitioners need to create a two-way synergy between athletics and campus classrooms, by increasing the interaction between faculty and athletic department personnel.

Lastly, primary researchers encourage university professors to cultivate classroom discussions that include both students and college athletes. Institutions and athletic programs must support interventions, which can help college athletes develop confident attitudes in the classroom in the same way they learn to feel confident about their skills in their sport. The ability to transfer skills from the athletic domain to the academic domain can make a significant difference in how college athletes approach academics (Gaston-Gayles, 2005). The students responses reflect some acknowledgment of noncognitive variables (e.g., persistent, dedicated, and committed) in the daily lives of Tyrone/Erik and these factors should be projected in more branding and marketing of college athlete success on campus in higher education.

Future research should examine student narratives about the daily lives of female college athletes using critical feminist and critical racial frameworks that could illuminate themes of homophobia and the intersection of racism and sexism in terms of the perceptions of women in sport. In efforts to prime for racial stereotypes, researchers should prime students with different first names (athlete targets) that imply athlete targets who are African American, White, Latino, Asian American, and Samoan American. In addition, researchers should clearly indicate the specific sports for the college athlete targets in efforts to examine racial stereotypes.

An important note on research for investigating race in sport management has focused specifically on African American males. Scholars such as Singer (2005a, 2005b) and Donnor (2005) have found that Critical Race Theory (CRT) helped them understand the plight of African American male college athletes and the social and cultural issues they face on campus. Their findings indicated that uni-

versity personnel perceive African American male college athletes to be inferior students and the African American male college athletes themselves felt stereotyped and isolated (Donnor, 2005; Singer, 2005b). Future studies may use CRT to prime *overt* racial stereotypes by using different names and naming the specific sports in the investigation (i.e., football and basketball). PCP and CRT could also be used at Historically African American Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to investigate students' perceptions of male college athletes of various backgrounds and ethnicities.

Finally, future research on sport with CRT can be informed by educational scholars call for a reform movement to effect change and promote educational equality for students from diverse racial, ethnic, and other social class groups (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

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